

Luke 4:20-32. ²⁰ 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, ²¹ and he began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." ²² 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. ²³ 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.'" ²⁴ "I tell you the truth," he continued, "no prophet is accepted in his hometown. ²⁵ 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. ²⁶ Yet Elijah was not sent to any of them, but to a widow in Zarephath in the region of Sidon. ²⁷ 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." ²⁸ All the people in the synagogue were furious when they heard this. ²⁹ 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. ³⁰ But he walked right through the crowd and went on his way. ³¹ Then he went down to Capernaum, a town in Galilee, and on the Sabbath began to teach the people. ³² They were amazed at his teaching, because his message had authority.

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- 1. We walk with Christ through the hateful crowds.**
- 2. He does not hesitate to tell us what we need to hear.**
- 3. He is undeterred by rejection in his mission to save us**

He walked right through the crowd and went on his way. Imagine that scene. An angry mob approached a cliff, driving Jesus ahead until he seemed to be stuck in this impossible situation. And then just like that, he was gone. Jesus walked right through the middle of them and went on his way and what he had warned them would happen, happened. The message moved on, ***³¹ Then he went down to Capernaum, a town in Galilee, and on the Sabbath began to teach the people. ³² They were amazed at his teaching, because his message had authority.***

It is astounding how quickly this all seems to happen. It is a bit unsettling as well. One moment Jesus is reading from the scroll of the prophet Isaiah. The next he is being run out of town. As Jesus in the synagogue of Nazareth, he speaks those powerful words, ***"Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."*** This wasn't a small statement. He was staking his claim as the Messiah. But even after this statement we are told that the people in Nazareth ***spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips.***

They listened to him and were amazed, but there was one thing that kept them

from truly listening and believing. There was this one thing that they were hung up on and couldn't get past. ***"Isn't this Joseph's son?"*** This was the kid from Nazareth. This was Joseph and Mary's son. How could he really be the Messiah? He need to prove himself as the proverb implied, "Physician heal yourself!" But even if Jesus would perform miracle after miracle they would never really receive him as Savior because they could get past that one thing, ***"Isn't this Joseph's son?"*** And when Jesus addressed this issue their amazement would so quickly turn into disappointment and then anger ultimately spiraling down all the way to a murderous rage. And so they crowded around him, lead him to the brow of the hill and the edge of the city, but then Jesus, well, he simply walked right through their midst.

It is astounding and unsettling how quickly and completely they turned on Jesus, and unfortunately that is something with which the people of today can relate. The change may be slower but it is still rather obvious. Many in the world that we live in today have rejected Jesus and his message. For one reason or another they have driven him away and dismissed him. Some because his message seems too exclusive, "Salvation comes only through Jesus Christ", that can't be right they say. Some push him away or force him out of their lives because of Jesus says some things that people just don't want to hear. Jesus has things to say about honoring marriage, or honoring the gift of life, and following God's will, and what he says doesn't sit well with a lot of folks.

Some might still be amazed at the things that he did. Some might speak highly of him as a great teacher with some golden things to say, they might even teach their kids about this kind man but they do it in a way that goes no further than a book of fables or fairy tales because they refuse to believe he is the promised one of God. Their lack of faith rejects that he could really be the son of God. For a while most spoke kindly of him but now it has happened that others, especially with the aid of communicating online without filter or consequence, some have even gotten to the point of being aggressive in their efforts against Christ and his message. And a mob mentality has picked up momentum, and as that mob mentality builds, as more and more speak up against Christ and his church, as that crowd seems to thicken around us Christians today it can make us feel a bit alone, a bit unsure.

Therefore, it has become even more important to come and find encouragement in public worship and bible study, to gather together at the feet of Christ and be reminded that we are not the only ones. It becomes all the more important to go to God's Word which is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, correcting, rebuking, and training so that we as people of God may be properly equipped to stand up for our faith and pass that faith on to the next generation. As we look at those young faces among us, as we hold a child in our arms and marvel at how fast children grow up, we would do well to consider how we may tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of our God. As we consider the state of the world around us we might have a real and growing concern how our sons and daughters, grandsons and granddaughters, will be treated for their faith in a world that often wants to get rid of Jesus. As that mob grows and surrounds you and threatens to sweep your faith or the faith of your children or grandchildren

away we are reminded today that our Savior walked right through the crowd and went on his way. Here we are reminded that we are united with Christ and each other in faith and if Christ is for us, who can be against us. And so in faith we stand tall and we walk with Christ through the hateful crowds who oppose his word.

Jesus had warned the people of Nazareth - many of them he had known for years - the painful truth that if they would not listen God would send his gracious message to someone else. The refreshing rain of the Savior and his gospel would move on from them and would bring life to another people, another region. It had happened with their forefathers in the past, it could happen to them as well. Jesus reminded them that there were plenty of widows in Israel but God sent Elijah up to Zarephath in the region of Sidon. God's prophet would go up north of Galilee outside of the chosen people of Israel and God would do amazing things for this woman who was brought to faith in the LORD. There were plenty of people suffering with leprosy in the time of Elisha, but because God in his grace desired to reach out in all directions with his goodness and love he saw to it that a servant girl who believed in the LORD shared her faith and Naaman went to see Elisha. And eventually Naaman would be cleansed by the LORD and he would confess that there is no other God, but the God of Israel.

God is so rich in mercy and grace that he has to reach out, he has to grant his gifts of faith and salvation. And while it is true that if God reaches out with his love and is rejected he will be patient; it is also true that his great patience only lasts for only so long before he turns to another place, another people, with his love and mercy and goodness.

This was the warning that Jesus was giving the people of Nazareth.. He was concerned for them. He was concerned that they would miss out on the message of salvation and so Jesus told them exactly what they needed to hear. But they didn't want to listen. They took his concerned warning as a hurtful threat and they closed their ears to him. In fact, they were so furious when they heard this that they got up and drove him out of town to the top of the hill on which the town was built so that they could throw him down the cliff. They were done with him. They had heard enough. *No one was going to speak to us like that and get away with it.* They all seemed to say.

If we are honest, instead of standing with Jesus against the oncoming crowd, far too often we find ourselves as a member of this angry mob, this crowd, as well. We know Jesus, we know that he came to preach and teach with authority, but our amazement and our faith quickly fade when we hear something that we may not want to hear. And this is especially true when he comes to us through his Word and speaks to us about that one thing that needs to be said. Those in Nazareth were hung up on the fact that this was Joseph's son, and so Jesus spoke of that one thing that was hurting their faith with the desire that this issue would be addressed. He too speaks to us through his Word concerning those things that we might not want to hear, because they need to be addressed. He speaks to us about our pride, our greed, or our lust, our laziness, our lack of time spent in his house or in his word; he speaks to us about what is hurting our faith and often we don't want to listen. We get angry and we close our ears and we may

even chase Jesus and his Word out of our lives for a time. He speaks to us through his word and through our pastors and fellow Christians about that sinful vice that has grabbed hold of your life, the gambling, the drinking, the gossiping, and we don't want to hear about it. He tells the married and the unmarried to honor marriage and instead of listening we might act offended that he would dare to intrude into our personal lives. *Who is he that he can tell me what to do?*

Dear friends, He is Jesus. He is the Christ. He is the son of Mary and also the Son of God who is our Savior. He came to preach and teach and he does not hesitate to tell us what we need to hear. In his love he would not hesitate to address the pride of the Pharisee, the denial of truth by the Sadducees, and the unbelief of the Jewish leaders. During his public ministry he would not hesitate to address the greed of the tax collector, the sin of the prostitute and the woman at the well, and the lack of faith of the people of Nazareth. He did not hold back when he addressed his own disciple's unfaithfulness and lack of trust and their frequent disobedience. But this is done not just to point out our sin or that he was simply better than them, but this is done out of love and concern. He reaches out to us with his Word of truth so that we may be brought to faith, believe in him, and remain in him. He is patient with us in our stubbornness and persistent in his love, undeterred by rejection in his mission to share the word and save us.

What a scene this must have been. The crowd was ready to throw him off the cliff and he walks right on through because there was more people to preach and teach to, more people to reach out and save with the good news of the gospel. What a scene it is that faith made it into your heart and mine; what a miracle it is that in his love and faithfulness the LORD reaches into our cold stubborn hearts and creates faith. What a scene it is when he takes a lost and condemned creature and makes this child his own son or daughter through water and the word. Sinners who naturally resist his Word are connected to him by grace through faith in Jesus our Savior.

What a Savior we have, who strengthens us and walks with us and protects when many in this world oppose and attack our faith! What a Savior we have who blesses us with opportunity to speak his Word of truth, to speak of sin and grace, so that God's message of salvation might be extended to our family and friend! What a blessing we have to listen to his word both law and gospel, receive it our God and Savior and then share this message, *both law and gospel* with our family and friends! May this word of Jesus, this word of salvation, may it never pass away from us because of pride or unbelief, but let us instead pass the word on to the next generation! Let us speak God's Word of truth about Jesus our Savior with determination and without hesitation to whomever will listen. Amen.