

The title for today's message is: **It's A Message for Home**

Jesus said to those in the Synagogue: ***"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor."***

Grace and peace to you from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

I begin with a story of a unnamed pastor, regarding his journey to Czech Republic.

The Pastor said: I had arrived only a couple weeks before in the Czech Republic and I was living with a retired Czech couple in a small village.

Being the only American in the area he said, I was somewhat of a celebrity to the people there.

He recalled one day a couple of elders from a local church visited him to ask if he would preach in their church some Sunday morning.

Now the Sunday which they wanted him to preach finally came and he met early with his translator to go over what he would say.

He said when the time came he got up and preached making sure he stayed within the 20 minutes they had given him to preach.

After he sat down there was a great stir and the pastor of the church looked very flustered.

He didn't know what was going on but the pastor got up and began talking for another 20 minutes.

He said after the service ended the leaders were visibly disappointed in him and he didn't know what he did or what he said to cause this.

Finally, he found out that he was supposed to preach 20 minutes which didn't count the translation, in other words a 40 minute sermon.

He said even though they didn't try to throw him off a cliff like that of Jesus in our text, it did remind him of that story.

What happens when expectations are not reality? In Nazareth expectations were high.

The people there had heard about a man from their town who had been doing some amazing things in the country.

Not long ago Jesus had attended a wedding in Cana, only seven miles away and had turned water into wine, you remember!

Then only recently he had returned to Cana, met a nobleman and had healed his son who was lying sick by the seaside at Capernaum.

These were amazing miracles and Jesus continued traveling from village to village teaching in the Synagogues and being "glorified by all".

In fact the people were even talking about Jesus as being the Messiah. Yes, their own who has become famous is now coming home at long last.

Without a doubt the people were excited! Look the Synagogue was the local place of worship where all believers worshiped.

And normally they would meet twice a week for worship and then on the Sabbath for a special service.

And on that day the Chief Priest of the synagogue would ask a leader, or a special guest to lead the service.

He would be the one to not only lead the service but also to be responsible for one of the important Scripture readings: the reading of the prophets.

And since Jesus was the honored guest that Sabbath, he was asked to be the leader according to custom.

Now, a traditional synagogue service at that time had two parts. The first half was liturgical filled with many prayers that were read.

And, the people had their own “creed” which was called; “The Great Shema” meaning; The Lord our God, the Lord is One.

The second half of the service was not so different from the second half of our service, manly focusing on the Scriptures.

Whereas we have two or sometimes three readings, they would have seven. First a priest, then a Levite, and finally five ordinary laymen would read.

The last reading would be from the prophets and as I mentioned before would be led by the service leader, in this case by Jesus.

After the last reading there would usually be a sermon which could be preached by any Israelite who was capable and didn't require ordination.

And finally at the very end of the service there would be a brief prayer and the service would be over.

Now Jesus has just led the liturgical part of the service and then six men have come in front of the congregation to read their apportioned Scripture.

Luke tells us that Jesus stands up, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah is handed to Him. Jesus then opens it up to Isaiah chapter 61.

Remember – there was no chapter or verse numbers on the scroll's. Back then, Scripture was divided, but not numbered in any way.

Jesus reads from what we know as verse 1 and 2, then He stops reading and sits down. At this the people were shocked! Why?

Jesus is filled with the Spirit of God. He is anointed and the Spirit leads Jesus to do something that is completely contrary to what is to be done.

The rule was that each Scripture reader was to read 21 verses, or else read several verses and then continue with a devotion or sermon.

But Jesus stops short, rolls up the scroll and sits down. No wonder everyone was staring at him. Why did he do that they thought?

But Jesus knew their hearts, and he knew what they wanted to hear and he knew what they wanted to see.

These are people who had heard about His miracles and about His fame. They wanted Him to do a healing for them, you know make a show of it.

Instead Jesus reads this Scripture about the poor, about the captives, about the blind, and the oppressed.

It's beautiful and Jesus' brief sermon follows: He said: ***“Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”***

That's it. That's the message. Yes, that's all there is. My friends, do you see what Jesus was doing? The congregation wanted signs, miracles, power!

And Jesus gives them healing and poverty solutions. It would be like coming before you and saying that my message this morning is for the diseased, the homeless, the blind and those in jail.

It's certainly nice to hear, but it doesn't apply to any of us. No one is living on the streets, no one is behind bars, no one here is blind nor diseased.

No! for the most part we're well and healthy and want something more! But in addition to that, they expected Jesus, if He was the Messiah to finish the passage He began to read.

The rest of it goes like this: "to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God."

They all knew that the Messiah's mission according to Isaiah was to bring blessings and also judgment, especially on the enemies of the Jews.

Not many sitting in that synagogue were poor, blind, and naked. But they were all under the rule of the Romans.

They were anxious for their enemies to fall and be judged. They wanted vengeance! They wanted the lightning to strike and destroy their enemies.

So how could He be the Messiah? How could He say these things to us and lecture us? They had Jesus figured out, at least they thought they did.

Those in the synagogue that day were blinded by their own assumptions about God and the Messiah.

And Jesus was revealing just that through the word He read before them and their reaction to it. Jesus was rejected by his own!

My friends, pray that your eyes would be opened to reality, and be prepared knowing that when God opens our eyes, it will be a shocker.

It will be a heart-breaker because we will see the grief we caused to our Lord, Jesus Christ.

You may see the grief you have done to your sister or brother in the Lord. We pray; "Lord, open our eyes that we may see the truth!"

Like Saul, when he saw what he was really doing was devastating! He was in shock for several days.

And it took a long time for his restoration but Ananias was sent to restore him to the Lord and then Saul began testifying for Jesus.

He was transformed and revived. Only Jesus can free us from the spiritual poverty we find ourselves in.

Only Jesus can heal us from the sin sickness that oppresses us. Now, I'm not necessarily talking about Salvation here.

We trust in Jesus to save us from our sins for eternal life. But just covering up the past sin is only half of our problem.

What about the continual hunger and desire for evil. To bite back. To get revenge. To talk behind someone's back.

To think evil of someone. To lust. To lie. To cheat. To hide. To not help someone in need.

That's sickness! It's the disease of sin. Jesus isn't just there to forgive you for sin but to help you overcome it when it rears its ugly head.

Now returning to Jesus, picture him standing up in his home congregation in Nazareth. The congregation is disappointed.

He didn't give them what they wanted. All this talk about helping the poor and needy. Where is the good stuff? Where is the power and majesty?

Do you see what he did? He gave them a feast of his Word and they considered it ordinary stable food.

He wanted to bless them and open their eyes but they closed them and cast him out of their presence.

Let us also picture him here at our congregation. He preaches the exact same message to us this morning. Will we receive it?

Or will we say; give us something different!? Will we see that he is coming to bring healing and renewal?

My friends let us embrace the Lord and the healing that he brings. It's exactly what we need! Open our eyes Lord, we want to see Jesus.

Amen

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all. Amen.