

***Luke 4:16–30 (NIV): He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read, 17 and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:***

***18 “The Spirit of the Lord is on me,  
because he has anointed me  
to proclaim good news to the poor.***

***He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners  
and recovery of sight for the blind,  
to set the oppressed free,***

***19 to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”***

***20 Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. 21 He began by saying to them,  
“Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”***

***22 All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips. Isn’t this Joseph’s son?” they asked.***

***23 Jesus said to them, “Surely you will quote this proverb to me: ‘Physician, heal yourself! And you will tell me, ‘Do here in your hometown what we have heard that you did in Capernaum.’”***

***24 “Truly I tell you,” he continued, “no prophet is accepted in his hometown. 25 I assure you that there were many widows in Israel in Elijah’s time, when the sky was shut for three and a half years and there was a severe famine throughout the land. 26 Yet Elijah was not sent to any of them, but to a widow in Zarephath in the region of Sidon. 27 And there were many in Israel with leprosy in the time of Elisha the prophet, yet not one of them was cleansed—only Naaman the Syrian.”***

***28 All the people in the synagogue were furious when they heard this. 29 They got up, drove him out of the town, and took him to the brow of the hill on which the town was built, in order to throw him off the cliff. 30 But he walked right through the crowd and went on his way.***

There once was a man, whom you’ve probably never heard of before, named Robert Liston. He was a really bad doctor. He was known as the fastest surgeon around. But as he lived in the early 1800s, that really just involved cutting off people’s limbs. There was one memorable day in his life as a famous doctor, that he wanted to be particularly speedy. But in his haste he ended up cutting the fingers of his assistant, and slicing the coattails off of a bystander; the bystander was so terrified that he had a heart attack, and the patient and his assistant both later died of gangrene. It is the only surgery on record with a 300% mortality rate. Robert Liston was a pretty bad doctor. While, Jesus wasn’t a physical doctor, we see that Jesus can be defined as the Good Doctor for two reasons we find in this text that one, while his treatments may be painful, his treatments have a purpose.

### **Treatment is painful:**

Now including myself, a lot of us don’t like going to the doctor. And avoid going there as long as we can. Not because we’re scared of a saw-wielding speed demon surgeon. But for a number of other reasons. The weird smells of the sanitizer, the uncomfortable chairs, and the long wait times are emblematic of a larger reason that we hate it. The doctor usually

involves some sort of pain. There are bones have to be reset, the infection cut away, the bullet pulled out, your body cut open with a blade for a surgery. And it's hard to anticipate that pain and be ok with it. Which is why many times the doctors visits get put off or ignored, which is why doctors sometimes aren't the most popular. Sometimes you even get the occasional "I hate the doctor".

Sort of what happened in Nazareth isn't it? Jesus comes to his hometown and is ultimately rejected. He sort of gets the same statement in actions of "I hate Jesus". He is rejected so intensely that the people of his hometown dragged him outside of the city in order to toss his flailing limbs off of a cliff so they would never have to see or hear from Jesus ever again. They were absolutely furious.

Any particular reason why? It's because Jesus was being the doctor. Let me explain. Jesus had come back home after his Baptism to assume the responsibilities that the Father had established since the time of Isaiah. At the Sabbath worship service he came and read the Scripture to his hometown friends and most likely his family too.

Those people of Nazareth had tried to manipulate Jesus a bit. They wanted Jesus to do and to say the things they wanted. Do for us the things that you did in Capernaum! The things we expect the things that are good, and comfortable, and pleasant. You owe us this on after all, we're your hometown! They had come to the doctor to have them tell them what they wanted. They wanted the famous rabbi Jesus to read, they wanted miracle worker Jesus to do signs, they wanted hometown Jesus to pledge some sort of allegiance to the place where he had been raised to his ethnicity at least.

Jesus had to play doctor, and inflict some painful procedures on those close to him. But Jesus has never had any trouble saying what needs to be said. Jesus never has trouble pulling punches or giving the half truth in order to keep people comfortable. Like a surgeon wielding a scalpel, Jesus lets them know that you don't have any special control or ownership over me. Elijah was sent to a Canaanite. Elisha was sent to a Syrian leper. Like a dentist, pliers in hand he tells them that there were plenty of people who wanted miracles then as you ask me now but you don't tell God what you want. You don't tell God what you need. You don't tell Jesus what is needed. The scripture is fulfilled in your hearing, I am Jesus the Son of God, but what you need is not what you want in this moment.

*That's why Jesus was rejected, that's why they wanted to throw him off a cliff. That's why those people who were in one moment amazed and astounded, turned to vicious murderous intent. They wanted to be coddled, not challenged. They wanted a neighborhood friend not the Son of God. They wanted a casual party with the local magician not the Word of the Lord to pierce the hearts to the core*

Is that something that we do? Do we come to church to be coddled. Do we avoid church or Scripture specifically because it hurts sometimes? I mean honestly, how many of us genuinely come to church with the attitude that we want to be challenged. That we want to sit and let Jesus speak to all our secret faults to poke at our blisters. The burns that need to be grafted with skin. Many times I open the scriptures and I seek not to listen to what God

is pointed and probing at but I end up looking for the parts that make me feel good about myself that don't sting.

We, just like the Nazarenes, try to make Jesus into something that easy. Something that's painless. A cheap feel good story. We turn Jesus into the one who stands in front of the synagogue and teaches about how he supports your issues. How he loves all of our ideas. He supports all of our choices. We turn Jesus into our biggest cheerleader. The one who only says good things about us.

### **Treatment has a purpose:**

Killing three people isn't the only mark of a bad doctor. I mean Dr. Liston was still trying to help save his patient. I would argue that there a lot of other nameless doctors who were far worse than Robert ever was. Because the purpose of a doctor is to find the sickness or the injury and to treat it for the good of the patient, no matter how painful that might be.

That is Jesus purpose. Jesus isn't inflicting wounds for fun. It doesn't bring Christ joy to cause us pain. There is a distinct purpose to when God looks you in the face and challenges you and calls you out. It's to heal. Jesus has to tell you how blind you are before he can give you sight. Jesus has to help you understand that you are in a prison of sin before he can liberate you. Jesus has to make you understand how poor you are before he can show how great and good the news of salvation is. Jesus has to make you understand how bad your oppression is before you know what true favor is.

Jesus came to preach these same truths to the people of Nazareth. He told them about their misplaced focus, not to make them angry, not to simply have an ironic moment where he walks through the crowd after they have asked him for a miracle, but to show them what they really needed: Not a miracle worker, but a Savior. That's the true medicine.

Jesus knows that this message is extremely difficult to handle. This is why he is so often rejected. The great high priest is rejected by the Pharisees. The Son of God rejected by his own two brothers. The Savior rejected by his people. The King rejected by Pontius Pilate . He's rejected because he's telling them the harsh truth of their conditions in his effort to save.

But for those few, who the Holy Spirit enables by that word, he heals. The medicine treatment is painful, but it is effective and has a purpose. The Law always paves the way for the Gospel. The pain from the word of God lead to the healing from the Word of God. The death that the law brings leads to the life from the Gospel.

That's what makes Jesus a good doctor. He has no problem telling you the problems you have, in his efforts to heal them. He has no trouble causing you some pain on his gracious road to save. He has no issue killing your sinful flesh, to lead to life everlasting. Amen.