

**"Our Jesus"**

Luke 4:20-32

I. *Is not the one we always want;*

II. *but He is greater than we could have hoped for.*

Every one of us this morning has expectations of certain people in our lives. We have expectations of our parents. We have expectations of our spouses and our children. We have expectations of our leaders, like our President. We expect them to do the right thing and to do what is best for the country as a whole. We have expectations of our teachers, that they would teach us the right things and lead us into the truth.

When these individuals do the right things and live up to their expectations we are blessed and we grow. When these individuals do not live up to our expectations we can get hurt even cynical about life and right and wrong.

To be sure the people of Nazareth had very certain expectations of one of their favorite home town heroes--Jesus. By this time Jesus' ministry was under way and Jesus was becoming popular and famous as a preacher and a worker of miracles. Imagine what was going through the minds of the people as Jesus entered the town.

What would Jesus do at Nazareth? Would Jesus perform many miracles as He apparently did at other places? What would Jesus say and teach to the people? What would Jesus do at the synogoge for worship? The answer to that question Luke tells us this morning.

As was the custom Jesus the rabbi (teacher) took the scroll and began to read. Jesus read:

**"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."** (verses 18-19).

A beautiful and comforting text to be sure. Amazingly is Jesus' comments regarding this well known passage from Isaiah. **"Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."** (verse 20).

We can only conjecture how excited the people were. What would Jesus bring to the people of Nazareth? Would He bring fame? Fortune? Wealth and good fortune? The text says that the people "spoke well of

him." Yet we know that their perspective and expectation of Jesus was not altogether correct.

The people also asked, "Isn't this Joseph's son?" (verse 22). The expectation they had of Jesus was a good person, a powerful person, but ultimately a person they were familiar with and a person they thought they knew the most important things about. In short, they did not think Jesus could be the real Messiah, after all Jesus was the boy that grew up with them and the boy whose family they knew first hand.

Looking into their hearts and what they actually were believing Jesus' words seem confrontational even awkward to us in a synogogue setting. Jesus said, **"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. 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. 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.'" (verses 23-27).**

Jesus spoke of Elijah and Elisha a time of tremendous unfaithfulness of the Jews. Remember, it was Elijah who had to defeat the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel. He was also the prophet whose ministry occurred when Ahab was King and Jezebel was Queen and she in her evilness tried to have him killed. This the leader who was persecuting all of the people of God.

Elisha, whose ministry directly followed that of Elijah had to undergo his own persecution and rejection. Elisha was able to cure Naaman, a new-Jew, of leprosy. Why did he not heal more people? Because of their rejection of God's Word and the work of His prophets. What Jesus was saying plainly was that the people of Nazareth had the same heart as one of the worst times in all of Israel. Their reaction should not surprise us in the least.

It was the disposition of their hearts that Jesus used the proverb--"Physician heal yourself."--that He did. What was meant by this? There can be two basic understandings. First, we may think the people's expectation of Jesus.

While they readily accepted Jesus as a prophet and as a healer they still remembered him and looked at him as 'Joseph's son.' While it is not explicit in the Bible, tradition does tell us that Joseph died early and that Joseph was not present for most of Jesus' earthly ministry. It is true that

Mary is present as she was at the wedding at Cana, and even at Jesus' crucifixion as well; in addition there is mention of Jesus' brothers such as James and Simon and Jude, but there is no mention of Joseph, Mary's husband and the man who raised Jesus. Because of this perhaps this could mean that the people would question why Jesus would leave Nazareth and go and perform miracles and healings and not be by Joseph's side to save his life. In other words, the people were questioning Jesus' decision to do good for others and not for His own immediate neighbors.

This would also make sense for Jesus choosing Elijah and Elisha who ministered and did miracles for non-Jewish people, because of the people's disbelief at that time. There is however, another and perhaps more simple way to understand Jesus' proverb.

"Physician heal yourself." is a simple way of asking for proof for something. It is kind of like saying: You say you are a doctor. Fine, then prove to us you are a doctor by healing yourself of something. If this was the intent then it was as if the people were saying to Jesus, prove to us that you really are the Messiah, because you only seem like the son of Joseph to us. Prove to us you are the Messiah by giving us everything that is good including health and prosperity! That is after all what Messiahs do.

Whether it is the first or the second meaning what we can be sure of is that the people of Nazareth were not going to take Jesus simply at His word without further proof. In that sense the people of Nazareth represent everyone who does not want Jesus by faith. It is also interesting to note at this time that Jesus would be confronted by people who did say to Jesus that if He was in fact the Messiah He should save Himself and show His glory. That incident was at the cross itself. At that time later people were telling Jesus to come off the cross and save Himself.

Jesus did not give the people of Nazareth at that time the immediate proof they were looking for; rather they became infuriated with Him and even tried to kill Him. Neither did Jesus show His power and might in the way the people were expecting at the foot of the cross. There Jesus died. In both cases Jesus failed to meet their expectations; at the same time Jesus after His death on the cross raised Himself up and in His resurrection gave proof to everyone that He was exactly who He proclaimed. (see John 10:18). In fact Jesus' gift was greater and more powerful than anyone could have imagined. This is how God works and it is why we need to allow God to be God and to follow and trust Him.

Like the people of Nazareth even church members today want a Jesus different than the one they actually have. If that sounds terrible and blasphemous it is because it is. So often people want a Jesus that will come into their lives and who will remove every single hardship and pain

this side of heaven. They say if Jesus is so good and so powerful then nothing bad should happen. Yet, the reality is that believers suffer and sometimes they suffer especially because they are followers of Jesus.

Jesus taught plainly that, **"If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you."** (John 15:18-19). Scripture gives comfort of these times saying to us, **"In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: "My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son." Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father?"** (Hebrews 12:4-7).

Just as many people want a pain free existence often they want a faith where they can selectively choose one item and leave another. Some are fine with Jesus who constantly says everything is alright and to not worry about anything yet they don't want to hear Jesus calling His believers to go into the world because the world is perishing. The Jesus we have is the Jesus who gives us the whole truth that we need and who sends us into the world to transform it.

Today I hear so often of people who want God and all the good things but they are not so sure that they want to be a part of a church community that has to gather together and sometimes compromise in non-essential things as they grow and serve one another. Rather, they would prefer just themselves and God and not the hassle of other people. Yet this is not the Jesus we have. The Jesus we have is God who gathers us together in a single body of believers led by Jesus. This after all is what we heard in the Epistle to the Corinthians this morning. Jesus joins us together, each with different gifts, each with different roles to play, all brought together and held together by love--the greatest gift of all.

Today we don't have the Jesus that our frail, limited and sin stained hearts and minds so often want. But this is good news because in reality we have a Jesus so much greater, so much more powerful and so much more loving than we could have desired or even conceived.