

**MINISTRY BY MAIL**  
**Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship**  
[www.lutheranlccf.org](http://www.lutheranlccf.org)  
**Fourth Sunday after Epiphany, February 2, 2014**

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 27, 237:1, 367, 348, 46.

Lessons: 1 Kings 17:1-24, 1 Corinthians 12:27-13:13, Mark 6:1-6.

Sermon Text: Luke 4:20-30.

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehlretter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

To understand and explain Scripture, we must always let Scripture interpret Scripture. Scripture does not contradict itself. The message of Scripture is consistent from Genesis to Revelation. The Scriptures show man's sinfulness and they show God's plan to remove that sinfulness from mankind so that everyone who believes in Jesus Christ as Savior will live eternally.

When we let our sermon text explain Old Testament Scripture, we see that Jesus confirms that what he reads from Isaiah is an actual prophecy of Christ, the very Son of God, sent to earth to redeem mankind. He is the one who brings deliverance from the spiritual slavery under sin, death, and the devil. Jesus is correct in truly applying the passage to himself.

He read from the book of 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." Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him, and he began by saying to them, 'Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.'*" (Luke 4:18-21)

Last week we presented a discussion of Jesus reading from the scroll of Isaiah in the synagogue in his hometown. Today we continue and realize that

**MAN'S REJECTION OF JESUS COMES LONG BEFORE HIS CRUCIFIXION.**

- 1. Jesus fulfills the Word of God.**
- 2. At first, people spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words he spoke.**
- 3. When he preached the truth, people became furious with him,**
- 4. But the time was not right for his death.**

Jesus begins his sermon in his home town in a very positive tone. He tells the people what he came to do and what he is to do. At first the people liked what he had to say. But when he began preaching the law to them and showed them their sinfulness, they suddenly turned Jesus' positive remarks into something very negative for him.

*"Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him, and he began by saying to them, 'Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.'"*

What a marvelous thing this could have been! What a great day this could have been! If only these people had truly recognized Jesus as the Savior. If only they had realized that the age of the Messiah has come, that the servant of the Lord has come.

*"All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips. 'Isn't this Joseph's son?' they asked. Jesus said to them, 'Surely you will quote this proverb to me: "Physician, heal yourself! Do here in your hometown what we have heard that you did in Capernaum.'" 'I tell you the truth,' he continued, 'no prophet is accepted in his hometown'".*

Gradually the implications of what Jesus was saying struck home. He himself was that servant of the Lord who had been anointed with the Holy Spirit. His ministry was to preach and teach and heal. But these were people who knew Jesus and had known Jesus for a long time. These were people in his hometown. They had not known this man to be a miracle worker or a prophet when he was among them.

Surely something wasn't right with the message this man was speaking to them, they thought. Wasn't this man Joseph's son?

The positive purpose of his mission was taken from the words he read from Isaiah 61:1-2. Isaiah speaks of great promises for those whom Messiah delivers. Jesus' purpose in his ministry was to preach, to announce freedom, to heal, and to proclaim that God's time is at hand. He was rejected because the people of his hometown could not believe a local man could accomplish so much and because they did not see in Jesus the promised Messiah.

They were surprised that one of their own, whom they thought to be the son or foster son of Joseph would talk like a prophet.

At first they gave him their approval as a preacher, and they wonder at his words. But there was no change in their hearts. His parentage, lowly as it seemed, was a stumbling block in their way. And so it is with many today. Jesus is thought by many to be merely the son of a carpenter, or as even some Lutherans teach, the illegitimate son of an itinerant Roman soldier.

The people were expectant: ***"All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips. 'Isn't this Joseph's son?' they asked."*** Jesus himself goes on and explains what he knew they expected. Jesus begins with the proverb ***"Physician, heal yourself!"***

***"Jesus said to them, 'Surely you will quote this proverb to me: 'Physician, heal yourself! Do here in your hometown what we have heard that you did in Capernaum.'"***

Nothing great, nothing extraordinary could be expected of him. The disrespect shown by the designation as merely "son of Joseph", meaning that he is merely the son of a carpenter is what the sinful people were thinking. It is kind of like telling him "Do something to prove you are a prophet." He healed people, or so we have heard. That would suggest that he is a physician. , If he performs miracles in their presence to show them that he is more than the son of Joseph, then they might respect him as something greater than a carpenter pretending to be a prophet or a healer. There is a challenge in the words. So if he is not respected in Nazareth, they reason, it is his own fault. He should perform miracles there like those that were reported from Cana and then of course they would recognize him and offer him some real praise.

But he does not do as they suggest. This was because of their unbelief, which made them absolutely incapable of recognizing the manifestation of his glory.

In essence he withdraws his grace from the city where he grew up.

But before he takes this step he wants to impress upon them the solemn responsibility which would be theirs if they take offense and turn him away in unbelief. He gives two examples of warning from the Old Testament. These are introduced with a sort of an oath: ***"of a truth"***. (King James Version) ***"I assure you"***. The historical events from the days of Elijah and Elisha might be easily made applicable to the case of the inhabitants of Nazareth, that their unbelief might prevent him from performing the mighty deeds among them which he had done in other regions.

Jesus' ministry was begun here in a context of rejection. He compared his rejection in Nazareth to the rejection of Old Testament prophets. One notable example is wicked queen Jezebel, wife of wicked king Ahab. We read in 1 Kings 18 and 19: ***"While Jezebel was killing off the Lord's prophets, Obadiah had taken a hundred prophets and hidden them in two caves, fifty in each, and had supplied them with food and water."*** (1 Kings 18:4) We read a few verses later: ***"Haven't you heard, my lord, what I did while Jezebel was killing the prophets of the LORD? I hid a hundred of the Lord's prophets in two caves, fifty in each, and supplied them with food and water."*** (1 Kings 18:13) And we read in the next chapter: ***"So Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah to say, 'May the gods deal with me, be it ever so severely, if by this time tomorrow I do not make your life like that of one of them.'"*** (1 Kings 19:2)

Jesus makes it clear that he, as well as many other prophets, were not accepted in their hometowns, but rejected. He uses two illustrations: First he tells of Elijah: ***"I assure you that there were many widows in***

***Israel in Elijah's time, when the sky was shut for three and a half years and there was a severe famine throughout the land. Yet Elijah was not sent to any of them, but to a widow in Zarephath in the region of Sidon.***” You heard about this in our Old Testament lesson. Then he tells of Elisha: ***“And there were many in Israel with leprosy in the time of Elisha the prophet, yet not one of them was cleansed--only Naaman the Syrian.”*** This is a reference to the prophet Elisha who healed a foreigner of leprosy.

As a result, the people knew what Jesus was going to do and what he was NOT going to do in Nazareth. They knew that he was NOT going to perform miracles in their midst as they had heard he had done elsewhere. He was thought to be a carpenter, the son of a carpenter. Who was he to pretend he was a prophet, and not let the people in Nazareth share in some of his glory! When they realized this, we read that ***“All the people in the synagogue were furious when they heard this.”***

Jesus had angered them. They perceived him as a local man, one who had been brought up as a carpenter's son, and of course, he would have been trained as a carpenter, too. He had the audacity to usurp, or so they thought, to claim for himself the role of a prophet. Surely, he had received the typical training of a Jewish man, but to claim that he was greater than a rabbi, or greater than any other religious leader, to claim he was a prophet and to compare himself to Elijah and Elisha! That was blasphemy. And blasphemers had to be dealt with severely: He should be put to death! ***“They got up, drove him out of the town, and took him to the brow of the hill on which the town was built, in order to throw him down the cliff.”***

They rejected him. People who had known him perhaps as a child, or had known him for years were probably among those who now wanted to kill him. They had no use for his words. They had no use for anything he could claim to do for them. They had to remove him from their lives. They weren't content to simply ignore him or turn their backs on him. They didn't merely want to say things to damage his reputation. They didn't want to bother with any legal measures to get rid of him, to kill him, probably because they had only his ‘arrogant words’ to rely on and words weren't a valid reason to put someone to death. They decided to take matters into their own hands. They intended to end things right now.

The words Jesus read from Isaiah are a fulfillment of prophecy that Jesus was to do all these things: to preach, to heal, to help, and above all, to redeem.

The people in the synagogue – the holy place! – the gathering of 'good' or 'holy' people! – decided that they didn't want to listen to Jesus and they tried to kill him. One writer said that the city of Nazareth even in the 20th century is situated on a hill with a cliff about 50 feet high. That is probably where they tried to kill Jesus. But the Word of God tells us ***“But he walked right through the crowd and went on his way.”*** This in itself was a miracle, though they may not have recognized it as such. How it occurred, we can't really explain. But the fact is that it was not yet Jesus' time to die. He had only begun his public ministry and had a great deal of work to do on earth before he died. And when he died, it was to be for the sins of all men.

***“Then he went down to Capernaum, a town in Galilee, and on the Sabbath began to teach the people. They were amazed at his teaching, because his message had authority.”***

May we always recognize in Jesus Christ the perfect salvation for us. May we always see in Jesus Christ the one who takes away our sin. Believe that and be saved. Amen.