

Sermon Text: Luke 4:20 – 32
Sermon Theme: What is Your Reaction to the Words of Jesus?

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." 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. 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."

All the people in the synagogue were furious when they heard this. 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. But he walked right through the crowd and went on his way. 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.

What is your reaction when you hear some from the kitchen yell out, “Supper is ready!” Do you not move from the spot you are in, or do you immediately come to the table to enjoy the meal that has been prepared? What is your reaction when you hear politicians speak? Do you believe everything they tell you or do you find you are a little skeptical of the words they are speaking? What about the words recorded for us in the Bible? Do you believe absolutely everything that is written in God’s Word or does your sinful nature lead you to question some of the teachings found in the Bible. Based on the Gospel Lesson before us today, I want to ask you a question today? That question is: “What is your reaction to the words of Jesus?”

Let’s set the scene of our Gospel Lesson for today. Jesus is the guest speaker at a worship service in his home town. After reading a prophecy from the book of Isaiah, Jesus tells the people that he is the One Isaiah was writing about. He is the promised Messiah. At first, the crowd seems to accept Jesus’ words, for we are told, “All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips.” But, as true God, Jesus knew that what the words they were speaking did not line up with what was in their hearts. He knew the group didn’t see him as the promised Messiah, but only as the son of a carpenter by the name of Joseph. They had heard reports that he could do amazing things. So all that the people wanted from Jesus was to do the miracles he had performed in the town of Capernaum. That’s why Jesus says 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,’ Jesus continued, ‘no prophet is accepted in his hometown.’” The people in his hometown of Nazareth had rejected Jesus as the promised Savior, just as the people of Israel rejected Elijah and Elisha as messengers of God’s Word. What was the reaction of the crowd when they heard these words from Jesus? We are told, “All the people in the synagogue were furious when they heard this. 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.” But Jesus showed his almighty power and “walked right through the crowd and went on his way.” It was then in the town of Capernaum that Jesus found people willing to listen to him. We read, “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.”

Now we go back to the question I asked earlier. What is your reaction to the words of Jesus? Like the different people in this account from Luke chapter 4, there really is only one of two reactions that someone can have when they hear the words of Jesus. Either they will reject the words of Jesus, and try to push him out of their lives, or they will gladly hear and listen to what the Lord has to say. What about you? What is your reaction to the words of Jesus? The Bible tells us that the sinful mind is hostile to God. Your sinful nature and my sinful nature want nothing at all to do with Jesus and his words. If we allow the sinful nature inside of us to reject the words of Jesus, he has every right to walk away from us, to take his words away from us and leave us to suffer forever in hell. But, as we have heard in our Second Lesson from God's Word the past two weeks, God the Holy Spirit has placed faith in your heart and mine. Faith that knows Jesus as the Savior. Faith that trusts in the forgiveness of sins that Jesus won for us. Faith that is motivated by the love of Jesus to gladly and willingly hear all the words of Jesus found in the Bible.

So, what is your reaction to the words of Jesus? Let's look at some examples. What is your reaction when you hear from God's Word, "Honor your father and mother." Do you let your sinful nature control your attitude toward your parents? Do you ever show them disrespect? Do you ever disobey them? Do you ever make fun of them when you are with your friends? Or, do you see them as God's representatives, whom the Lord wants to use to bless you while here on this earth? Parents, do you ever feel like your children are simply a burden on your life? Do you ever fail to show them love? Or, do you view your children as they are spoken of in Psalm 127, "Sons are a heritage from the LORD, children a reward from him. Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are sons born in one's youth. Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them."

Or, how about your attitude toward worship? What is your reaction when you hear Jesus say to you in his Word, "Remember the Sabbath Day by keeping it holy." Do you ever let your sinful nature control you and view coming to Church as something you HAVE to do on a Sunday Morning or a Monday Evening? Does your sinful nature ever convince you that there is a better way to spend your time, rather than coming into God's house to worship him and hear his Word? Or, do you let the New Man, the new self, that the Holy Spirit has created in your heart, control your thinking and your attitude toward worship so you join your voice with King David when he says, "I rejoiced with those who said to me, 'Let us go to the house of the LORD.'"

Or, how about your attitude toward the words Jesus speaks to you and me in the Bible about Close Communion, about couples living together outside of marriage, or about the roles of men and women? Do you ever let your sinful nature control your attitude, and think to yourself, "Our Church and the Wisconsin Synod are so old-fashioned! After all, this is the 21st century! This can't be true anymore today!" Or, do you gladly and willingly listen to the words of Jesus and then respond with the words of Psalm 143, "Teach me to do your will, for you are my God; may your good Spirit lead me on level ground."

What is your reaction to the words of Jesus? As we take an honest look in our hearts, as we examine carefully what we have said or done in the past, you and I will confess that we are guilty, at times, of not wanting to hear the words of Jesus. We are all guilty of pushing him away at one time or another. For this sin, join with me in pleading for the Lord's forgiveness. Having confessed this sin, rejoice in these words from Jesus when he says to you, "Your sins are forgiven." What is your reaction to the words of Jesus? As the love of Jesus fills your heart, rejoicing in the forgiveness of all your sins that Jesus won for you, may God the Holy Spirit continue to bless you with the attitude that we read about in our Psalm for today. It is in Psalm 85 that we read, "I will listen to what God the LORD will say; he promises peace to his people, his saints. Surely his salvation is near those who fear him...You forgave the iniquity of your people and covered all their sins. Show us your unfailing love, O LORD, and grant us your salvation...I will hear what the Lord proclaims: peace to his people!" Amen.