

Hometown Boy | Luke 4:16-30 | Epiphany 2
Pastor Nick Shults | St. Mark Lutheran Church | Sunnyvale, CA

The Light coming into the world comes not for one but for all...bringing liberty and freedom and forgiveness to the nations.

Trouble in the World

What kind of Jesus do you want? Which Jesus are you looking for? Because there's options.

Do you want the American Jesus, Rambo-esq, decked out in camo, rifle slung over his shoulder?

Do you want Buddy Jesus, giving you the perpetual smile and thumbs up?

Do you want the Jesus who forgives but not the one who judges?

Do you want the Jesus who does amazing things but keeps his mouth shut?

Do you want the Jesus who makes your bank account swell?

Do you want the Jesus who makes sure you're comfortable at church, worn out pew padding notwithstanding?

Which Jesus do you want?

There are many from which you can choose and many people have chosen the Jesus of their liking by picking and choosing from the pages of Scripture. Thomas Jefferson, for instance, decided that he didn't like the miraculous Jesus. Which is to say he wanted a down to earth Jesus. A Jesus who wasn't divine. Some choose the Jesus who teaches us how to live well, aligning His Golden Rule with the teachings of the Buddha, or any number of other teachers or sages throughout time.

Some prefer their Jesus to look like them. Blond hair and blue eyed Jesus has a way of making some of us feel better about the racial stereotypes we perpetuate.

Which Jesus do *you* want?

Trouble in the Text

In our Gospel lesson this morning, those who attended the synagogue on one particular Sabbath seemed to have a Jesus in mind that they wanted. But from their reaction to his words, they didn't get the Jesus they wanted.

We see Jesus coming back to his hometown of Nazareth and kicking off his earthly ministry in Luke's Gospel. In this passage Jesus preaches from Isaiah 61, proclaiming

that He is the fulfillment of Isaiah's messianic prophecy. He's the Anointed One, the One who has come to proclaim,

*...good news to the poor.
...liberty to the captives
...recovery of sight to the blind.
Liberty to those who are oppressed.
...the year of the Lord's Favor*

To this the people in the synagogue have a surprisingly positive reaction as they "marvel" at his words. This is one of their own! And He's the messiah! How incredible is this?!?! Amazingly, this isn't the part of Jesus' sermon that makes them mad. It's what comes next really sets them off.

Clearly Jesus doesn't know the first rule of show biz: "Always leave them wanting more". He could have just stopped his sermon when he had them in the palm of his hand. But no...He keeps on going. And he pushes some buttons.

Underneath their marveling and shock that Joseph's son, the carpenter's son, has come to fulfill Isaiah 61 is also a feeling of pride, of privilege. Their thinking must be something like this: "If Jesus, our Jesus, is the Messiah from Is. 61 then these words he speaks are for *us*. That is, primarily or especially for us"

Jesus gets behind this thinking when He puts this proverb in their mouth, "Physician heal thyself". Perhaps more accurately, we would translate that, "Physician, take care of your own". That is to say, we heard you did all these amazing things in Capernaum - verse 23 alludes to the work Jesus has already done though Luke doesn't record it. We heard about all these amazing things you've done elsewhere...you're going to do that (and more!) in Nazareth, right? The Messiah from Nazareth has come primarily for them, right?

What Jesus did those in the synagogue want that day? They wanted their hometown Messiah to be *for them*. They wanted their hometown boy to be concerned with *their* poor, their captives, their blind, and their oppressed. But how does Jesus respond to their wants?

Well, he tells them a couple stories. Well, he *reminds* them of two OT stories of which they no doubt would be familiar with. The first is the story of Elijah coming to the widow in **** and then Elisha healing the Syrian general in ****.

And for this, he faces rejection. Rejection that would rather see the Messiah thrown off a cliff than come to terms with the fact that He wasn't exactly what they wanted. Rejection that Jesus would face over and over again. Ultimately rejection unto death.

Grace in the Text

Perhaps the Jesus that showed up at the synagogue that day wasn't the Jesus that those in Nazareth really wanted. Nevertheless, this Jesus is the one the world *needed*. Jesus shows up on the scene not as a hometown boy, a hometown messiah for the people of Nazareth alone but He shows up as the Messiah for the entire world.

The OT stories Jesus references there in Nazareth, what do they have in common? They show glimpses of what the Reign of God will look like when the Savior comes. They show glimpses of the fact that God's reign doesn't and won't come just for Israel. No, it's coming for the entire world. The Light of Jesus has come into the world and it's for everyone. It's for pagan fools like the 3 Magi. It's for those who wonder if God is really for them and not against them. It's for those who lack now but will have abundance later in Christ's New Creation.

He shows up for the prisoner. He shows up for the blind man. He shows up for the poor. He shows up for the oppressed. He shows up for the widow. For the leper. For the Gentile, even. Not just the Nazarene. Not just the Jew. Everyone.

What Luke sets us up for in this passage, in Jesus' very first sermons, is Jesus' whole ministry. A ministry filled with love and compassion even for the least. For the Lepers and the paralytics. For the widow of Nain who lost her son. For the sinful woman who washes his feet at Simon the Pharisee's house. For the demon-possessed. For the woman who had uncontrollable menstrual bleeding for 12 years. He pronounces blessings on those who are poor, and hungry, and mourning. He pronounces blessings on those who are hated because of His name.

This isn't the Jesus they wanted that day in Nazareth. They wanted a Jesus who was *for them* but instead they got a Jesus who was *for the world*.

Grace in the World

On this day in Nazareth, we see a Jesus who comes for the entire world but, from the very beginning, is rejected. He is rejected because of this expansive mission to all nations. And even though that day he passed through the crowd when they tried to kill him and went on his way, well, when it was his hour to die on the cross he did not walk away. He did not pass through the crowds and go on his way on Good Friday. He stayed true to his mission to bring God's rule and reign into the world. And he did it by dying. He did it by rising. And in doing so He has brought God's reign to you, too.

To you He has brought Good News of the forgiveness of sins.

To you He has brought liberty and freedom from death.

To you He has poured out His Holy Spirit, giving you eyes to see Him revealed in Scripture.

To you he has proclaimed the year of the Lord's favor...that OT Year of Jubilee where debts are forgiven and bondservants freed.

Jesus has come to us and, by his life, his death, and his resurrection he has fulfilled Is. 61. He has fulfilled it for his hometown in Nazareth, he has fulfilled it for you, for all the Bay Area.

Perhaps this isn't the Jesus that we want. A weak looking, dying messiah. Perhaps the rejected Messiah isn't the Jesus that we want, either. But He's the Jesus we need. Amen.