

**Third Sunday after Epiphany**  
**January 27<sup>th</sup>, 2019**  
**Pastor Matthew Ude**

**Luke 4:16-30** <sup>16</sup> So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read. <sup>17</sup> And He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written: <sup>18</sup> "The Spirit of the LORD *is* upon Me, Because He has anointed Me To preach the gospel to *the* poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to *the* captives And recovery of sight to *the* blind, To set at liberty those who are oppressed; <sup>19</sup> To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD." <sup>20</sup> Then He closed the book, and gave *it* back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on Him. <sup>21</sup> And He began to say to them, "Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." <sup>22</sup> So all bore witness to Him, and marveled at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth. And they said, "Is this not Joseph's son?" <sup>23</sup> He said to them, "You will surely say this proverb to Me, 'Physician, heal yourself! Whatever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in Your country.'" <sup>24</sup> Then He said, "Assuredly, I say to you, no prophet is accepted in his own country. <sup>25</sup> "But I tell you truly, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, and there was a great famine throughout all the land; <sup>26</sup> "but to none of them was Elijah sent except to Zarephath, *in the region* of Sidon, to a woman *who was* a widow. <sup>27</sup> "And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian." <sup>28</sup> So all those in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, <sup>29</sup> and rose up and thrust Him out of the city; and they led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city was built, that they might throw Him down over the cliff. <sup>30</sup> Then passing through the midst of them, He went His way.

Let us take a moment to consider what is going on here

First this is later in Jesus ministry. Luke puts it here in chapter four seemingly fairly early on in Jesus' ministry but he does for theological reasons. Mark show us that actually it came later. After Jesus had done a lot of miracles and become fairly famous. This is clear even from the text. They have heard of his many miracles. Jesus is in short a minor celebrity. The people of Nazareth are pretty excited that now he is here in their midst.

Second they themselves acknowledge that his fame is well earned. They are amazed at his teaching. They are astounded at the wisdom and grace of his words. They acknowledge that he understands the scripture to a depth that no one else has ever shown. They see that he teaches that same scripture in a way that captivates and inspires. You've probably had many different teachers and pastors in your life. Perhaps you can think of one that was really able to speak to you and explain things in a way that no one else could. Jesus was able to do this to a far greater degree than any you may have meet in your life.

Thirdly and most important what did Jesus bring them?

He came to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. That is a reference both to the year of Jubilee but as a symbol of the coming of the Messiah. In other words he was there to tell them that the one thing they had been waiting for and praying for since the time of Moses had finally come. The kingdom of God was here.

And what did that mean to them: He came to “heal the broken hearted, to forgive sins, to give sight to the blind.”

This was wonderful amazing joyful news. Christ came to them to bring them the forgiveness of sins, to bring them kingdom of God, to welcome lead them into heaven.

And yet before Jesus can even finish talking in their hearts they start to reject this wealth of grace that Christ brings, why?

1. Because He is Joseph’s son. They knew him. They knew his brothers and sisters. They remembered him when he was child.

What this really boils down to is that they reject Christ and all that He promises them just because he doesn’t appear in the way they want the Messiah to appear. They want lightening from the sky. They want glory and power. They want great miracles and fire. They want the Messiah to appear in the sky with the voice of thunder and awe them with his glory and power.

We talked about this last year. God does not reveal himself wrapped in glory. He comes to us hidden in the normal small things of this life.

Last week in bible class we were talking about baptism. God’s gifts come in simple water

God speak to you though his word and through me. How easily it would be to despise the word which I share with you because you know me. It’s not hard to find problems and faults with me if you want. It’s not hard to convince yourself that you know better. With all my faults and sins and shortcomings it would be easy to look and say what is this? This isn’t God, this is just a man.

As Luther supposedly pointed out, once God spoke through the mouth of a donkey, he certainly can do it again.

God’s gifts come through ordinary things. If we throw away God’s gift just because they are wrapped in water or in people like myself than we are throwing away eternal life and salvation

2. Second they reject all the grace and gifts Christ brought them because he wouldn’t do the miracles that they had heard about. In other words he wouldn’t put on a show for them.

In Capernaum and other places there were people in need who came to him in faith to help with their troubles. Even though Jesus was very busy with other things he had mercy on many of those people and helped them out.

That is not the case in Nazareth. Here they are coming to him not in their need and in faith, but instead because they want a show. They want to see the great miracles that he had done other places.

Over and over again when people approach Jesus looking for entertainment he rejects them. He is not a clown to perform at their command.

That should tell us a little bit about our own worship service shouldn't it. If we come here, or to any church for the purpose of being entertained we aren't going to find Christ. That isn't why Christ came. He came to heal the broken hearted. He came to preach good news to the poor. If we come looking for healing and forgiveness then we will find a Christ always willing to help. But if we come looking for entertainment there is no Christ at all.

3. Thirdly and most importantly they reject Christ and the gifts that he comes to bring because he makes it clear to them that they are no better than the people of Capernaum, the people of Sidon, the people of Syria, in short the gentiles that they hated and despised so much.

Jesus spent most of his time in Capernaum and the area near there and far side of the lake of Galilee. This was not Israel proper. This was largely Gentile country. There were many Israelites but there were also a lot of Gentiles.

Jesus in our text points to many other examples when God's grace and gifts were given to Gentiles and not to Israelites. Why? Because they also needed the grace of God and unlike the Jews were willing to listen to Him.

When we think of the account of Elijah and the widow of Sidon, why was there a drought on the land? Because the people of Israel refused to listen to the Word of God and were worshiping Baal. Because they had rejected the Lord and his prophet Elijah, Elijah was sent with the word to someone who would appreciate the gifts of God.

With these words Jesus makes it clear to these people that they are no better than the people of Israel during the time of Ahab and Jezebeel. They are no better than the people of Capernaum, that are largely gentiles and even worse Romans. They are no better than the Samaritans that they hated so much. In fact not only are they no better they are worse, because those people rejoiced to receive the grace and gifts of Christ.

There is no one in this world whose is going to get really angry as quickly as someone who thinks they are right with God who is then confronted by their sin. Go to a brothel and talk about sin and grace, go to a prison and talk to someone there about God's law. These people are far more likely to listen.

Go to someone who is in church every Sunday, who volunteers their time, who gives 10% or 15% every Sunday, and suggest that maybe this or that thing they do is wrong, that they messed up, that they need to confess some sins. The anger you'll get in return is often worse than the heat of the fiery furnace. How dare you accuse me of such things.

So it is here too in Nazareth. "We are Israelites how dare you suggest that we are worse than the people of Capernaum, or Sidon or Syria," says the crowd of Nazareth.

Their anger is fierce and immediate and full.

And yet Jesus' response is the same mercy and grace which he came to bring them. He allows them to take him even as far as the cliff. Did you notice that? He waits hoping they will wake up, hoping they will recognize what they are throwing away and come to their senses.

He came to bring them mercy and grace and forgiveness. He came to preach the gospel to the poor. He came to seek and save the lost, even such terrible sinners as these.

Yes we aren't any better. Yes we too are far too quick to get angry when anyone points out our sin. But Jesus came to Nazareth anyway to bring them the grace and mercy of God, and so he comes here also to give the same to us.

Amen