

Epiphany 3 1/27/19  
Luke 4:16-30 C

AND ALL SPOKE WELL OF HIM AND MARVELED AT THE GRACIOUS WORDS THAT WERE COMING FROM HIS MOUTH.

Following His 40 days in the wilderness, Jesus went on a speaking tour of Galilee. And wherever He went, people glorified Him because of what He had to say. He went to His hometown, Nazareth, to the synagogue in which He was raised and the same thing happened there, “He spoke well of Him and marveled at the gracious words that were coming from His mouth (v. 22).” That’s what happened, right up until “they rose up and drove Him out of the town and brought Him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they could throw Him down the cliff (v. 29).” What in the world happened? How did things get so bad so quickly?

Well, here’s what happened in Nazareth: Jesus walked into the synagogue on the Sabbath Day, He stood up to read, they gave Him the scroll of the Prophet Isaiah, and He read this to them,

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor (vv. 18-19).”

And He rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And everybody was looking at Him. So, He said, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing (v. 21).” In other words, “It’s about Me. I am the Messiah, the Anointed One. I am the Christ. I have come to bring you God’s favor. I have come to proclaim the release from the captivity of sin and its wages of death. I am going to open your eyes to God’s love and care for you. More than that, I am the guy that’s going to make it all happen.” That’s what Jesus said. And when He said it, “all spoke well of

him and marveled at the gracious words that were coming from his mouth (v. 22).”

But that’s not all they did. They also got to thinking, and they got to talking, “Is not this Joseph’s son (v. 22)?” You know, isn’t this the carpenter’s son who played with our kids when He was a little boy? His hand is skilled on the lathe and the plane, how does He know the Scriptures? He didn’t go to rabbi school to learn all that stuff. Now, He comes home again and says to us, ‘Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing’ (v. 21). Who does this guy think He is? He’s just Jesus, the carpenter’s kid.”

There’s a lot of people who say that about Jesus. Maybe you’re one of them. You look at Jesus, what He says and what He does. He’s a nice guy, kind and gentle to the poor and lowly; He’s a good teacher with wise sayings, like we are to love one another; but this guy can’t possibly be what He says He is. And besides all of that, if He really is the one who comes to do all Isaiah says, He’s going to open the eyes of the blind, set free the oppressed, proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor. If He is the Savior, He’s going to do all that today. So today, why is today so terrible? Today, why do we still have wars, bloodshed, hatred, jealousy, gossip, and all kinds of problems in the world? If he’s going to do this today, maybe He should do it today; otherwise, no, I won’t believe.

That’s a good question, but Jesus has an answer for that. He looked at the people in the synagogue and He looks at us today, and says, “Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, ‘Physician, heal yourself’.” Yea Jesus, you’re right. If you want us to buy into that you are the Promised One and we should believe in you, Do something for us! Do what you did in Capernaum. In other words, do the miraculous, do the big,

do the wonder, do what I demand you to do for me! And make it happen today! Today, Jesus, turn water into wine. Today, go to the Hazen hospital and make all the sick people well. Today, go to the cemetery and raise all the dead. And you know what else you need to do Jesus? You need to answer all my prayers with a resounding 'yes'. You need to make my life successful and give me money, so that I can buy everything my little heart desires, and make certain that illness and heartache and sorrow and grief and trouble stay far away from me. You do that for me today, Jesus, then, then I'll buy into that you fulfill these words of Isaiah and I'll believe in you. Until that happens, no. So, do for us what you did for those in Capernaum." That's what we want Jesus to do.

And wouldn't you know Jesus knows you expect that of Him. That's why He says,

"But in truth, I tell you, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heavens were shut up three years and six months, and a great famine came over all the land, and Elijah has sent to none of them but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian (vv. 25-27)."

It can be the big, the wonder, the miracle, but God doesn't always do that. What Jesus is teaching us in this: There were many widows, but only one widow received the miracle. There were plenty of lepers, but only this leper received the miracle. What gets us is that these people, in Zarephath and a Syrian, were foreigners, the enemy. They are the ones who get the miracle. We are simply poor sinners stuck with the Word of God. It's just the synagogue in Nazareth all over again. We get filled with such anger that we go after Jesus just like those in His hometown, "Why don't you do

for us what you did in Capernaum?” Why don’t you work those miracles in our lives?

Do you know what happens when you go after Jesus like that? The same thing that happened in Nazareth. He just passes through the midst, and goes on His way. And the reason Jesus passes through our midst and goes on His way is because He really and truly is the One who fulfills the Scriptures. He really and truly is the One who comes to proclaim good news to the poor; the One come to proclaim liberty to the captives; the One come to free those oppressed and ashamed by their sin.

And the way He will do that is not by doing what He did in Capernaum, but by going His way to Calvary. He’s going to give His life into death for you and, in doing that, He fulfills these words of Isaiah and all of Scripture. Calvary is the ultimate expression of Jesus is fulfilling all the Scriptures say about Him. At Calvary, He bears your sins. He takes your place. He takes the punishment and the death you deserve for all of your sins and, in doing that, He sets you at liberty from sin, death, and the power of the devil; in doing that, He opens your eyes to the great love and grace of God. In doing that, He brings the favor of God into your life.

And He rises from the dead to give all that to you. He does that by joining you to Himself in and through the waters of Holy Baptism. In that new birth of water and Word, your eyes are open to Jesus, your sins are forgiven, and you are set free.

And here’s the thing you need to know about that Jesus did at Calvary. Unlike what Jesus did at Capernaum, unlike what Elijah did at Zarephath, unlike what Elisha did for Naaman the Syrian, what Jesus did at Calvary is for all people, of all times, and all places. The miracle at Capernaum, and the miracle at Zarephath, the miracle for Naaman at the

Jordan were only for certain people, at one specific time, at one specific place. But in His death on Calvary and His resurrection on Easter morning, all the people of all the world are benefitted. His dying and rising again does for those in His hometown what it does for all people of all time of all places. And that means it wins forgiveness of sin, life and salvation for you, Dear Child of God.

That's not a reason to doubt or question the ways of God. That's reason to believe, to speak well and marvel at all that He has done.