Jesus' Nazareth Sermon

Deep Prep

Luke 4:16-30; Matthew 13:54-58; Mark 6:1-6

The Big Idea: Jesus fulfills God's promises to the people.

Learning Goal: The promises Jesus outlines and calls "fulfilled" are meant for all people.

This story serves as a bit of a foil to the stories of Jesus' successes in Gentile territory. In Matthew and Mark, the location of the story is unnamed but said to be Jesus' hometown. In Luke the town is named as Nazareth. In the synagogue in his hometown, Jesus announced he was bringing in the kingdom of God and furthering God's mission in the world. Jesus was familiar with the customs of the synagogue and knew the text of the prophet Isaiah.

There is much drama in the unrolling of the scroll. We readers can nearly hear the "drum-roll" and feel the anticipation. The good people of Nazareth might have expected that Jesus would favor his hometown with his greatest works. Jesus' first declaration after the reading—that the scripture had been fulfilled—seemed like a promise of just that. That wasn't what Jesus had in mind, however. He was not about being a sideshow with a stopover in Nazareth. His message and his mission were larger.

It is interesting to notice the change in the crowd as Jesus taught. He read from Isaiah and the very words from this beloved prophet in the mouth of Jesus became a claim: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor....release to the captives... recovery of sight...let the oppressed go free...proclaim the year of the Lord's favor" (Luke 4:18). Good news, to be sure! Originally it was prophetic encouragement to the exiled and oppressed Israelites. The people sitting in the synagogue the day Jesus read it surely knew that the continuation of this oracle painted pictures of Israel enjoying the wealth of nations while "strangers" (Gentiles) served them. Good news, indeed!

Jesus sealed the claim in verse 21 when he said the scripture the people had just heard was fulfilled in their hearing. The Spirit of the Lord is on ME, Jesus said. The crowd was thrilled. They "spoke well of him" and were "amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth." Then things started to go badly.

Jesus began his teaching with the saying "no prophet is accepted in the prophet's hometown." He told the people they would reject him and they did. They were upset because Jesus claimed his calling as the kingdom fulfilled. It was a scandal to them that Jesus claimed such a position. The people of Nazareth were so angered by the first part of Jesus' message that they couldn't hear the rest. Jesus pointed out how people outside Israel had received God's favor even at times when the Israelites could have used it and did not get it. Popular reaction became increasingly hostile. The crowd moved from admiration to offense rather quickly when they were so pointedly reminded that God's generosity and mercy and love were often shown to Gentiles as well. The people of Nazareth first heard Jesus' declaration of God's promises being fulfilled as a guarantee
of God's blessing on them. When Jesus said the good news was not limited to Israel—when he heightened the point by calling their attention to times in history when foreigners sometimes received help while Israel suffered—the people were angry.

The people of Nazareth were not so different from us. How often we hear God's promise as one intended just for us! The townspeople of Nazareth thought they'd receive an unexpected bounty by having Jesus in their midst, but then Jesus told them that the bounty was for everyone. No historic or ethnic boundaries limit God's wondrous work in the world. Jesus interpreted the scriptures differently than those around him (being God's son and all). The town heard the promises in Isaiah as being an exclusive to them. Jesus' insistence on God's radical inclusivity angered them. They were not open to sharing in God's grace and therefore could not, in the end, fully receive it themselves.

We do not limit God's grace. But we try to all the time. Think what God could do if we were open and could allow the human-made boundaries to be joyfully transcended. Think what the world would be like if we embraced the radicality of God's grace instead of taking offense. We are not so different from the people of Nazareth. Let us learn from them.

Quick Prep

Luke 4:16-30; Matthew 13:54-58; Mark 6:1-6

The Big Idea: Jesus fulfills God's promises to the people.

Learning Goal: The promises Jesus outlines and calls "fulfilled" are meant for all people.

- In the synagogue in his hometown, Jesus announced he was bringing in the kingdom of God and furthering God's mission in the world.

- The good people of Nazareth might have expected that Jesus would favor his hometown with his greatest works. That wasn't what Jesus had in mind, however. He was not about being a sideshow with a stopover in Nazareth. His message and his mission were larger.

- Jesus' teaching pointed out how people outside Israel had received God's favor even at times when the Israelites could have used it and did not get it.

- Nazareth heard the promises in Isaiah as being an exclusive to them. Jesus' insistence on God's radical inclusivity angered them.

- The people of Nazareth were not so different from us. How often we hear God's promise as one intended just for us!

Adolescent Connection

Jesus' powerful message that he had come to fulfill scripture is a proclamation that his own community could not accept. Youth can relate to this concept because often when they achieve something there are peers who will reject them. Jealousy is a prime motivator for putting someone down and mocking him or her. The people in Jesus' own community wouldn't believe he
came from God. After all, he was part of them, how dare he make a claim to be the fulfillment of that prophecy? Youth may be heralded by adults, and youth from other communities, but often they are ridiculed by their own. There is something innate in many people that cannot accept someone they know to be better, excel greater, or become more than the rest of them. The important thing for youth to acknowledge is that they know inside themselves that they have accomplished something to be proud of even when peers do not.

Baptismal Connection

In the Rite of Affirmation of Baptism, a five-part question addresses each confirmand's intent to continue in the covenant God made with them in Holy Baptism. Here We Stand resources help adolescents—with support from parents, leaders, and the entire congregation—prepare to answer this question as they continue in their lifelong faith journey. Today's lesson focuses on the clause "to live among God's faithful people" (Lutheran Book of Worship, page 201; Evangelical Lutheran Worship, page 236).

Welcoming

Prepare your large group space by playing upbeat music in the background and by welcoming learners as they arrive. Make a special effort to welcome and thank adult small group leaders for their presence and for being willing to help pass on the faith to the next generation.

• Begin by thanking learners for coming! Remind the group what a privilege you feel it is to serve God by leading confirmation, and what a gift from God you consider all of them to be.

• Ask learners to recall last week's Big Idea if they can. Reward the first person to get it right with a handful of candy or some other small treat to share with their small group. (Be aware of any food allergies in the group.) Ask for a volunteer to capture last week's lesson in their own words; affirm all genuine responses; keep going until you're satisfied everyone has been oriented.

• Project this week's Big Idea on the screen or write it in HUGE block letters on your presentation board or overhead slide. Invite learners to recite it with you aloud. Repeat it two or three times.

Skit: Once Upon a Time

Ask or assign a small group to perform the skit. In a pinch, grab enough volunteers from the audience to form an impromptu "readers' theater" troupe.

CHARACTERS: Cinderella, Winifred, Clarisse, Stepmother, Prince

PROPS: chairs, book or cross-stitch, suitcases

(Winifred, Clarisse, and Stepmother are sitting on chairs on stage. Stepmother is reading a book or doing cross-stitch, and Winifred and Clarisse are primping. Cinderella walks in with her Prince. They have a couple of suitcases.)
CINDERELLA: Hello? I'm home!

PRINCE: We finally made it! Wow! Those ice storms are awful!

(Winifred, Clarisse, and Stepmother sit as if nothing is happening.)

CINDERELLA: Oh! There you are!

(Cinderella hugs each one of them as she is saying her line.)

CINDERELLA: Oh! It is so good to see you, Winifred!

WINIFRED: (No reaction to hug.) Oh. It must be Cinderella. Good. Maybe she can mend my dress.

CINDERELLA: (Ignoring the comment, still happy.) Stepmother! Oh, I have missed you and your cooking!

STEPMOTHER: (Stiffens when hugged.) Cinderella...I can't see my cross-stitch when you do that.

CINDERELLA: (Still genuinely happy.) And Clarisse! Oh, I've missed you, too!

CLARISSE: (Very dry and superior.) I've missed you, too. I've had to clean the fireplace when you were gone.

CINDERELLA: Oh! Clarisse, everyone, that reminds me! My prince and I have recently come into a large amount of money.

PRINCE: Of course we already had a large amount of money, but we have even more now.

STEPMOTHER: Well, I can't imagine why I want to keep hearing you chatter about it, but you can leave the money on the mantel and then go clean the fireplace.

PRINCE: (To Cinderella.) Really, Cinderella, this is ridiculous, let's go to my family for Christmas, I don't know why you want to keep coming back.

CINDERELLA: Shhh. They are my family, Prince. Now, Stepmother, Clarisse, Winifred....

WINIFRED: (Looks up surprised.) Wha...? Did someone say my name? (Realizes it was Cinderella.) Oh. (Goes back to primping.)

CINDERELLA: We've made a fortune because I discovered electricity and have devised a way to harness its power. Cleaning is a snap now! And for Christmas, I'm going to run electricity to your house and give you brand new brushed stainless steel appliances!

WINIFRED: Cleaning is a snap anyway when you do it for us, Cinderella.
CLARISSE: Yes. I agree. Anything you invented would probably just be sooty anyway.

PRINCE: Now hold on!

(Prince starts towards the family, but Cinderella stops him.)

CINDERELLA: No, Prince. Let's just go. (To family.) The appliances will be installed tonight. I truly hope you'll enjoy them.

WINIFRED: Mother, don't let her install any appliances here. Brushed stainless steel will never be in fashion.

CLARISSE: Don't let her give us any electricity either. I don't like the way that word sounds.

STEPSMOTHER: Heavens no, children. Don't worry, we'll send the dogs after her next time she tries to come back.

CINDERELLA: (Sighs.) Okay, Prince. Let's go. Let's see if the neighbors want the appliances.

(Prince and Cinderella exit.)

Quiz Show

Use these questions for both options.

Face-off

Have two small groups face-off in a test of knowledge that helps you teach the theme of the day!
Get the groups up front and pose the following questions. The first to "buzz in" gets to answer, and the team with the most correct responses wins!

Partners

Ask the students to get a partner and form teams of two. Pose the questions and let each team member give his or her answer to the partner. Partners discuss their responses and come up with a team response. See which team gets the most correct answers.

1. Jesus' hometown was...
   a. Nazareth. (*Correct.*)
   b. Jerusalem.
   c. Rome.
   d. Capernaum.

2. True or false: Jesus performed his best miracles in his hometown. (*False. He could do little there because the people couldn't accept that he was God's Son.*)
3. In the temple, what did Jesus read the scriptures from?
   a. A very heavy Bible.
   b. He didn't. He knew them all by heart.
   c. A scroll. (Correct.)
   d. A PowerPoint® projection.

4. True or false: Jesus said that the prophecy he was reading in the scripture was actually being fulfilled in him. (True.)

5. Who was to receive God's favor, according to Jesus' teaching?
   a. The people of Nazareth.
   b. The Israelites.
   c. Foreigners.
   d. All of the above. (Correct.)

6. True or false: The people of Nazareth tried to throw Jesus off a cliff. (True.)

7. How did Jesus escape from being thrown off the cliff?
   a. There was a giant trampoline, and he bounced over to the other side.
   b. His brothers intervened and saved his life.
   c. We don't know. He just passed through the midst of them and went on his way. (Correct.)
   d. God struck those involved with lightening and they died.

8. Which word best describes God's generosity, mercy, and love?
   a. Inclusive. (Correct.)
   b. Exclusive.

**Presenter's Interruptions**

Keep this menu of short theme-related bits at the ready for those moments when you feel you're losing your audience.

- Shout "Stop!" and throw your hands up in the air. Write a list on the board of all the towns in which people in the group have lived. Give a piece of candy to the one who has lived the farthest away. Remind the learners that though Jesus never lived very far away from his hometown, his life and death have had an impact on people all around the world.
- Shout "Stop!" or give a blast on your whistle. Ask all those who got an "A" on an exam in school the past two weeks to raise their hands. Now hand out a piece of candy to all those who didn't raise their hands. Talk about how God's generosity and mercy and love were often shown to those who weren't the "winners." Then give those remaining a piece of candy as well, reminding them that God's love is for everyone.
- Shout "Stop" and quickly hand out slips of paper to each person. Have them write down one or
two ways they'd like to see God's promises fulfilled today. Take a minute to have the learners share some of their ideas with the large group.

Opening Prayer

Ask for a volunteer to read the opening prayer. Then ask the learners to close their eyes, breathe deeply, and listen while the volunteer reads.

Dear God, sometimes you don't always give us what we expect. Help us to be open and surprised by how big your grace is. Amen

My Faith Story

Talk about a time when you expected special treatment from someone you knew, and got it. For example: getting the Friends & Family discount from a friend who works at a hotel, being allowed to hunt on your cousin's property for free, being moved to the front of the line because your sister is the cashier, and so forth. Contrast your story with the Bible story for the day. The people in Jesus' hometown thought they would be getting special treatment because Jesus had grown up among them, but it wasn't so. The message Jesus is bringing is that God's grace is for all people, not just those who think they have some "inside connection."

Guest Speaker

Is there someone from your town who has been quite successful and is admired within and beyond your community? Invite him or her, if possible, to talk about his or her hometown experiences. Brief the person on the story of Jesus' Nazareth experience so he or she knows the context of your lesson. How are people's expectations of him or her different now? How has he or she dealt with any jealousy from community members or old friends? Another option would be to invite in the person's family member who still lives in your town, or talk to the "famous" person on speakerphone with your class.

Cartoon Connection: What to Pour on Those Who Are Poor

The Funny Shape of Faith, page 42

This sign doesn't seem too different from the "White Washroom" "Colored Washroom" ones people encountered less than 50 years ago. How little has changed in two thousand years! And yet, God knows our human failings—our tendency towards selfishness and egoism. God knows that we tend to separate ourselves from those who are different from us, and that somehow we think we deserve better than someone else. Just who do we think we are? Jesus showed again and again that God's extravagant welcome is for everyone. Poor and rich, fisherman and priest, leper
and doctor...all are welcome at God's table!

Encourage your young people to talk about the people of today who are on the margins of society. How do we participate in continuing their segregation? How can we work to overcome it?

Handbook Connection

Ask your learners to open their copy of *The Lutheran Handbook* to "The Three Most Rebellious Things Jesus Did" (page 156.) Have a volunteer read the first item. Interrupt at the end of the title, and ask all learners to circle "hometown." As the volunteer continues to read, interrupt and ask the learners to underline "Nazareth." Have the volunteer finish reading, and ask learners to put parentheses around "foreigners" and draw an arrow to the margin. Have them write "Gentiles." Ask the students to raise their hand if they think they are a Gentile. Explain that Gentile means anyone who is not of the Jewish nation or the Jewish faith.

Have learners find the map "The Holy Land—New Testament Times" (page 179) in *The Lutheran Handbook*. Have them locate Nazareth and highlight it with a highlighter pen. Then have them highlight Capernaum and draw a line between the two. These are the first two towns mentioned in the Gospel of Luke where Jesus goes to teach. Ask students how far they think it is between Nazareth and Capernaum. *(About 20 miles.)* Talk about how people got from place to place in Jesus' time. *(Common people—including Jesus and his followers—traveled on foot, by boat, or on common animals like donkeys. Wealthy people might have had a horse and carriage.)*

Bible Connection: A Hero's Welcome

• Have the following signs ready with a volunteer to hold each one: polite applause, standing ovation, grumbling, and angry mob. Have the four volunteers stand in front of the group (signs held down) while you read aloud Luke 4:14-30. Stop after the following verses, and motion for the appropriate sign to be held up. Encourage the audience to participate in the "drama."

  verse 15, polite applause

  verse 20, polite applause

  verse 22, standing ovation

  verse 26, grumbling

  verse 29, angry mob

Thank the volunteers and have them return to their seats. Lead the group in a discussion about the

Jesus' Nazareth Sermon page 8
passage, using the following questions: What were the people of Nazareth expecting from Jesus? *(That he would favor his hometown with his greatest works.)* After Jesus read the scripture, he declared that it was being fulfilled in him. The people of Nazareth thought God's favor was meant for whom? *(Them—the people of Israel only.)* But Jesus actually intended God's favor to be for whom? *(People outside Israel as well. Gentiles. In fact, Jesus pointed out in the stories of Elijah and Elisha that sometimes in history foreigners received help while Israel suffered.)* Why do you think this made the people of Nazareth so angry? *(Answers may vary, but selfishness may be a leading answer. We tend to think of God's grace in a limited quantity, therefore if an outsider has it too, there's less for us. But God's grace doesn't work that way. There are no limits in quantity and no boundaries. Also, the Nazarenes may have been angry because they were indicted by their own scripture when Jesus used the stories of Elijah and Elisa to show God's favor to non-Jews.)*

**More Bible Connections**

- Break into two groups and have the students read the parallel stories of Jesus' Nazareth sermon in Matthew 13:54-58 and Mark 6:1-6. What differences do they notice from the Luke version?
- Isaiah 61:1-2 and 58:6 are the scripture passages from the prophet Isaiah that Jesus quotes in Luke 4. Originally this was prophetic encouragement to the exiled and oppressed Israelites. The people sitting in the synagogue whom Jesus was teaching that day would have known that the continuation of this oracle in Isaiah paints a picture of Israel enjoying the wealth of nations while "strangers" (Gentiles) served them. How surprised then, were the people in the synagogue when Jesus says he has come to fulfill this scripture, but with a different ending! They wanted the riches of God to themselves, but now Jesus was saying it is for all people, even those who are supposed to be the servants!

**Object Lesson: May I Have the Scroll, Please?**

Prepare a scroll prior to your teaching time. Tape or glue the short ends of a 1 yard (1 meter) x 1 foot (30 cm) strip of paper to two dowels or smooth sticks. Roll the ends toward one another. On the paper, print one or more of the Bible readings for the day, or tape another piece of paper inside the scroll with the readings on it. Have a parent or adult leader waiting outside the room with the scroll, preferably in a biblical-period costume. When the time comes for the Bible readings during your teaching time, ask the students to start a drumroll. Have the person enter with the scroll, and with much drama, have the guest "teacher" unroll it for the Bible reading. *(The scroll should be held with the dowels vertical, not horizontal.)* Have all the learners stand during the Bible reading, then sit for the teaching time, as was the temple custom.

Talk to the learners about how there were no books during Jesus' day. Anything written was on a scroll made of leather or papyrus, neither of which was very durable. The oldest known scrolls with copies of biblical writings are believed to be the Dead Sea Scrolls, which date from between 100 B.C. to 125 A.D. They were discovered in caves near the Dead Sea in 1947. Pass the scroll around so all participants can have a chance to open it.

**Science Connection: Magnetic Force**

Jesus' Nazareth Sermon page 9
In advance of this lesson, assemble the following items and read through this experiment.

Strong horseshoe-shaped magnet
Iron filings (check with an auto repair shop to see if you can collect their iron filings from brake repairs)
Sheet of copy paper

When Jesus spent time in the temple, he was called upon to teach. At first, this surprised people! This son of Joseph and Mary was teaching as one who really knew something, and in the temple too! But as Jesus continued to teach after the time in Nazareth, people were drawn to him and his words about God.

Magnetic force is something that we know exists, although we can't always see it. This experiment can show the force and the field lines of magnetism.

Place the horseshoe magnet in the center of the table, and lay the copy paper on top of it. Gently shake the iron filings onto the paper. What happens? Do the filings move in a certain pattern or direction?

Tap the paper lightly to rearrange and move the filings to really show the curved lines and the direction of the magnetic force. Amazing!

The words that Jesus taught, and that we read in the Bible even today, can change the direction of the way that people think, and can even change the world!

Video/DVD: Protecting What's Important

Option 1: The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe

Provide the movie The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe (2005, PG).

Start Cue: (Chapter 4, 00:23:44) Lucy and a faun, Mr. Tumnus, stop running. They crouch by a lamp post in the snowy woods. Lucy asks, "Will you be all right?"
End Cue: (Chapter 5, 00:28:55) Edmund falls out of the wardrobe into Narnia. He calls for Lucy.

When Jesus returned to his hometown, his friends and neighbors were skeptical. How could this local kid be the one who would fulfill God's promises? In this film clip, Lucy has just discovered the magical world of Narnia on the other side of the wardrobe doors. After her new friend, Mr. Tumnus, helps her escape from the evil White Witch, Lucy rushes to tell her siblings of her adventure. But, to her dismay, they just don't buy it.

• What would you think if your next-door neighbor told you that she had experienced something unbelievable (like a visit with an angel, or a conversation with a burning bush)?

Jesus' Nazareth Sermon page 10
• What were the Jews expecting from the Messiah? Why did they doubt that Jesus could be the one they were waiting for?
• What things about God do you have a hard time believing?

Please preview this content to determine its appropriateness for your setting.

Option 2: National Treasure

Provide the movie National Treasure (2004, PG).

Start cue: (Chapter 3, 0:22) A bird's-eye view of Washington D.C.'s national monuments.
End cue: "If it's any consolation, you had me convinced."

Ben Gates's family has been hunting for a legendary treasure for centuries. When his search uncovers a plot to steal the Declaration of Independence, he has trouble convincing anyone of this threat.

• What does Dr. Chase think of Ben's extraordinary claims?
• What extraordinary "claims" did Jesus make when he preached in the synagogue?

Please preview this content to determine its appropriateness for your setting.

Option 3: Dr. Dolittle 2

Provide the movie Dr. Dolittle 2 (2001, PG).

Start cue: (Chapter 20, 1:05) Dr. Dolittle questions the weasel in the forest. "Did you see anything or not?!"
End cue: "Motion to extend denied!"

Dr. Dolittle's ability to converse with animals is his only hope for saving the forest from urban developers and for defending Archie, a bear who's been falsely accused of ransacking the local market. Unfortunately, not many people are going to believe the testimony of Dolittle's key witness—a weasel who saw what actually happened.

• When is a time you chose to stand strong against ridicule and criticism? How did it make you feel?
• Why do you think it was difficult for Jesus' community to accept the idea that he was the fulfillment of scripture?

Please preview this content to determine its appropriateness for your setting.

NOTE: Consult Christian Video Licensing International at Motion Picture Licensing Corporation (1.800.462.8855 or www.mplc.com) for its umbrella licensing program covering the use of videos/DVDs or video/DVD clips in any public gathering.
Music: Grace to You

Option 1: "The Real Me"

Provide the song "The Real Me" by Natalie Grant (from *Awaken*, Curb Records, 2005).

The sermon Jesus shared in Nazareth is powerfully thought-provoking. He opened the door to criticism and anger from his hometown crowd by talking about caring for all people, not just those from Nazareth. In the thought-provoking song "The Real Me," Natalie Grant explores what it feels like to live as if in a charade, with only Jesus knowing who the real person is inside. Jesus knew very well who the people from Nazareth were; he knew that they would not accept his message. He also knew that he needed to teach and preach and love all people, no matter what parts of themselves they decided to show the world.

- How do you know that Jesus loves you and cares for you?
- Do you ever feel like you act one way on the outside and feel another way on the inside? If so, why do you think that happens?

*Please preview this content to determine its appropriateness for your setting.*

Option 2: "One"

Provide the song "One" by U2 (from *Achtung Baby*, Universal-Island Records Ltd., 1991).

Jesus believed and preached about how important it was to love and accept all people, even when he knew that this message would not be well-received. In this classic U2 song, Bono sings of how essential it is that all people in the world love and care for each other. The lyrics also talk about how we do love each other at times, but we choose to go on hurting each other anyway because we don't nurture and care for that love.

- How does the message Jesus shared with the people of Nazareth so long ago still affect the world and its people today?
- How does the message of Jesus affect you in your own life?

*Please preview this content to determine its appropriateness for your setting.*

Option 3: "Believe"

Play the song "Believe" by Lenny Kravitz (from *Lenny Kravitz Greatest Hits*, Virgin Records, 2000).

Rejected by his own community, Jesus could have easily given up in frustration. Instead he embraced his identity as Savior, prophet, and Jew—and in the process fulfilled his promises to the people, especially those who were poor. All that was left for the people to do was believe and follow, which is a spiritual act of opening the eyes: "The son of God is in our face / offering us eternal grace."
• How does Jesus' belief in himself and his ministry serve as an example for us in today's world? What are some things that we can learn from how Jesus handles roadblocks and challenges of all sorts?

• How do you handle rejection? Looking at Jesus' life, how can you derive comfort and inspiration in times of feeling left out or turned away?

Please note: This song has multiple versions, some of which may have a parental advisory warning on the label. If the song selection is not suitable for your group, please consider one of the other options for this lesson.

Learning in Motion: Following the Custom

According to Jewish custom, one stood to read scripture but sat down to teach. Follow this custom, and have your learners stand and sit as you do. You may even want to clear the room of chairs, as there wouldn't have been chairs as we know them in the temple in Jesus' day. Have participants sit on the floor while you sit on a simple bench for your teaching time.

Closing Questions

Consider starting the Closing Time with a "Stump the Presenter!" moment in which learners may ask you questions that have come up during their small group discussions, but for which they want further explanation. This gives the small group leaders an "honorable out" when they get into sticky theological territory, and it's a great way to start out your final minutes together.

If there are no "Stump the Presenter!" questions, tickle learners with one or more of the following questions to connect Small Group Time with the larger conversation:

• How do you see God fulfilling God's promises today?

• If Jesus brought the fulfillment of the kingdom of God, why is there still so much suffering, injustice, and hate in the world today?

Closing Ritual

Ask a learner to read the leader parts in the closing ritual.

L: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

L: Let us pray. Dear God, thank you that you give us grace that we don't always expect or deserve. Help us to share your love with others who aren't expecting it either. Amen.
Closing Blessing

Before anyone leaves to go home, make sure each learner receives the following blessing from the small group leader, or from you! (Or, if you like, consider writing your own blessing, based on your teaching time.) Have leaders trace the cross on each learner's forehead as they say the blessing.

God's promises are meant for you, too. Go now in peace in the name of the Father +, and the Son +, and Holy Spirit +. Amen
Small Group Leader Sheet: Jesus' Nazareth Sermon

Instructions

Make sure each learner has a Learner Sheet for use during your discussion. At the end of the lesson they can take the Learner Take-Home Sheet to use with their household at dinner or bedtime.

Be sure to start on a positive note. Welcome each learner by name. Let them know you're glad they're here! If anyone is absent, mention you'll be praying for that person together. Small Group Time is for give-and-take discussion. Your main job is to draw learners out and get them talking about the theme. Ask open-ended questions that will provoke responses. Once the conversation begins, intervene only to bring it back on track or to stimulate more talk.

Quick Prep

Luke 4:16-30; Matthew 13:54-58; Mark 6:1-6

The Big Idea: Jesus fulfills God's promises to the people.

Learning Goal: The promises Jesus outlines and calls "fulfilled" are meant for all people.

• In the synagogue in his hometown, Jesus announced he was bringing in the kingdom of God and furthering God's mission in the world.

• The good people of Nazareth might have expected that Jesus would favor his hometown with his greatest works. That wasn't what Jesus had in mind, however. He was not about being a sideshow with a stopover in Nazareth. His message and his mission were larger.

• Jesus' teaching pointed out how people outside Israel had received God's favor even at times when the Israelites could have used it and did not get it.

• Nazareth heard the promises in Isaiah as being an exclusive to them. Jesus' insistence on God's radical inclusivity angered them.

• The people of Nazareth were not so different from us. How often we hear God's promise as one intended just for us!

Prayer Time

Go around the group and have each learner share the best and worst thing from his or her week. Remind learners to pay special attention to (for example) the person on their right, as they will be praying for that person in a moment (alternate prayer partners from week to week). When the group has finished, prayer partners can pray for each other.

Key Words

NAZARETH is Jesus' hometown.
JEWS are descendants of Abraham, sometimes called the people of Israel; also a person who follows the Jewish faith.

GENTILE is anyone who is not of the Jewish nation or the Jewish faith.

PROPHECY is a declaration of God's will or purpose, or a prediction of something to come.

FULFILLMENT is when something predicted in scripture becomes true in a person or event.

Discussion Time

Use the following questions to kick off a conversation about the theme:

• Can you think of a time when you were upset because you thought something would be given exclusively to you, but it turned out many others were included? (Answers will vary.)

• Open your Bible to the story of Jesus' Nazareth sermon in Luke 4:16-30. Focus on verses 18-19. Write on a piece of paper or a white board the promises Jesus says are fulfilled in him. (Bringing good news to the poor, release to the captive, recovery of sight to the blind, the oppressed go free, the year of the Lord's favor.) Talk about specific ways each of these might be fulfilled in our world today.

• Look at the map on page 179 in The Lutheran Handbook. Jesus' ministry took place in a relatively small geographic area, during a relatively short period of time. How can it have had such an impact on the world ever since and still be having an impact on us today? (Accept all answers, and use these ideas to further conversation: Jesus is God's son, and he brought the radical message that God's love and mercy are for all people, not just a certain people in a certain time and place. Jesus showed that God doesn't work according to our pre-conceived ideas, but constantly surprises us with the expansive reach of God's love, a love that reaches all the way to us today.)

Big Fun Idea

Take photos of people at church and make a big collage out of them. Add pictures from magazines or other stock photo sources. On the top write the title "God's promises are meant for..." Hang the poster in a high-traffic spot in your church for a week; then keep it displayed in your small group room after that.

Big Serving Idea

Your group can bring good news to the poor by being a voice for them. Contact an organization (like Bread for the World) that advocates for hungry people. Find out how you can write a letter to a policy maker, urging them to increase funding for programs that seek to eradicate hunger.
Funny Shape of Faith Small Group Devotions: Jesus' Nazareth Sermon

Have a volunteer read the devotion that corresponds with this cartoon: "What to Pour on Those Who Are Poor," *The Funny Shape of Faith: Devotions for the Rest of Us* (Augsburg Fortress, 2007), p. 43. Then use the following questions to spark group discussion.

How would you rewrite the sign?

Think about how the biblical image of Christ as "living water" contrasts with images of forsaken humanity as dry bones, ashes and dust, or Lot's wife becoming a pillar of salt. Where else do images of water depict God's power, and dryness depict the predicament of the human spirit?

Imagine that you are the supervisor of the person who put up the sign. What would you say to your employee? How can you teach your employee about "living water"?
Learner Sheet: Jesus' Nazareth Sermon

Luke 4:16-30; Matthew 13:54-58; Mark 6:1-6

The Big Idea: Jesus fulfills God's promises to the people.

Big Fun Idea

Take photos of people at church and make a big collage out of them. Add pictures from magazines or other stock photo sources. On the top write the title "God's promises are meant for..." Hang the poster in a high-traffic spot in your church for a week; then keep it displayed in your small group room after that.

Big Serving Idea

Your group can bring good news to the poor by being a voice for them. Contact an organization (like Bread for the World) that advocates for hungry people. Find out how you can write a letter to a policy maker, urging them to increase funding for programs that seek to eradicate hunger.

Prayer Time

Remember your partner's prayer needs—record them here.

Discussion Time

• Can you think of a time when you were upset because you thought something would be given exclusively to you, but it turned out many others were included?

• Open your Bible to the story of Jesus' Nazareth sermon in Luke 4:16-30. Focus on verses 18-19. Write on a piece of paper or a white board the promises Jesus says are fulfilled in him. Talk about specific ways each of these might be fulfilled in our world today.

• Look at the map on page 179 in The Lutheran Handbook. Jesus' ministry took place in a relatively small geographic area, during a relatively short period of time. How can it have had such an impact on the world ever since and still be having an impact on us today?
Learner Take-Home Sheet: Jesus' Nazareth Sermon

Luke 4:16-30; Matthew 13:54-58; Mark 6:1-6

Take this sheet home and keep it someplace near the dinner table, like on the fridge. At least three times next week at dinner, use Prayer Time and one other family activity to make your confirmation learning come alive!

Prayer Time

Invite God into your presence as you pray this prayer together and reflect on how God's promises are given to all people.

Dear God, thank you for fulfilling your promises in Jesus Christ. Help us to be open to your grace, which comes even to those we don't think deserve it. Amen

Key Words

Keep a family white board someplace near the dinner table, and write these words on it. Try writing a family definition for each one during the week.

NAZARETH

JEWS

GENTILE

PROPHECY

FULFILLMENT

Talk Time

• Think of some people or groups of people your family considers "outsiders" today (for example, people who follow a different religion or political party). What would the world be like if we believed God's grace was for them, too? What would have to happen to make that a reality?

• The promises Jesus fulfills bring good news to the poor, the captives, the blind, and the oppressed. Who might these groups include that expands upon their literal meaning? (The blind might mean those who only see hate in the world, not God's goodness.) What is one way your family is bringing, or could bring, good news to people in one of these groups?

• Is there a special favor your family usually gives to someone? How could you give that to someone you don't normally include? (Give money to a struggling mission congregation in addition to your own church.)

Web Time
Gather around the computer and do a search around the word hunger. See what kind of sites come up. Which seek to feed hungry people? Which advocate for change to public policy to end hunger? Are there any organizations you've heard of before? Talk as a family about what criteria you should use to determine which organizations to support.

Ritual Time

As a family, write down all the people or groups you pray would receive God's grace. Say a prayer together, passing around the list and having each person read one name or group.
Video 1 (High Resolution): Promises, Promises!

*Media file: JesusNazarethSermon.mov*

A young woman leans against a tree as she enjoys her new Shins CD. When her friend begs to borrow it, she reminds him that he is not so great at returning things. He promises to return it the next day, so she gives it to him. You can probably guess what happens when she asks him to for it the next morning.

• On a scale of 1 (low) to 10 (high), how good are you at actually doing what you say you're going to do?

• On a scale of 1 to 10, how good is God at keeping promises?

• How many Old Testament prophecies and promises can you name that Jesus fulfilled (sometimes in unexpected ways)?
Video 1 (Low Resolution): Promises, Promises!

*Media file: JesusNazarethSermon.mp4*

A young woman leans against a tree as she enjoys her new Shins CD. When her friend begs to borrow it, she reminds him that he is not so great at returning things. He promises to return it the next day, so she gives it to him. You can probably guess what happens when she asks him to for it the next morning.

• On a scale of 1 (low) to 10 (high), how good are you at actually doing what you say you're going to do?

• On a scale of 1 to 10, how good is God at keeping promises?

• How many Old Testament prophecies and promises can you name that Jesus fulfilled (sometimes in unexpected ways)?
Christians today sometimes forget that Jesus was quite a puzzle to his contemporaries. He had grown up with these people—worked, played, and worshiped with them. No wonder the church leaders were concerned when this local guy claimed to be the fulfillment of Scripture! But Jesus' life, death, and resurrection supported the claims he made in the temple as he brought healing and freedom to all.

Jesus quotes Isaiah 61:1-2 in his Nazareth sermon. What promises does this passage make about the Messiah? *(He will preach good news; bring freedom and hope and healing.)* How did Jesus fulfill these promises? *(Consider Jesus' encounters with the "lost" and sick in Luke 4:31-44; 5:12-26; 6:20-49; 7:11-15, 36-50; and 11:1-19:10.)* Look around the room. How easy or difficult would it be to believe if one of the people here claimed to be someone else? Why? What would that change about the way you understand everyday life around you?
Music Clip: Come As You Are

Media file: JesusNazarethSermon.mp3

Song: "All Are Welcome"
CD: Many Rooms (www.hiphopoutreach.com)
Artist: Agape
© 2002 Hip Hop Outreach / Dave Scherer

It says in Bible that all are welcome
All are welcome in the Bible to the table to eat
Come as you are
All are welcome
Come as you are

The message here echoes how Jesus extends love and profound promises to all, especially the poor. Think how controversial this must have been in Christ's day, when there was a clear dividing line between the Pharisees and the "common" people. It's still controversial today, at a time when the rich are insulated from the poor and social justice in North America is questionable at best.

• Jesus reaches out to all, even though his own community rejects him. How does this paradox highlight his standing as the Son of God?
• What does it mean to "Come as you are"? When do you feel comfortable enough to do that? When don't you?

Note: You can purchase the CD featuring this song from the Augsburg Fortress online store (www.augsburgfortress.org).
This presentation includes a video file and an audio file. All three (the presentation, the video, and the audio) will download at once as a ZIP archive. Unzipping the archive will produce a single folder containing all three files. For the presentation to work properly, the files must all be in the same folder; therefore, we recommend you not remove them from the folder produced when you unzip the archive, but rather move the entire folder as a single unit.

Media file: JesusNazarethSermon.zip
Cartoon

Media file: JesusNazarethSermon.tif

From HERE WE STAND Confirmation Series. Copyright 2009 Augsburg Fortress. All rights reserved. Reprinted by permission under Here We Stand Annual License.