

**JESUS: Rejected”**  
**Luke 4: 16-30**

**14** Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit,  
and news about him spread through the whole countryside.  
**15** He was teaching in their synagogues, and everyone praised him.  
**16** 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.

**Introduction**

He’s simply known as *Brother Andrew*. Andrew Van Der Bijl was born in Holland in 1928, now 90 years old. He was raised in the Dutch Reformed Church. After barely surviving World War II, Andrew discovered the need that the church behind the Iron Curtain had for Bibles. Between 1955 and 1966, he personally “smuggled” thousands of Bibles into the old Soviet bloc.

In 1981, his *Open Doors* organization planned to bring one million Bibles into China. Believers in China faced an immense task with huge risks.

Brother Andrew sent Joseph, a Chinese team member, to meet with five key house-church leaders. Joseph asked them, “Do you know how much space one million Bibles take up?” They said they have already prepared storage places. “Do you know what could happen to you if you were caught with even a portion of these Bibles?”

“Joseph, all five of us have been in prison for the Lord,” they told him. “All together, we’ve spent 72 years in jail for Jesus. We are willing to die if it means that a million brothers and sisters can have a copy of God’s word.” With tears in his eyes, Joseph folded up his long list of questions and put it away.

Whether it is risking our life or risking our reputation, serving the gospel requires courage. Brother Andrew and *Open Doors* continue their risk taking and ministry, bringing Bibles to believers who live in oppressive environments, especially in predominantly Muslim countries today. You can read some incredible stories at [opendoorsusa.org](http://opendoorsusa.org).

### **I. Jesus Leaves and Comes Back Home (vs. 16-22)**

Jesus knew the risks of sharing the truth of God’s word in his world. He grew up in Roman-occupied Palestine. He knew how the religious leaders of his day had consolidated their power and hold on the people. What he had to say and do would challenge both groups as he reveals the emptiness of pagan life as well as the hypocrisy of religiosity.

Jesus grew up in his father’s construction shop as a stone mason and carpenter. Now at about 30 years old, it was time for him to take the risks that he knew would be his purpose in God’s plan.

He went out to the Judean wilderness and Jordan River and was baptized by John. “You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased,” came the voice from heaven. Then the Spirit led Jesus into the desert for a time of prayer and fasting. Now he returns to Galilee to preach, teach and heal. It says that news about him spread through the whole countryside. When good things happen in your life of faith, news about Jesus also should spread. And you don’t have to smuggle the good news for others to hear.

In our passage this morning “Jesus went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom.” Most synagogue services had

a reading from the Law and one from the Prophets, with an explanation, a teaching on their meaning.

It was Jesus' turn to read and preach. The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found Isaiah 61. After reading it he sat down and began saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me." Jesus was claiming to be the royal figure with prophetic mission, indeed the promised Messiah. "To preach good news to the poor; he has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners," to heal the brokenhearted, to help all those discouraged with their plight in life. "Recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, the Jubilee." Jesus offers forgiveness for sins, God's light and life in the midst of darkness and death, total cancellation of spiritual debt with a new beginning for all who respond to his message. Sing: "Debts forgiven, slaves set free, Jesus is our Jubilee" (song setting by Michael Card).

After this amazing synagogue meeting, "everyone spoke well of Jesus and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips." Who could criticize good news to the poor, freedom and release? And yet he is claiming that the day for the fulfillment of this Messianic promise is here – today! "The Spirit of the Lord is on me!"

The doubts immediately begin. "Isn't this Joseph's son?" Surely a humble carpenter's son cannot be the central figure in God's plan, especially with all the rumor and talk about the legitimacy of his birth!

## **II. Jesus Challenges the Hometown People (vs. 23-27)**

You think Jesus would just leave it alone and go on. But no, he challenges them. He took the risk of identifying himself as Messiah and now he furthers the risk by challenging their motives and their faithfulness. "Surely you will quote this proverb to me, 'Physician, heal yourself!' Do here in your hometown what we have heard that you did in Capernaum." Remember the devil's temptation in the desert? "If you are the Son of God, prove it!" Let's see a miracle. Prove your claim to be Messiah today. During his holy week arrest, we will hear those guarding Jesus say as they blindfold, mock and beat him, "Prophecy, now! Who hit you this time?" (Luke 22:63). During the crucifixion the people watching sneered at Jesus, "He saved others, let him save himself if he is the Christ of God, the Chosen One" (Luke 23:35).

Jesus said to his family and friends in Nazareth, “I tell you the truth. No one is accepted in his hometown.” He goes on to point out how two great prophets did nothing to help and heal Israel in the times of their greatest disobedience and need. Instead, Elijah ministered to a widow in Zarephath; Elisha reached out to a leper, Naaman the Syrian – both gentiles!

What angered the people was the apparent compliment Jesus made to gentiles. This hometown crowd was sure that they alone were God’s people and they utterly despised the others. They had been taught that quote, “God had created the gentiles to be fuel for the fires of hell.”

Not only do they want to run him out of town, but they even want to throw him down a cliff, the cliff that overlooked so much of Israel’s proud history and identity.

### **Conclusion**

Pastor Bakhrom Kholmatov was detained by police in Tajikistan a year ago and was sentenced last July to three years in prison. Officers of the State Committee for Religious Affairs interrupted the church, beat church members, insulted and swore at them. They demanded that the believers renounce their faith. During the raid, they confiscated items from the church, including the pastor’s computer and this book “More Than a Carpenter” by Josh McDowell.

Pastor Kholmatov was punished for quote, “singing extremist songs in church and inciting religious hatred”. After his arrest, he was first held in NSC secret police custody before being transferred to the Investigation Prison in Istaravshan. It is unclear whether he remains there or has been transferred to a prison camp to serve his sentence.

Why would Jesus or Brother Andrew or Pastor Kholmatov take such risks? They know that without the Redeemer-Messiah-Savior, without the Word of God, without being ready to die, people are lost – lost forever. No power religious or political, no human culture or way of life can release us from the human condition of sin and death. Only Jesus can.

Although Jesus faced rejection, he knew that his life, death and resurrection would secure a people of God for all eternity, “Jew and Greek, slave and free, male and female” (as it says in Galatians 3). Although followers of Jesus faced great danger throughout the world today, they know that God’s eternal plan will not be frustrated. Their lives are in the hands of their Savior.

The same is true for you and me. God calls us to share his love and compassion, the mission and ministry of Christ, the grace and truth of the Gospel without worrying about who will reject us. We speak and act on behalf of our Savior because we know that God wants to save others through our sharing of the Gospel. “Good news preached to the poor” – do it and let God show

you the amazing difference it makes. “Freedom for prisoners” – people trapped by addictions, choked by wealth, consumed by self – share the freedom you have in Christ and don’t worry about what will happen. “Sight for the blind” – help others open their eyes to real life, life in Christ. “Release for the oppressed” – depression, friendlessness, outcasts, the lonely and hurting – do ministry with and for people. Let Jesus work his work through you. “Proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

I hope people out there will start telling stories about you! What you did to make the good news of Jesus good news for them. Even if you face rejection.

Let us pray together.