

“Proclaiming the Anointed Savior” + Luke 4:16-30

3rd Sunday after the Epiphany + January 23, 2022

Dear Friends in Christ,

This past week, by the grace of God, I completed 34 years as pastor of St. Luke’s and St. John’s. It is amazing to me that after all these years, you are here again to hear me preach. Some of you may have heard me preach over 1500 times. And yet, here you are still! There’s a simple reason why you are here: you did not come to hear me preach. You came to hear the word of Jesus. When Jesus sent out 72 disciples two by two, He told them: “The one who hears you hears me, and the one who rejects you rejects me, and the one who rejects me rejects him who sent me” (Luke 10:16). You come because when the word of God is read and proclaimed, Jesus is speaking, and you are listening to Him. It is an amazing testimony to the grace of God at work in you that you overlook my faults and still receive the word of Jesus from my lips. I thank God for you!

When Jesus sat down to talk about the Scriptures that day in the synagogue of His hometown of Nazareth, He said that the Scriptures were fulfilled in their hearing. It was all about Him. He is the Savior anointed with the Holy Spirit. He is the One long prophesied by the prophets. Let us use this account to proclaim Jesus today! Let us listen as He speaks to us through these words recorded by Luke. Jesus has been at work for awhile, perhaps a year, mostly down south, but Luke has omitted all of that. (You can read about it John’s Gospel.) He had even done miracles in nearby Capernaum, which had become his base of operations. How is the Anointed Savior proclaimed?

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First of all, Christ is proclaimed on the basis of the Scriptures. Look at the role the Scriptures played in the life of Jesus Himself. He works with the people of Nazareth by means of the written word of God. The first thing to know about the use of the Scriptures in the day-to-life of the Christian is that we should open them! “And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll” (v. 17). Open the Bible and read it. It will not help to use it as a door-stop or to be stuffed into your shirt as a bullet-proof vest. Read it. Let it speak to you.

Let us supposed it became known that Jesus was visibly present in these parts, and that He was traveling to a city near you in a tour bus with big letters on the side, “Jesus of Nazareth, Savior of the world.” It wouldn’t take long and that tour bus would be the center of attention. News reporters would follow it. Helicopters would shadow its coming. Everybody would want to find out where that tour bus stopped, in hopes that they could meet Jesus and spend time with Him.

Dear friends, you might say that the Scriptures are the vehicle that Jesus uses to come to us. Concerning the 39 books that we know as the Old Testament Jesus said, “It is they that bear witness about Me” (John 5:39). Paul wrote to Timothy about these writings: “From childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 3:15). How much more the books of the New Testament! “These [signs recorded in the Gospel of John] are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may life in His name” (John 20:31). Our day-to-day use of the Bible brings a daily meeting with Jesus. The Bible is filled with Christ, who told His people: “This Scripture is filled full in your hearing.” The words of Scripture are filled full of Jesus. The Bible is the Jesus-book. This Book is a vehicle that Jesus uses to travel with you wherever you go. He told His disciples, “The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life” (John 6:63). It brings to us the news of the holy life of Christ, news of His death on our behalf, and of the pardon for us sealed by His resurrection from the dead.

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Secondly, the proclamation of Christ brings about the great reversal. He turns things around 180 degrees. What a sermon He gave! He read from the prophet Isaiah: ““The Spirit of the Lord is on Me, because He has anointed Me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor”” (Luke 4:18-19). Then, with every eye in the place focused on Him, He began His sermon on this text by saying: “Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing” (v.21). This same Jesus, the Savior, the one sitting there in their synagogue, the one they had so often seen with

Joseph the carpenter, was the long-awaited Deliverer and Rescuer of God's people. In fact, wherever Jesus spoke, even as people believed in His name, poor miserable sinners received the great riches of eternal salvation. Right there in the synagogue in Nazareth that day Jesus wasn't just talking about these blessings; He was giving them through His word. Are you among the poor? Do you have nothing of that which you need? Do you lack deeds of righteousness that will count in the reckoning of the Judge of all the earth? The Lord Jesus has held nothing back from you! There is not one act of goodness that He has left undone. There is no righteousness that He lacks, and He shares it all with you. There is no part of His sacrifice that has been left undone. Through faith in Him you will taste the riches of His eternal kingdom, where neither moth nor rust destroy, and no thief breaks in and steals. In Him "All things are yours" (1 Corinthians 3:21).

Are you held captive, as though you have been taken hostage in warfare? Are you captive to a guilty conscience? Are the lies of Satan ringing in your ears, as if to say: "You haven't done enough! How can you be sure that you will go to heaven? Look at the terrible things you have done in your life!" The voice of the Lord is there to free you! Let His freeing words drown out the enslaving words of the enemy. Christ says to you: "I have done everything that needed to be done for you! I have erased those sinful things you did. They are drowned in the depths of the deepest sea. Yes, you will go to heaven! When you leave this world you will be with Me in paradise!"

Immense pain, grief, and sorrow have come into creation because of sin; Jesus is the Savior or rescuer from all these. Are you blind, unable to see through dark days of grief or sadness? Let the Scriptures shine the light of the glory of God in Jesus Christ upon you. Let the Good News of the Lord Jesus Christ take away your ashes and replace them with a crown of beauty; let Him give you the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit (Isaiah 61:3).

Have you been broken by repeated blows? Let Christ come to dwell in You and bind up your wounds with His promises. The promises of the Holy Scriptures are the basis for our faith. If God has not said it, we have nothing to go on. But where God has spoken, we can venture out in faith. We can remind

Him of those promises even as we pray to Him. He says, “Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you” (Isaiah 43:1-2).

In the Old Testament (Leviticus 25) God laid down a system by which, once every 50 years, during the year of “jubilee,” slaves were liberated, debts were forgiven, and land that had been sold was returned to the family to which it originally belonged. It was a very real way in which God showed His people that His intention was that everyone would live in prosperous freedom and dignity, each with a portion of the promised land as his possession. In the course of 49 years, tragedies and famines and death would force some to lose their land or freedom, but in the 50th year these curses were to be reversed. Isaiah announced it, and now Jesus fulfills it, that this time of His coming is an ongoing year of “jubilee.” Until Christ returns, we are in the “year of God’s favor.” Let His declaration of freedom set you free!

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Do not resist the proclamation of Jesus. Every time we gather together in God’s house, every time the word of God is preached or taught among us, the name of Jesus that we grew up with is mentioned again. Many of us have been hearing about Jesus since before we can remember. His name is a household word and His words and deeds are commonly known among us. No name throughout the history of the world has been more influential. And yet the question remains as we gather here: “How will we welcome Him?”

The people of Nazareth had known Jesus and Mary and Joseph for many years. They had heard what miracles He had been doing in the surrounding area and they wanted some of those in their town. True, he had become an effective public speaker, but they did not listen to what He had to say. All they could say was “Isn’t this Joseph’s son?” The old saying says “Familiarity breeds contempt.”

Even today, many people speak well of Jesus on a superficial level: “He was a good teacher.” “His life makes for interesting reading.” “He has something to say to us all.” But how many are willing to say: “I am a poor

miserable sinner eternally damned to hell without Christ My Lord--but He has come to rescue Me from this death sentence”?

This is one of the great tragedies of modern America. The word of God is proclaimed on a regular basis in many houses of worship. It is broadcast on the airwaves and easily available in bookstores, magazines, and countless other ways. And yet when people hear it, they say, “That’s the same old Jesus. What difference does it make?” That flows from a lack of humility and submission to the word of God.

In Elijah's day there were many in Israel who went hungry. Why? Because they refused to believe the word of the Lord that Elijah and many other prophets had brought them. In Elisha’s day many lepers languished in physical and emotional pain. Why? They didn't have the faith of the little girl who urged Naaman to go to the prophet in Israel. They didn't humble themselves like Naaman, who at the Lord's promise, washed himself seven times in the Jordan River. In Jesus’ day, there were many who didn’t listen to Jesus or believe His word. They continued on as impoverished sinners, imprisoned by their guilt, blind in ignorance, oppressed by the devil, simply because they refused to believe the word of this Jesus from their home town of Nazareth.

And so in our day, many are indifferent to the word of Jesus. Unless they repent and humbly receive His words, they will be lost. Yes, even church people will be lost if they do not take to heart the word that is preached in their ears.

The Jesus we see here is the who was rejected by His own people--even unto death--rejected and put to death for you and me. Now we take you to another scene. This time the city is Jerusalem. The people are yelling “crucify Him” and take Him out of the city limits once more. Only this time Jesus does not pass miraculously through their midst. At Calvary the Savior refused to save Himself. Instead He saved us. By His death and resurrection, He has reversed the curse upon us. May God continue to bless us that we might rightly proclaim and rightly hear Him speak in His word!