

A Prophet Without Honour

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Preacher: Steve Brown

[0 : 00] This is the morning service at Holy Trinity on the 6th of July 2003. The preacher is Steve Brown.

His sermon is entitled A Prophet Without Honour and is based on Luke chapter 4 verses 14 to 30. The line of the ancient Maori chief who is also called Paikia and he came on to New Zealand on the back of a whale to lead his people and she is named after him, after her mother and her baby little twin brother die during her delivery and she's left as the only descendant in the line of this ancient chief, Paikia.

And she's quickly, in a sense, abandoned by her father who is overcome with grief so he goes away and she's left with her grandparents. And her grandfather is the chief of the people but he's distressed, greatly distressed about the tribe losing their tradition.

You see, he's pinned all his hopes on a baby boy coming to lead them. He's been expecting a long-awaited son to come and be their chief, eventually, once he passes away.

[1 : 32] You see, his own son is left because of the grief, gone away, abdicated. And all that is left is Paikia, the young girl.

And little Paikia, she attempts to show her grandfather as she grows up that she can be chief. And so she learns all the traditions and the chants and the dances and the Maori fighting techniques. She even passes the final test of retrieving the chief's whale bone that sits around his neck on his chest from the bottom of the ocean.

She retrieves it from the bottom of the ocean to show that she is worthy to be the next chief. But her grandfather, the chief, rejects her and he curses her for messing with tradition.

And he pushes her away. And he blames her for all the misfortunes the tribe is suffering. Curses her for living while her baby twin brother died.

[2 : 40] Rejects her completely. You see, sometimes it's the most unexpected people who reject us. The people of Israel were waiting expectantly too. The people of Israel had pinned all their hopes on the servant of God.

The servant that God would send to save and heal his people. The servant that God would send to deliver Israel from her enemies, the Romans at that time. The servant God would send to establish his kingdom forever.

However, the servant God would send to proclaim and inaugurate the year of the Lord's favour. The people of Israel were pinning all their hopes to this servant.

Just like the chief pinned all his hopes to a male heir in Wairida. Then Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee and a report about him spread through all the surrounding country. He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone. Can you imagine the excitement in the synagogue, the hometown synagogue, when Jesus comes back to Nazareth?

[3 : 53] All the people are there. The whole place is packed out. The rabbis and the leading men would be at the front. All his friends and relatives and the other men of the town would be crammed in behind them, sitting on the floor.

And everyone else would be against the walls or peering through the doors. He said there's no room left. The only room is standing room outside. A buzz of expectancy starts to calm down. As the carpenter's son gets up to read. Everyone is silent. As he finds his place in the scroll of Isaiah.

And his voice breaks the silence. The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.

You see, they all love this passage, don't they? They love it because it's all about God's long-expected servant. It's about their hopes and their expectations for a saviour to come, to save them.

[5 : 14] Can you imagine? Everyone on the edge of their seats waiting for him now to preach, to put the squirrel back and preach to them.

The whole place is electric as he sits down with them to explain and apply what's just been said.

And he says, Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.

In other words, God has sent his servant to save and heal you. God has sent his servant to deliver Israel from their enemies and establish his kingdom.

God has sent his servant to proclaim and inaugurate the year of the Lord's favour. God has sent his servant to say, Today, this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.

You see, if anyone should have accepted Jesus, it should have been his hometown crowd, shouldn't it? It's great news. The long wait is over. The expectations and all the hopes of these people is satisfied.

[6 : 23] But look at their reaction in verse 22. All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth.

They said, Is not this Joseph's son? Do you see their reaction? Their reaction is this. Yes, that's all really good.

We like your words. But is not this Joseph's son? He isn't going to save and heal Israel, is he? He can't deliver Israel from her enemies and establish God's kingdom, can he?

Surely, he isn't going to inaugurate the year of the Lord's favour. He's not this Joseph's son. He's one of us. In fact, as we look at the Gospel of Luke before this point, we see that Luke is at pains to show that Jesus is in fact God's son.

In the genealogy that Paul preached on two weeks ago, that was made painfully clear, plainly clear. Luke 3, 38 said this, Son of Adam, son of God.

[7 : 39] And in Luke 3, 23, at the start of that, it said he was the son, as was thought, of Joseph. You see, Luke realises that Jesus is in fact God's son, not merely Joseph's son.

It's so obvious because God himself says that Jesus is his son. In Luke 3, 22, you are my son, the beloved. God himself declares Jesus to be his son.

It's so obvious because the devil himself knows that Jesus is God's son. Look at Luke 4, 3 and 9. If you are the son of God, you see, the devil isn't trying to sort of find out if Jesus is God's son.

He knows he is. He's trying to make Jesus doubt that he's God's son. He's trying to deceive Jesus into not acting like God's son.

The devil knows that Jesus is very dangerous because he is God's son. The point is clear. Up to this point in Luke, Luke has been at pains to show us that Jesus is the son of God.

[8 : 54] God himself declares that Jesus is his very own son, and the devil attempts to deceive Jesus because he is the son of God. But his hometown crowd say this.

He's not this Joseph's son. In other words, we like your gracious words, but we can't accept that you will actually fulfill them.

Often it's the most unexpected people who reject us. It's like the old grandfather in Whale Rider, the old chief, isn't it? You see, he's happy for Pukia to know all the Maori traditions.

He liked the fact that she knew the dances and the chants and the songs, but he couldn't accept that she was to be the next chief and lead the people.

This passage is a bit surprising, isn't it? It shocks us and it catches us unawares because those who rejected should have accepted.

[10 : 02] Those who rejected should have accepted. But it didn't surprise Jesus. Listen to his response. You see, Jesus isn't surprised.

He's not caught unawares. See, he anticipates their rejection of him. He anticipates their mocking taunts for him to prove himself to them. He's not surprised.

Nor should we be surprised. We shouldn't be surprised when those closest, those who are supposed to be in the know, reject Jesus.

Just look at our church over the past week or two. Our church, the Anglican church, and other denominations as well, are full of people who think that there are people in those churches that should accept.

But they reject the teaching of Jesus on a variety of issues and homosexuality is just one of them. Sometimes it's the most unexpected people who reject Jesus.

[11 : 36] We shouldn't be surprised because Jesus isn't surprised. He anticipates it because leopards don't change their spots.

You see, he knows their history. He knows Israel's history. So he gives them a history lesson. But the truth is, there were many widows in Israel in the time of Elijah when the heaven was shut up three years for six months and there was a severe famine all over the land.

Yet Elijah was sent to none of them except your widow, Zarephath, in Simon. There were also many lessons in Israel in the time of the prophet Elijah and none of them was clean except Naaman, the Syrian.

Well, Jenny was my first sort of serious girlfriend. You know the sort. The one you can't stop thinking about.

The one that you have to ring up at least a dozen times every night. The one you hassle your parents to go and visit all the time. The one that you buy the little bracelet for with her name engraved on the back of it.

[12 : 46] The one who makes you feel like the world ends when she finally breaks up with you. Jenny was my first sort of serious girlfriend but there was a problem.

I was 17 and she was only 15. You might think, oh, two years difference, that's no big deal but imagine that you have a pretty 15 year old daughter and she brings home a 17 year old supercharged hormone factory.

A 17 year old boy. Now I don't know about you but I pray that Mel and I have boys. Girls are lovely to begin with until they turn into boy magnets.

Anyway, you get the picture. After dating, seeing Jenny for about a week, she decided that I should meet the parents and go and have dinner with them.

I decided that I should escape to another country. I knew that they would hate me. I knew that they would just see me as this little leech that had attached itself to their beautiful baby daughter.

[13 : 57] I knew that they would probably make me feel really uncomfortable and unwanted. I was really scared about going to dinner with the parents. And as soon as I walked into the home, as soon as I extended my hand to shake Jenny's dad's hand, as soon as I said, hello, thanks for having me, as soon as I met the extended family, the brothers and the sisters, I felt accepted.

And right from the beginning, Jenny's parents absolutely loved me. It was great. They thought I was unreal. They thought I was polite and kind and considerate.

They thought Jenny was onto a winner. So did I. Jenny's parents loved me from the beginning. And when Jenny finally broke up with me, her parents were shattered.

They got on the phone and they said goodbye and they told me to stay in touch. Sometimes it's the most unexpected people who accept you. A widow from a pagan Gentile country accepted God when no one in Israel would.

You see, that's what Jesus' history lesson is telling us. A general from an opposing army accepted God when no one in Israel would. That's what Jesus' history lesson is telling us today.

[15 : 26] This passage is a bit surprising, isn't it? It shocks us and it catches us unawares because the most unexpected people accept. accept. And today, the most unexpected people accept.

Just like the other night, we had a youth rally and it was called Contagious and we had 220 youth come along. That was from about six or seven different churches.

And it was an amazing night. It was a fantastic night. The kids loved it. They loved the music. They loved the video advertising that we had for the camp coming up. They loved the speaker, Dave Fuller.

They thought he was fantastic. But the point of the night was for them to invite their non-Christian friends along so that they could hear the Christian message. And so we encouraged the kids to do that.

It was interesting to see that some of them did do it. Some of them did do it. They had the courage to do it. It was fantastic. One in particular was a girl called Jenny who comes to this church. And she's been a Christian for only nine months.

[16 : 33] And she's still young in her faith. She's still learning lots of things about God. But she's keen to share her faith. So she invited a friend along.

And after the night, after the night that we gathered all the response cards from all the kids, and her friend said this, I want to become a Christian.

Please contact me. So I contacted him. You see, isn't that great? You see, I was really surprised. And so I was really excited.

And I told Jenny about this. And she wasn't that surprised. You see, Jenny didn't assume that her friend would reject Jesus. Jenny knew that often it's the most unexpected people who accept. A widow from a pagan Gentile country. Or a general from an opposing army. Or the kids from your school.

[17 : 42] Or the people that you work with. Or the neighbour next door. You see, today we need to change our attitude, don't we? Change our attitude so that this passage doesn't jump up and surprise us and shock us and catch us unawares.

Because those who accept are often the ones we think would reject. We don't want to fall for that. You see, I'd love to see all types of people in this church.

I'd love to see people from every nation worshipping here. I'd love to see heaps of youth at the youth service praising God. I'd love to see your work colleagues listening to the word of God here in this building.

I'd love to see heaps of young families running, with their little kids running around screaming at the top of their lungs during the service. We want to see that, we do.

We want to see as many people here. I'd love to see all the people whom we don't think will be here. And we don't think we expect to be here to be here.

[18 : 55] Because Jesus said, You see, I believe that the unexpected people in our lives will accept.

Because the servant, Jesus, brings good news. He brings the Lord's favour to those sinners.

Because the servant, Jesus, releases them from captivity and oppression of their sin.

Because the servant, Jesus, gives sight to those who are spiritually blind. Because the servant came and he died for them.

And the Holy Spirit has the power to change them. You see, I believe that the unexpected people in our lives will accept if we have a go.

I want you to think for a moment of the most unlikely person in your life who would accept Jesus. I want you to picture them in your mind. Have you got them?

[20 : 18] Do you believe that they will accept Jesus? Jesus? Because I hope your answer is yes, because Jesus' hometown crowd said no.

They said no. When they heard this, all in the synagogue were filled with rage. They got up and they drove him out of the town and they led him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built so that they might hurl him off the cliff.

But he passed through the midst of them and went on his way. Today, don't be like Jesus' hometown crowd.

Don't be like Israel who said no to outsiders. Don't reject his call to reach out to those unexpected people in our lives.

Instead, say yes to those who seem unlikely to accept. Say yes to telling them about the servant, the servant who came to bring them good news and the year of the Lord's favour.

[21 : 28] To the servant who can release them from the captivity and oppression of their sin. The servant who gives them spiritual sight.

Amen. công job out Thank you.