Luke 4:20-32 (21b) Today, this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.

It is just an absolutely incredible text. We heard the first part of this history last week and today we hear the end of the history. Well, starting with what we heard last week and looking at the whole of this history let’s see what we can learn. Our theme will be: **HERE IS JESUS!**

Just imagine for yourself what it was that took place. Here is Jesus in your Synagogue. Jesus is becoming famous. Famous for his teaching and preaching, actually famous because of the miracles and wonders that he has been doing all around the area of Galilee and Judea. Here he is in your Synagogue the very place where he grew up and where He worshiped with you for years. When given the nod that allowed Jesus to be the guest speaker, Jesus stood and Jesus was handed the scroll of the prophet Isaiah. Jesus turns that scroll to the words of Isaiah 61 and he reads. **“The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the afflicted. He sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release for those who are bound, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”**

After Jesus reads these words it is clear that he preaches a sermon on the meaning and purpose of these words. His sermon evidently started with the words we highlighted for ourselves: **“Today, this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”** I don’t know exactly what Jesus preached but I can tell you that it would have been the best sermon anyone there had ever heard. Here is the Son of God, the very Word himself, preaching and sharing the wonder and marvel of God. He is sharing especially a text that pointed to the Messiah and what that Messiah would do for the people. I can just imagine hearing that sermon myself. Jesus preaching on sin and the forgiveness of sin that was going to come from and through the Messiah that God would send, the Messiah your whole faith was about. A Messiah that would bring the “good news” of eternal life and salvation to God’s people. A Messiah that would cause the grace of God to break forth and no doubt start that **“time of the Lord’s favor.”** Seriously, it must have been the best sermon these people had ever heard.

And I want you to note the initial results of that preaching. The text before us said this: **“They spoke well of him and were impressed by the words of grace that came from his mouth.”** Let that sink in. They liked what they heard. They recognized the message was of compassion and the love of God. They even recognize and describe the message with the phrase “**words of grace.”** Wow! Words of grace. I suppose by that phrase they could just mean that the words were really good, and beautifully put together, but in truth the word is the word for grace, as in “the grace of God.” I think they did hear a message of God’s love and compassion for them as people in need of forgiveness and salvation. After all, that was the reason for the prophecy to begin with. To bring comfort to God’s oppressed and downtrodden people. To bring them hope and to help them look forward to what God was promising and surely would bring! The best sermon they had ever heard and a sermon that literally shouted “the grace of God!”

Meanwhile, in the congregation are the weeds. You know, the weeds sown among the wheat in the field. The weeds that grow and choke out the wheat. The weeds that work to hinder and hurt faith where ever and whenever they can! The weeds are speaking, **“Isn’t this Joseph’s son?”** The other Gospels report: **“Where did this fellow get his wisdom and these miracles? Isn’t this the carpenter’s son? Isn’t his mother named Mary? And aren’t James, Joseph, Simon and Judas his brothers? Aren’t all of his sisters here with us? Where then did this fellow get all of these things?”** (Mtt / Mrk).

Did you hear what they said? They know Jesus and his family. I will tell you they knew that Joseph and Mary claimed that Jesus was a miraculous baby and that really their question **“Isn’t this Joseph’s son?”** was meant to slander and ridicule what Joseph had told them. But more than that! These people know of the miracles of Jesus. And these people admit here that Jesus has wisdom! What in the world is going on? Dear people, welcome to the world!

There is more going on here than just **“No prophet is accepted in his hometown.”** What is going on here is unbelief. What is going on here is a complete and utter rejection of Jesus as the Messiah and the Son of God. What is going on here is **“that seeing they do not see and though hearing they do not hear.”** And they raise their voices to oppose and speak against Jesus so that even those who might have come to faith in this town are prevented. Yes, what you see at work here is the world opposed to Jesus.

And why? What had they ever seen or witnessed that should so turn them against Jesus? Again, I think the members of this church knew the claims of Mary and Joe that Jesus was a miraculous birth. I think these people had seen Jesus grow up and I can tell you surely that not a one of them had ever seen Jesus do a single thing wrong or out of place. They would have known that Jesus was an exceptional student while attending their Synagogue school. They would have known Jesus as an excellent craftsman who did only the best of work as a carpenter. In truth, in the entire lifetime of Jesus these people would have seen nothing in Jesus but kindness and good, perfection and holiness on a level they could not grasp. And here is Jesus in his utter simplicity shining forth. Yet they have no joy in this. They see no good in Jesus. And as the unbeliever is want, they reject his wisdom, reject his ability to do miracles, reject Jesus as utter trash. Again, welcome to the world.

Now, what is the point of the Scripture telling us this history? It is given as a warning, a warning to us and our faith. It is given as a reminder to not fall into the trap and snare of Satan the way these people had. Given so that when the Lord offers to us the wonder of Jesus we don’t turn and reject as they did.

Because here is Jesus. He is God’s son, born of a virgin, born to bring the hope and wonder of eternal life and salvation. Many of us have heard of and learned of Jesus in this very church. If you are a member here, you have undergone confirmation classes, a time when you got to systematically study and learn more deeply the wonders of Jesus. Those classes and studies had an impact.

I think of many of you as young adults, preparing for confirmation. At that time your faith and your grasp of Jesus was perhaps the best it could be. You were excited about Jesus. You confessed the name of Jesus. You promised that you would rather die than give up the truth, the wonder and the joy of what Jesus is. Seriously, go look at all the pictures of all the kids confirmed here and see the looks and smiles as they confess faith in Jesus and promise to be faithful to Him and his word.

But as time went on, the world talked them away from Jesus. Faith was laughed at. The wisdom of God was scorned and ridiculed. The idea of sin, accountability to God, that a Savior suffered, died and rose from the dead to give you eternal life? Seriously, you believe in that garbage of faith? And as time goes on, so many, so many hearts filled with Jesus became empty and void of his grace and love.

I can tell you of adults, who entered into classes and during the time of those classes marveled and rejoiced in the message of Jesus as Lord and Savior from sin. And then the world came after them. It might have been jobs or drink or drugs or immorality or just the stress of life and living, but with time, sometimes a short time, this wonder and marvel of Jesus was lost to them. They forgot the joy of salvation. They cast aside the wisdom of Jesus and His Word.

How so like the children and adults of Nazareth. They had Jesus among them. They had the Son of God walking their streets, growing with their children, and setting the example of holiness and love. And now, here before them is Jesus beginning to implement the plan of God’s grace for their very souls. They reject him. No it is more than that. They have come to hate and despise Jesus. All Jesus did was share with them the truth of God’s Holy Word. But they have taken Jesus out, drove him out of town to the cliff that was nearby. Their intent was to toss him off the cliff. Their intent was to kill Jesus, to be rid of him for no other reason than he spoke God’s truth.

Thank goodness for Jesus. I don’t know exactly how it happened but the Scripture records this simple line, **“He passed through the middle of them and went on his way.”** In many ways, those are some of the saddest words recorded in the Bible. Oh, not the part of the miraculous escape, that is awesome. I have imagined myself a part of that crowd and try to grasp what happened. There we are, furious, filled with murderous rage. We are driving him out of town, but Jesus is just moving along with us. We are pushing and shoving him and Jesus offers little resistance other than a rebuke here and there for our anger and rage. There is the cliff. We are almost there. Get him, grab him, thrown him off….where is he? Where is Jesus? It is mass confusion. If you could have been a bird flying above us you would have seen Jesus just casually walking away from the cliff, right through the middle of everyone. No one seems to see him. No one seems to even notice that Jesus had turned and gone the other way, against the crowd and the anger but that’s what happened. Make no mistake, it was a miracle that he escaped.

The miracle is awesome but the last words are fearful. **“He went on his way.”** You are aware that Jesus does not go back? You are aware that here was God’s opportunity for faith and salvation and because of this rejection and the fury of unbelief Jesus is now gone! He does not return. He does not give a second chance, he does not come to preach and teach again. Here is one of those instances that causes me to say with great sadness: “Beware. If you insist on turning away from Jesus and His Word, beware, lest God grant you your wish for eternity.” Yep, **“He went on his way,”** are some of the saddest words in Scripture.

And again, what of us? What flimsy excuse are you using to turn away from Jesus? God, through his faithful church has said to you, “Here is Jesus.” Here is my Son. Here is your Savior! And how would you answer?

So let’s just make sure we grasp the complete wonder of Jesus. God had created a perfect world. The first man and woman of that perfect world were confronted by temptation and though guided by God, they too rejected the truth of God for the lies of Satan. Enter sin. And with sin comes the ugliness that it brings. As our Catechism reminds us: Evil is all the bad things that are a part of our lives as a result of Adam and Eve’s sin. The world has problems, deep problems. Not just physical problems but spiritual and moral problems. As a result of this sin, we now face death, not the threat of physical death, but the horror and reality of eternal death, an existence completely void of the grace and love of God.

But God promises a Savior from this sin and damnation. Throughout history God acts and moves for this promise. God not only gives more promises but sees to it that the whole of history is geared to serve this promise of salvation. Promise after promise after promise. The lesson of God is clear: **the Lord would anointed him to preach good news to the afflicted. He would be sent to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release for those who are bound, to proclaim the time of the Lord’s grace.”**

Now enter Jesus. Not just a lone figure, appearing haphazardly, to proclaim a new message of work righteousness, but the Son of God born to save us. Jesus lived the perfect life we could not. Jesus faced every trial and temptation we do and was without sin. All of this so Jesus could go to the cross and there, in accord with the plan of his Father, Jesus became the atoning sacrifice for sin. Our sin. He took upon himself our sins and their punishment for all eternity. He suffered for us, died for us, paid for our souls in the only way it could be done. And then he rose from the dead. In that resurrection is the heart and core of our faith. Jesus is God’s Son. Jesus is our Redeemer. Because Jesus lives, so will we. God calls upon us to believe in Jesus.

That’s it. That’s the message of Jesus. God’s Son came to grant us forgiveness and eternal life because of what He accomplished on the cross and through the empty tomb. He is our Savior from sin, our promise of eternal life, our hope for redemption and everlasting peace. He is Jesus. He is here before us in his Word. We can hear and believe in God’s grace or we can hear and not believe, rejecting Jesus and God’s grace.

It’s that simple. I believe this message of Jesus so powerful that it will change your life, change how you think, and change what you are! Change you into being a child of God and an heir of eternal life. Not because you have to but because the message of Jesus will change you. That simple.

So, here is Jesus! Please, cast aside all your petty and foolish reasons for chasing Jesus away. Hear and believe in Him. Amen.