

INI

St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749
Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
February 6, 2022
5th Sunday after Epiphany

Scripture Lessons: Jeremiah 1:4-10; 1 Corinthians 12:27-13:13

Hymns: 16; 293; 415:1-4; 45:1

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: Luke 4:20-32

²⁰ Then He closed the book, and gave *it* back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on Him. ²¹ And He began to say to them, "Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." ²² So all bore witness to Him, and marveled at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth. And they said, "Is this not Joseph's son?"

²³ He said to them, "You will surely say this proverb to Me, 'Physician, heal yourself! Whatever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in Your country.' " ²⁴ Then He said, "Assuredly, I say to you, no prophet is accepted in his own country. ²⁵ But I tell you truly, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, and there was a great famine throughout all the land; ²⁶ but to none of them was Elijah sent except to Zarephath, *in the region* of Sidon, to a woman *who was* a widow. ²⁷ And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian."

²⁸ So all those in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, ²⁹ and rose up and thrust Him out of the city; and they led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city was built, that they might throw Him down over the cliff. ³⁰ Then passing through the midst of them, He went His way.

³¹ Then He went down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and was teaching them on the Sabbaths. ³² And they were astonished at His teaching, for His word was with authority. (NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth.
Amen.

In Christ Jesus, God our Savior, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: The Epiphany season focus on Jesus' glory.

Why does this Epiphany season of the church year matter? It begins with the account of the wise men from the east coming to worship Jesus, which represents the gentile world turning to Christ in faith. In the weeks following Epiphany we center our attention on Jesus' glory, and how the glory of the Lord is revealed.

Does it really matter that much if Jesus actually did the miracles credited to Him? Many believe that these are stories circulated by people who were impressed by Jesus and wanted others to be impressed also. They contend that people were motivated to add miracles to the life of Christ because Greek and Roman mythology had the gods visiting the earth and doing great things, and so if the gentiles were going to be brought to faith then it was necessary to make Jesus sound more divine. In other words, a good many teach that the gospels are loaded with myths that need to be sorted out.

This is what many believe and teach in liberal Lutheranism today, especially among progressive clergy. It is argued that the ideas of love and kindness and receiving sinners which Jesus promoted are what's actually important for us today, and it's not so important if these things actually happened. When one starts rejecting the Scriptures where does one stop? It actually does come down to the authority of Jesus' teaching. Are these the teaching of a man, albeit a good and wise man, or are these the teachings of God? In our text we see that --

**THEME: Jesus Reveals His Divine Authority
through His Teaching.**

Our text returns to the synagogue in Nazareth and the people --

I. Hearing Jesus' Gracious Words.

In our gospel lesson last Sunday, we read the account of how Jesus read from Isaiah during their Sabbath worship in the synagogue in Nazareth. Jesus read that portion which spoke of His own anointing by the Holy Spirit to preach good news to the people and the coming of the acceptable year of the Lord. The Holy Spirit does not share with us Jesus' entire sermon on this occasion, only that He declared to the people that this Scripture was fulfilled in their hearing. What our text does report is how the people responded, and how they characterized Jesus' teaching. "*So all bore witness to Him, and marveled at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth.*" (v.22)

Perhaps we have wondered what it would be like to sit at Jesus' feet and hear one of His sermons. Perhaps we think to ourselves that would be one of the highlights of our lives. Perhaps we might think that this is something that will happen when we go to heaven and see Jesus' face to face, and indeed it will be wonderful.

How blessed were those people in Nazareth that Jesus came back to His hometown when He was known as a teacher! They were privileged to have Him come and teach them on that Sabbath Day. We see that the reaction was unanimous. They marveled at the gracious words which proceeded from Jesus' mouth. It was every bit as wonderful as you might imagine hearing Jesus proclaim the wonders of the gospel, the deliverance from the captivity of sin, and the replacing of all those representations of sadness and grief in the life of the sinner with the representations of joy and blessedness.

That's what the people of Nazareth got to experience. It was absolutely a new and wonderful experience for them to hear solid proclamations of the wonders of the God's grace and forgiveness. without a lot of quotations from old rabbis, and hedging about what this or that statement might mean, and then qualifying any of the statements of God's love and forgiveness with the call for personal achievements in fulfilling the law. Jesus' words were

gracious words that came with clarity and grace, easy to understand, wonderful to hear.

It was so because of who Jesus was and is! He **is** the Messiah! He **is**, even to this day and forever, the incarnate Son of God who was anointed by the Holy Spirit to bring the message of God's love and forgiveness to the people of this world.

This preaching of our Lord Jesus in the synagogue in Nazareth was a demonstration of Jesus' authority as the Christ, the Son of God. The initial response of all those present that day was a true and correct response. They marveled at the gracious words that proceeded out Jesus' mouth! And so they should have marveled.

What about us? Are the ideas that we have to wait until we get to heaven to share in this experience true and accurate? I don't think that I'm a terrible preacher, but listening to Pastor Barthels, well, we all know that is not the same as listening to Jesus! It just can't be! Of course, that's true on one level, but it isn't true on another level, a very important level.

As we talk about Jesus' divine authority as it relates to His teaching and preaching, we are talking about the authority of Jesus' Word. Too many people like to equate Jesus' Word with the red letters found in some editions of the Bible. A lot of people think that is a very nice feature, however it can lead to a faulty conclusion. Unfortunately, many false teachers take advantage of that faulty conclusion. Too many people are taught that the words in red in their Bibles are more important than other words because those are actually the words of Jesus, and other words and accounts, even contained in the gospels are not as reliable or authoritative.

In fact, "*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.*" (2 Timothy 3:16) And **Jesus is the Word of God incarnate!** We read in John's gospel, "*The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.*" (John 12:14) When the Word of God is taught in its truth and purity then we do experience the wonder of grace that was experienced by the people

in Nazareth on that Sabbath Day so long ago. We also ought to marvel at the gracious words that we are hearing from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Every time we have an opportunity to hear the Word of God, as it is taught in its truth and purity, (not by the false prophets which the fill the earth) we should recognize this as the wonderful opportunity that it is, to sit at Jesus' feet and to learn from Him the wonders of salvation that He secured for us in the greatness of God's love for us lost sinners.

Coming to hear the Word of the Lord from a humble pastor is not a letdown, but a chance to sit at Jesus' feet, as the Apostle Paul characterized his teaching experience with the Thessalonians: *“you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.”* (1 Thessalonians 2:13) Jesus' authority is clearly presented to us in His Word, and so the gospel *“is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes.”* (Romans 1:16)

Now we come to the sad part of our text. People --

II. Dismissing Jesus' Authority.

“And they said, “Is this not Joseph's son?”

²³*He said to them, “You will surely say this proverb to Me, ‘Physician, heal yourself! Whatever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in Your country.’ ”* ²⁴*Then He said, “Assuredly, I say to you, no prophet is accepted in his own country. ²⁵But I tell you truly, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, and there was a great famine throughout all the land; ²⁶but to none of them was Elijah sent except to Zarephath, in the region of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. ²⁷And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian.”*

²⁸*So all those in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, ²⁹and rose up and thrust Him out of the city; and they led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city was built, that they might throw Him down over the cliff. ³⁰Then passing through the midst of them, He went His way.”* (v.22-30)

Things took an ugly turn very quickly. They looked at Jesus and what they saw was one of the kids they had watched grow up in Nazareth. This is just Joseph's kid! Implied in that was, "*Why should we listen to Him!*" or "*Who does He think He is?*" They looked at Jesus and determined that He was getting a little too big for His britches. They discredited the wonder of authority and grace they had just witnessed because of familiarity. This was the boy who worked alongside of His father Joseph, building things around town. This was the young man who not so long ago, before He went traipsing about the country so full of Himself, that had worked for them, worked with His hands just like they did. They weren't about to listen to Him telling them what they were supposed to believe and how they were supposed to live. In fact, if He wanted them to believe then let Him do some of the wonders Jesus had done in some of the other towns!

When Jesus rebuked them for their pride and desire for the lesser temporal blessings, and when Jesus reminded them from Bible History how the people of Israel had missed out on spiritual blessings in the past, they became all the angrier and even more set on despising and rejecting Jesus. It was all about their own pride, and Jesus being too common, too familiar. We know the saying "*Familiarity breeds contempt,*" and so it did in Nazareth, of Galilee.

We have a different background in our relationship with Jesus. We hardly ever even think of Jesus working with His hands as a builder. The Scriptures are silent about that portion of Jesus' life. We are very familiar, or at least we should be familiar with the historical narrative of the gospel accounts of Jesus' life. Too often we present lessons from the gospels as "Bible stories" about Jesus. That's unfortunate, because it is in fact Bible **History**, not mere stories, and it is too easy for people, including many preachers in our day and age to degrade these accounts of Jesus' life to being merely stories that people told to make Jesus look good.

Year after year in our lives, we hear about Jesus and the miracles credited to Him, and lessons and sermons that He taught, and we think, "*Oh Yeah, I know all that! Those are good stories.*" And we might even think we know all about Jesus, and who He was and

where He came from, instead of who He IS! and His presence in my life with His power and authority. Through much of our day-to-day life we don't even think about Jesus' authority, and the authority of His Word for my life. *"Familiarity breeds contempt!"*

So, we ought to pay attention to Jesus' words of warning and rebuke, and instead of becoming outraged, humble ourselves before the mighty hand of our God and Savior Jesus Christ. He is our God! We ought not think we can just pitch Him over a cliff and be rid of Him!

What a mistake the people of Nazareth made. Of course, they couldn't just pitch Jesus over a cliff. He is almighty God! He walked through the midst of them and they couldn't stop Him. He is Almighty God! But they were rid of Him. He left Nazareth. In fact, Capernaum became His home base.

Be careful. We all need to be – oh – so very careful that we do not communicate to the Lord that we would like to be rid of Him. We **can** be rid of Him but to our own great loss. One is far better off--

III. Acknowledging Jesus' Authority.

We read of this in our text.

"Then He went down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and was teaching them on the Sabbaths. ³²And they were astonished at His teaching, for His word was with authority." (v.31-32)

As it was His custom, as an important part of Jesus' public ministry, He went to the synagogue on the Sabbaths also in Capernaum, and He taught them as part of their Sabbath worship. They weren't as familiar with Jesus as the citizens of Nazareth, but they were astonished at Jesus' teaching. His words had authority. Jesus' words hit home. Jesus words were powerful t save!

When was the last time we were astonished at Jesus' teaching? May the Holy Spirit open our hearts to hear this astonishing truth of salvation in a crucified and risen and ever-living Savior who came down to earth to fulfill all righteousness for us, and went to the cross to endure the curse of God for our transgressions. **This is astonishing!** We have life, everlasting life through faith in His

name. **His Word is truth!** His truth endures to all generations! It is all as astonishing today as it was 2000 years ago, and it has the same power and authority as when Jesus sat in the synagogue and spoke the Word of truth, and people heard it from His own lips.

Early next month we will enter the season of Lent, and we will be considering so closely this sacrifice Jesus made on our behalf. May the Spirit fill our hearts with anticipation of that time meditating upon the Lord's passion, and may we continue to be astonished at the lessons Jesus presents to us in His Word of life.

AMEN.

“Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” Amen. (Romans15:13)