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### My Summer with Jesus: Building a Résumé

Luke 4:14-15

This is the second installment of a series reflecting my summer reading of Luke's Gospel from the standpoint of the human side of Jesus. Many people find that the most provocative pathway to understanding Jesus as the Christ is to meditate on the ways in which he was and is so much like us. Seeing that Jesus faced the same challenges, disappointments, and successes serves to make him real, reachable, and believable.

Last week we looked at his first recorded adventure as an adult: trying to make a career choice and determine some of the basic principles he would live by. Today we're going to follow what comes next that may follow a similar pattern that can still be found in our world today. What Jesus needs to do whether he likes it or not is to establish some credibility as an evangelist. He needs to create a résumé. The sermon scripture may show his excitement and determination saying he *"returned to Galilee powerful in the Spirit"* but by our standards and by the standards of the people of his time that wasn't enough.

In any area of life it's usually never enough to say I'm qualified and experienced, there needs to be something more. The classic musical titled Music Man is about a con artist and salesman who calls himself professor Harold Hill. He's been ruining the reputation of salesmen everywhere by moving from town to town selling musical instruments, uniforms and the promise of lessons for a boy's band, and then leaving town with the collected money before anyone has discovered that he is musically illiterate. He touts his own credentials to the suspicious people of River City and sucks them into the deception.

And yet this is essentially what Jesus does as he begins his ministry and new career. During a visit to Nazareth he goes to the town synagogue: *"He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written: '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, and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.' And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them, 'Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.'"*

In Harold Hill's case the townspeople become angry because they feel the good professor is a phony. With Jesus the townspeople were not only skeptical of his

credentials, they were furious because what he claimed was nothing short of blasphemy. *“That set everyone in the meeting place seething with anger. They threw him out, banishing him from the village, then took him to a mountain cliff at the edge of the village to throw him to his doom, but he gave them the slip and was on his way.”* The Message Luke 4:28-30

Hopefully we don't get a reaction that extreme, but there does need to be something behind the claim.

Of course we can think of exceptions, times when folks are received and welcomed with no background check at all. They are accepted on the grounds of things like their confidence, determination, and demeanor and the result is good for everyone. Think of the Old Testament story of David. He is a scrawny shepherd boy who comes to the war camp of the Israeli army delivering food to his older brothers who are soldiers of King Saul. He learns about the standoff with the Philistines and the challenge of its champion named Goliath. *“Choose a champion to face me and let's settle this matter; winner take all!”* bellows Goliath. The shepherd boy goes to the king:

*“Let no one's heart fail because of him; your servant will go and fight with the Philistine.’ Saul said to David, ‘You are not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him; for you are just a boy, and he has been a warrior from his youth,’ But David said to Saul, “Your servant used to keep sheep for his father; and whenever a lion or a bear came, and took a lamb from the flock, I went there and struck it down, rescuing the lamb from its mouth; and if it turned against me, I would catch it by the jaw, strike it down, and kill it. Your servant has killed both lions and bears; and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be like one of them, since he has defied the armies of the living God.’ David said, ‘The Lord, who saved me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, will save me from the hand of this Philistine.’ So Saul said to David, “Go, and may the Lord be with you.”* I Samuel 17:32-37 NRSV

What intrigues me is that without a résumé and an established record David talks himself into the job. It would be silly to assume that Saul's army accepted him hands down. I'll bet most of the battle-seasoned veterans were astonished with the choice and privately felt that in a match with Goliath David was “toast.” And perhaps just the opposite was true of Jesus. While most of the townspeople wanted to throw him off a cliff there must have been those who took his “the spirit of the Lord is upon me” words to heart. And this is where we come to the idea I hope you can take home today. Beyond the conventional way of establishing and building a résumé, I want to zero in on what we do when we may not have the background to do something others feel we must have to do or accomplish the job. What was it that got both David and Jesus past the “no experience” barrier? It had to be something more than enthusiasm. In story form here's a look at what it might be.

Dan Gotly was in his early 30s, not unlike Jesus at that stage of life. He felt a calling to become a psychologist or psychotherapist and had started school with that goal in mind. One day while driving on the Pennsylvania Turnpike an eighteen wheeler going in the other direction lost a wheel: not a tire, but the entire wheel. It bounced across the lanes and landed on Dan's car crushing most of it. He was rushed to the hospital and the prognosis wasn't good; he would be a permanent quadriplegic. Learning of his situation Dan felt he would rather go to sleep and never wake than continue the way he was. He wanted to die. While in the critical care unit with all sorts of wires and machines attached, a nurse noticing what was written on his spec sheet said *"So you're a psychologist. Is everyone suicidal sometime in life?"* Dan chuckled because of her ignorance about what he was thinking but told her to come back after her shift if she wanted to talk. She did and after listening, he pointed her to some people who could help. Without knowing, that nurse had saved his life. While there were many people and friends telling him that his life had value, she had shown that his life actually did because she had asked something of him. *"I closed my eyes after she left and thought, 'I can live with this.'"*

Dan Gotly began to reflect: *"When my neck broke my soul began to breathe. If I was going to live I would live as me not as the person I wanted to be ideally." Before he had thought that if he made a lot of money and became a successful psychologist...chasing the dream of doing what he ought to be doing, all would be good. "Most persons spend their entire lives trying to be the person they think they should be and never discover who they are. And that's why my accident was a gift. I couldn't stand up and run away from the person I'd become. When my neck broke I had to be the man I was."*

And being the man he was Dan Gotly finished school, established a practice as a psychotherapist and in the twenty years since the accident had lived up to the claim of a nurse who thought a guy with a few classes in psychology was a seasoned and experienced psychologist. Besides a thriving practice, Dr. Gotly also writes a weekly column for the Philadelphia Inquirer and hosts a daily call in program at a local radio station.

From the story of Dan Gotly we learn two things: That when it comes to pursuing a life goal, dream, or calling the stronger frame of mind is more about taking advantage of what we are, rather than being driven by what we think we should be or would like to be. It's about listening to the inner voice. The second has to do with the outer voice, the ability to listen to the voices that will affirm and sustain rather than denounce and destroy.

Jesus and David heard both of those voices and without what the world had identified as the minimum requirements, they broke through the "no experience" barrier to transform their little corner of the world. So can we.