

January 23, 2022

Luke 4:16-30

“He [Jesus] Went Away.”

Pilgrim Lutheran Church  
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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The theme for our message this morning is not positive. It is a quotation from the narrative of St. Luke: **He [Jesus] Went Away**. The words struck me hard because they are the final comment after Jesus reads from the book of Isaiah and announces salvation for the people of Nazareth in himself. We are told that the people "...rose up and drove him out of the town and brought him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they could throw him down the cliff. But passing through their midst, **He [Jesus] Went Away**."

What a horrible comment. The people of Nazareth saw and heard the Savior of the world actually read about himself, and they didn't want to have anything to do with him. And all of this happened in the context of a report about Jesus that had gone throughout all the surrounding country. He had been teaching in the synagogues and was being glorified by all. Nevertheless, the people of Nazareth wanted to kill the Word made flesh - they wanted to kill "the offspring of the woman" promised long ago in the garden of Eden after the fall into sin. It puts a knot in the stomach that anyone of us might ever do the same. For this reason we fervently pray to the Lord that we would not treat Jesus in such a way that the last comment on our relationship with him would be: **He Went Away**. May he never go away!

The apostle Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 10:12, "Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall." There is much we could say about that verse, but I place it in front of us this morning as a warning that we should take to heart. Even in the Christian there is the sinful nature that would rise up and throw Jesus down the cliff. There is that part of us that is always more than ready to kill the good faith that has been given to us by the Holy Spirit working in the means of grace. Sinful desires, this unbelieving world, and the liar who is Satan are always crouching at the door hoping to leap on us and take us away from the eternal dwelling that is ours in Jesus. The writer to the Hebrews states:

Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. For since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable, and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard, while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will (Heb. 2:1-4).

Yes. We must pay much closer attention to what we have heard. Jesus says beautiful words to us in our gospel lesson about himself. He says, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." We find ourselves in grave danger in the moment when we are no longer poor, blind, and oppressed. These three words - poor, blind, and oppressed - are about a spiritual condition. Jesus has been set apart to proclaim good news to the poor. He has been set apart to proclaim release to those who are oppressed or captive. He has been set apart to proclaim the year of the Lord's undeserved kindness.

The year of favor/salvation is found in Jesus. More on that shortly. For now, to be poor does not mean that you don't have any money. To be poor is to see one's own spiritual poverty and to look to the spiritual richness of Jesus who took unto himself our spiritual poverty so that he might give to us the richness of his righteousness. In Jesus and his righteousness we are blessed because our lawless deeds are forgiven. Our sins are covered in him. No longer is our sin counted because we have been given the righteousness of Jesus. This is the richness that he gives.

When Jesus quotes Isaiah and says he has come to bring liberty to the captives he is talking about our release from the prison of Satan. We have become imprisoned by sin, death, and hell. The freedom that Jesus brought to us is by him becoming sin for us - taking our sins to himself. He brings release by dying our death and absorbing into himself our hell. By doing this he overcomes sin, death, and hell and lets us out of the prison-house of Satan that we may enter freely into the house of eternal heaven with the Lord. He gives recovery of sight to the blind. That means that he gives us spiritual eyes to see our need and to spiritually see how all of our needs are met in him.

Jesus has come to set at liberty those who are oppressed. Another way of saying that would be to say that he has come to give those who are broken release. To be released from being broken emphasizes the forgiveness of all our sins. Listen to this comment from Arthur A. Just in his commentary on *Luke*:

The "captives" and the "broken ones" include both those who are in physical bondage ... to sickness or demon possession, or in spiritual bondage to sin and death ... the Good News is that now in Jesus all of creation has been freed from the bondage of its fallenness. In the OT during the fiftieth year - the Jubilee - slaves were liberated, debts were forgiven, people returned to their homes and stopped all sowing and reaping (Leviticus 25). It was prophecy of the Messiah's eschatological salvation, which now breaks into the world through Jesus' ministry in the "year of the Lord's favor/acceptance."

In other words we have been released not only from sin, but all the consequences that go with sin. The way in which Jesus released us was by taking into himself not only every one of our sins, but the consequences. It really goes beyond our understanding. However, we are to know and believe that Jesus has taken it all into himself. He knows us - that intimately. As Isaiah says in his 53<sup>rd</sup> chapter:

Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows ... stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted ... he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed ... the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all ... He was oppressed, and he was afflicted ... like a lamb that is led to the slaughter ... By oppression and judgment he was taken away ... he was cut off out of the land of the living ... he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors ... he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors.

When you begin to understand these things, and then comprehend what the people of Nazareth were ultimately rejecting, it causes you to pause and cry out to the Lord that you would never reject such

incredible blessings. What happened in Nazareth was really a microcosm of what would happen throughout Jesus ministry, and it also pointed to what would continue to happen to this day when people are confronted with both law and the good news. People will reject and be angry at Jesus because he will not be what they want him to be. People will reject and be angry with us because of what we know and believe him to be and because we will not be like the unbelieving world. These things are hard for us to endure.

In the end of our account, it is interesting to note that Jesus escapes from the murderous grasp of those in Nazareth by a miracle. It says that he passed through their midst. It was not the time for Jesus to die. But when **He [Jesus] Went Away** he continued on his journey to ultimately die for them and us and to even rise from the dead to show that there is forgiveness of sins. In the same way, we continue on in our journey of dying and rising with Jesus. And we pray that he would never go away from us as we see what happened in our Gospel lesson.

May it be that we always welcome and remain with him in his Word regardless of how difficult his word may be for us. May we pay close attention to what he says that we may not drift from it, and if we have, may he forgive us and restore us in his peace. May we never neglect such a great salvation. May it ever be for us like the days of Nehemiah in our Old Testament lesson, that we also would embrace the word of Jesus, and that each one of us would say “Amen! Let it be so!” and bow our heads and worship the Lord with our faces to the ground.

Amen.

Pastor Brock Abbott