

Luke 4:14-21

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Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding country. He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone.

When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. 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,
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."

Who is Jesus?

Trust Jesus. Listen to Jesus. Learn from Jesus.

He is the Savior spoken of by Isaiah. He is one with God and sent to all of us in every generation by God.

Our reading this morning lets us watch like time travelers as Jesus reveals himself to those who watched him grow from a boy to a man.

Jesus has returned to Nazareth returned to the place that his mother probably still lives. Returned to the place where his childhood friends still worship. He has returned to the place of those who know him well; at least they think that they know him well.

He's been in Capernaum and Luke tells us about some of the good works that Jesus has done there. These Jews of Nazareth would have heard about some of his miraculous works. They might also have heard that he was teaching in synagogues throughout Galilee.

Jesus was raised in Nazareth, but it was no longer his home. Much as we were born into this world, but do not belong to this world. Jesus no longer belonged in Nazareth. His God-given ministry had already begun.

So this trip to Nazareth was merely a visit for Jesus. It proved to be a clarifying visit, one that answered the question, "Who is Jesus?"

We know that it was his custom to attend Sabbath day services in the synagogue wherever he happened to be on a particular Sabbath. A custom that he stayed true to on the day we read about this morning.

He was chosen to read from the scriptures that morning and the scroll he was handed was that of the prophet Isaiah. Jesus may have chosen his specific reading although it may have been assigned to him. Scholars seem to be divided on that point, but what that specific reading said was most definitely about Jesus and Jesus alone.

He read:

"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,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

Jesus had been doing all these things and many in his audience that day would have already heard about it. But then Jesus said something that would have shocked some and outraged others.

For at least a few in the synagogue that day, what he said would have made them realize that the Messiah they had been praying for, for their entire lives, had finally arrived.

Jesus said,

"Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

With these words Jesus told all of them that he was the long awaited Messiah.

Some would have got the message: trust Jesus; listen to Jesus; learn from Jesus. Some would have known that Jesus has been sent by God to save them. Others would have heard heresy. They would have heard Jesus telling them an evil lie.

He probably wasn't surprised by the shock, outrage, and confusion felt and expressed by many and although that might have made him sad, he didn't come to placate.

He knew he would face many obstacles when he came down from Heaven. He didn't come to be gentle and consoling to the religious powers of that day. He came to confront them.

He came to save every soul from the evil work of Satan. He came to save the people to whom he was speaking. Jesus came to save you and me.

Jesus came to do his Father's will on Earth and in so doing to show us, not just tell us, but to show us how to treat one another and how to live our lives. For those of us who follow Jesus today, he came to teach us to listen to each other, to learn from each other, and to trust each other. He came to show us the importance of God the Father in our live. From the day we are born until the day we die to this life.

Jesus came to show us that we can trust him and that we will be much better off when we listen to him. He came so that we might learn from him.

He gave his life not only on the cross, but from the day he was conceived until his ascension into Heaven. He gave all of himself so that we might have eternal life. Eternal life without the pains and hardships of the life we are living at this moment.

Our reading this morning lets us look back and watch as observers at the moment Jesus told those who thought they knew him best that they didn't really know him at all.

He answered the question, "Who is Jesus?" Jesus is the son of God and the Jews listening to him that day had been expecting him for centuries.

Odd as it may seem there are many today who are not able to answer that question, “Who is Jesus?”.

Many years ago Glenn and I tutored and mentored William, a young boy from El Salvador. As the excitement of Christmas was mounting for school children we asked William why we celebrate Christmas. William didn’t know. It turned out that William didn’t know anything at all about Jesus.

This was the first time I encountered someone who didn’t know anything about Jesus and even those who know that “Jesus is the reason for the season” (as the saying goes) don’t know much about Jesus. Like some the people of Nazareth that day long ago they might not know the depth of who Jesus really is. They might not be able to answer, “Who is Jesus?”

We are called to tell them, because we all need him. We all need to listen to Jesus, learn from Jesus, and to trust Jesus.

We can’t see the wind, but we know it’s there. We can’t see Jesus in the body, but even still, Jesus is with us always. When good things happen to and for us Jesus has a hand in them.

We can feel him when we are strengthened and comforted during the dark times of our life. It might be by the kind words of a stranger or the friend who touches our lives just when we need it most.

Jesus is with us always. I pray that we will share the wonderful news of Jesus. That like those early disciples we will trust Jesus, listen to Jesus, and learn from Jesus.

When Jesus asked those closest to him, “Who do you say I am?”, Peter quickly answered, “You are the Messiah, the son of the living God.”(Matthew 16:15-16)

“Who is Jesus?” My answer is this: Jesus is my comforter and my strength. Jesus is my teacher and my hope. Jesus was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. How do you answer the question, “Who is Jesus?”

Jesus was sent by God for us. He is with us now and he always will be.

Amen.