

## Sermon – Our Saviors Lutheran Church- January 27<sup>th</sup>, 2019

Text- Luke 4:14-21

### 20 Minute Sermon or Not

Grace and Peace to you and from our Lord Jesus Christ. We have a homecoming scene in our Gospel this morning. Jesus returns to his hometown and is invited to preach at the local synagogue. You know, local boy makes good. We'll get to what happened in a moment.

Years ago I was invited back to my home congregation to preach. You know, local boy returns. I was a Pastor in Albany, NY, and this homecoming was at Redeemer Lutheran Church in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn. A congregation that was struggling with dwindling membership. Quite a significant number of folks were moving out of Bay Ridge due to the fact that the neighborhood was changing. There were blacks and Chinese moving in. Norwegians and Swedes were deciding to leave. Very hard to come home to the congregation where you grew up - to a place where people remember your warts and flaws and the silly things you did in your youth. I'm not sure what my sermon was about but I do remember it did not cause the parishioners to throw me off a cliff.

Yes, Jesus has come home. He is about 30 years old when he has the honor of reading the scripture and delivering a homily. He certainly wasn't the same person as the one who grew up on the streets of Nazareth. The person who made his share of mistakes, the person who worked with his father Joe in the carpentry shop. Surely, many in the synagogue said that day, "isn't that Joe's kid?" Maybe even the stories circulated about the crazy things he did as a teenager. But, the crowd settles down. They know how to worship. Just like us in the ELCA. Everyone quiet during the sermon, most everybody paying attention, only a few nodding off. Jesus gets up and reads from the prophet Isaiah.

*"The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."*

Then Jesus rolls up the scroll and gives a nine word sermon. Probably the shortest sermon ever recorded. Jesus homily? *“Today, this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”*

If you were here yesterday for the Ordination of Dara Clifford, you will remember that I used this same text for my homily for the service where she became an ELCA pastor. Yesterday I focused on the word, TODAY. I made the point that Pastor Dara is a ‘today’ person. That she sees the importance of caring for people, helping the poor, healing the distressed, sharing forgiveness- All Today. There will be a nowness to her ministry - I should know because I helped train her.

But today what happens with Jesus in his home congregation is anything but a celebration, or a service with good feelings like we had yesterday. Jesus sits down and shares some comments, after the people ask him what he meant by Today. They basically ask him, “who does he think he is?” So Jesus accuses those in the synagogue of rejecting every prophet who ever stepped on their toes. He called them out on how they treated the most vulnerable in their midst. Now, nobody was speaking well of him. Actually, it was worse than that. The people got so angry they wanted to toss Jesus off a cliff.

What made them so upset?  
Glad you asked the question.

Had to do with the word TODAY. You see Jesus was saying that now there had to be changes. For them and for us. Pretend you are sitting in the synagogue, and Jesus is talking about today and the nowness of the moment. When Jesus announces good news for the poor might possibly mean bad news for them and us.

If Jesus came to bring good news to the poor, it means that we who have vast resources have to examine our attitude toward sharing and helping the poor. Today we have to figure out how much of our cash do we give away. (Great opportunity next week with our Souper Bowl of Caring Sunday).

If Jesus came to pardon those who were incarcerated or were people who many considered undesirable immigrants, than those in Nazareth and us have to deal with our self-serving attitudes toward those people. Today!!!

If Jesus was giving sight to the blind, then the blind would now see the way the powerful and the proud had been taking advantage of them. And if Jesus were to care for the oppressed, then those in Nazareth and us would have to stop oppressing them. Today!!!

Everything would be turned upside down. The last would be first and the first would be last. The people in Nazareth, and sometimes us, do not like that. Especially when we consider the word TODAY!

So the Gospel says they wanted to throw Jesus off a cliff. Then it says,  
*"But Jesus passed through the midst of them and went on his way."*

So what do we do. Do we say no not today? Maybe tomorrow? Or do we go with Jesus and follow him on His way? Do we say, OK Jesus, today we will walk with you. We will help make that happen. Yes, Jesus went on his way. It is that way- Jesus way- that we too must follow. So that, even in us, this scripture might be fulfilled. Today!

Amen. Let it be so.