

Luke 4: 21-30

We have read from Luke 4: 21-30, and verse 21 says, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing” Which scripture is Jesus talking about? Let’s read backwards. In verse 1 of Luke chapter 4 we see Jesus coming straight from the wilderness where he was praying for forty days and forty nights. That was a period of being equipped for service and surely, he was fully charged because the devil tested him by all means but without success. Straight from the wilderness, Jesus then went to Galilee. We are told that he taught in the synagogues and people glorified God. The shortly after that he then remembered his own people, the people of Nazareth, his hometown. Getting into a Synagogue as per his custom, we are told that Jesus opened the book of Isaiah and started reading, “ The spirit of the Lord is upon me, he sent me to preach the good news to the poor, to heal the broken hearted, to set the prisoners free, to open the eyes for the blind, to release those who are in chains, and to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour” Then he said to them, **“Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing”**

Verse 22 of Luke chapter 4 is so fascinating, the first part: **“And they were all giving witness, with wonder, to the words of grace which came from his mouth”**. They appreciated what he was saying. The second part of the same verse: **“Is not this the son of Joseph?”** Oh, what went wrong again? What made them to question his background? Who in that community did not know that Joseph was not Jesus’ biological father? Who in that community wasn’t aware that on his baptism the holy spirit testified that, **“This is my beloved son, with whom I am well pleased, listen to him”** So where is Joseph coming in? Inasmuch as they were astonished with his marvelous words, they focused on his background and missed an opportunity for salvation.

At that moment, Jews were almost tired and fed up of waiting for the Messiah. They have seen God working miracle after miracle throughout their history through the prophets, but the prophets were not Messiahs. So, with the coming of Jesus, we would expect them to be ready to receive the Messiah but alas, they are seeing the Son of Joseph, what a missed opportunity for salvation. If they had only rejected him but instead, they wanted to stone him to death. I want us to put ourselves in the shoes of Jesus. You have been equipped and with joy you feel that the people who should be the first beneficiaries of this grace are my own people, those who have

supported me when I was growing up. Remembering them with passion and love, their pay back is an attempt to stone you, what a shame! A missed opportunity!

Jewish people think of Isaiah 61:1, which Jesus quotes at Nazareth (vv. 18-19), as a promise to Israel—that the Messiah will bring good news to oppressed Israel, will heal the broken-hearted of Israel, and proclaim liberty to captive Israel. They think of the phrase, **“the day of vengeance of our God”** in Isaiah 61:2—which Jesus did not include in his quotation—as promising judgment on Israel’s enemies. In other words, they expect the messiah to deliver Israel and to wreak vengeance on Israel’s enemies. They were for centuries waiting for the day God would punish their enemies. For them the day of the Lord, the day of God’s vengeance was a day of jubilation because they would be set free, feasting while their enemies would be tormenting. This is again the problem the Jews had with Amos; Amos redefined the day of the Lord for them by reminding them that they were also to face judgement on the day of the Lord except those who have done the will of God. Jesus again this morning is reminding them the same.

Jesus also reminds them of God’s mercy on Gentile Naaman. Now, reference of Naaman is very interesting. Naaman had to be persuaded by the slave girl to visit Elisha. He had suffered for decades and decades, then the slave girl told him, “This kind of illness is nothing, if it was in Israel! Naaman ignored for some days till the wife persuaded him to say, “why can’t you just try” He almost missed a lifetime opportunity just by focusing on the status of the message bearer. As if that was not enough, after arriving at Elisha’s place. Naaman was told to go and wash seven times in Jordan, he started comparing Jordan and the rivers of Damascus till he was again persuaded to do so by his slaves. He almost missed an opportunity for salvation. So just like Naaman, the Jews expected to hear a certain message from Jesus but what they hear was a totally different message, opposite of the one that they expect to hear, so they are furious. But I think we should not judge them too harshly, because we, too, are easily angered when someone tells a truth that we don’t want to hear.

But I like Jesus’ approach, he reminded them, **“There were many lepers in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet, yet not one of them was cleansed, except Naaman, the Syrian”** Let’s not get

tired of doing good regardless of what people think or say. Let us not get weary of doing the right things even if we get the unexpected result.