

21 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!’ And you will tell me, ‘Do here in your hometown what we have heard that you did in Capernaum.’”

24 “Truly I tell you,” 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 off 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 he taught the people. 32 They were amazed at his teaching, because his words had authority.

Dear Disciple of God’s Word,

Imagine that you live on a farm. You grow crops. Now imagine that you do not have any rain for three and a half years. Jesus informs us that there was a severe famine. This was among God’s people in the Old Testament days of Israel. The reason God stopped the rain was because his people were not listening to his word through the prophets like Elijah.

Today we hear that Jesus was in his hometown church, the synagogue at Nazareth. We also hear that the people did not listen to God’s word. They did not suffer three years without rain, but there were consequences.

You come here to God’s house, but perhaps you don’t always listen closely. Perhaps there is one thing the pastor says that bothers you and so you don’t listen to the rest of the message. Perhaps you just don’t feel like coming to church regularly. In all these cases we are not listening to God’s

word. What are the consequences? How does Jesus feel about this? Please listen today because I am going to use this word of God to remind you why we should: **Listen to the Authoritative Message of Salvation.**

1. The message brings forgiveness in Christ today. 21-22a, 32

When you come to church, what do you want to hear? A preacher who tells jokes so you can laugh a little? Laughter is needed in life. Do you hope to hear the pastor talk about injustice and how God will make things right? Jesus went to the Nazareth house of worship with one message in mind. It was the message of the forgiveness of sins in the promised Messiah. That same message still brings forgiveness sins to you and me today.

A. When visiting rabbis came to the synagogue, they were expected to read and explain some portion of Scripture. Jesus was handed the scroll of the prophet Isaiah and he opened it to chapter 61:1-2. It starts out, **“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor.”** Luke 4:18 (NIV84)

1. The people of Nazareth were definitely poor. It was not a wealthy area of Palestine. The Roman Empire squeezed them through the collecting of taxes. The people of Nazareth are like you and me in that they complained about their lot in life, they worried and were jealous of those who were better off. Which means they also knew that they were poor sinners.

2. They likely enjoyed Jesus’ reading from Isaiah. God was favorable and gracious to his people. He would help them in their poverty. He would even forgive their sins. Jesus was proclaiming good news to them and they liked it. They had heard he was a great teacher and miracle worker. Perhaps now they would see it for themselves.

3. Then Jesus said words that they never expected to hear, **“Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”** (21) This was most alarming. This could not be! First of all they were still money poor. The Romans occupiers were still in power. Secondly, if the scripture was fulfilled that very day, Jesus is saying that their sins were forgiven at that very moment. They understood that God forgives sins, but they assumed that didn’t happen in a moment. It involved a lifetime of being a good Jew and bringing sacrifices to the Temple. Once a person did all the right things, the Lord would declare them righteous. How could this home town boy from a carpenter’s house do what only God could do? Jesus was claiming to be the Son of God and one

who had power to forgive sins. This appeared to be very wrong in their eyes.
B. We want to listen to Jesus and his message which is the message of Holy Scripture.

1. The people said Jesus words were gracious. They were because they proclaimed God's grace. We don't have all of Jesus' sermon recorded here, however we do know that he was telling people that God's Son had come into the world to make a sacrifice for the sins of the world. He was the lamb of sacrifice and on the cross he took our sins away.

God never set up a plan by which we can earn our salvation. It is so tempting to think, *"You know I have come to church and church activities for a long time. I know that Jesus died on the cross for me, but doesn't my faithful church attendance, Bible class attendance count for something?"* St. Paul reminds in Romans, **"20 Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin...23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus."** (Romans 3:20, 23–24 NIV84)

2. It is reported that the people were amazed at Jesus because **"his words had authority."** Even though they had been taught that they had earn their salvation, they admitted that Jesus had a point. No doubt they often despaired of making up for their sins. The problem was no matter how amazing his message was, they were not going to get past his past. No poor, hometown boy was going to be able to set them straight.

There is a caution here for you and me. Is the preacher in the pulpit: too old, too young, too plain, too flowery with words? Do you dislike him because he is from your hometown, or perhaps he is a second career pastor or because he has an accent? The caution is that when we go to a church, we go to hear the message. Regardless of whether the message is delivered well or poorly, it is still the powerful word of God. In Matthew 28 Jesus says that all authority had been given to him and the disciples were to go and proclaim. In Romans 1:16 St. Paul declares, **"I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile."** (NIV84) So you and I want to **Listen to the Authoritative Message of Salvation.**

2. The message moves on when it is rejected. 22b-31

What happened after Jesus announced to his hometown that he was the Savior of world? The answer is that they rejected him. And there is another important lesson. We see the message of salvation moving on going to other places.

A. The rejection of Jesus is in the things that the people say.

1. They express their unbelief with the question, **“Isn’t this Joseph’s son?”** This is their way of saying, “You can’t be the Savior of the world.” You’re an ordinary man. Jesus also predicts that they will hurl challenges at him.

“Physician, heal yourself!” and ‘Do here in your hometown what we have heard that you did in Capernaum.’” Jesus does not give them what they want because it won’t help. Remember in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus healed the man whose ear that had been cut off, but they still arrested him. It didn’t change their hearts.

2. Jesus states a truth. **“I tell you,” he continued, “no prophet is accepted in his hometown.”** If Jesus knew this, why did he go to Nazareth? The truth is that he cared about these people he had spent many years with. He went to share with them the message of salvation that they desperately needed. He knew that most would reject him, but he went anyway.

This is comforting for you and me. If we struggle with doubts or concerns about teachings in the Bible, or prophecies about the end of the world, he isn’t going to turn his back on us. If he cared for these people in their unbelief, he certainly cares about us his children.

B. Things got so bad that the people drove Jesus out of their town and they tried to kill him. Jesus did perform a miracle. He walked right through the crowd and went on his way. (28-30) This leads us to a final thought. When people reject the word, the message of salvation moves on.

1. Before Jesus leaves he tells the people what will happen. When the Israelites pursued other gods in the days of the prophets Elijah and Elisha, God sent his word to others. The widow of Zerephath and Naaman were Gentiles. Today we would say when one nation turns its back on the Lord, then the Gospel moves to other countries. Today the Gospel fire is not as strong in our country, but the Gospel is burning brightly in Africa, Asia, etc.

2. We hear that Jesus went from Nazareth to other villages and towns and proclaimed the Good News of the forgiveness of sins. He did meet some opposition, however there were people who believed and were saved.

C. Jesus has asked us who believe to go to the people of our towns and

villages. There are at times restrictions. There are limits on going door to door and hanging out signs in front of church. We have some limits on our health as we get older. We have the Son of God working with us and through us. We need to keep finding ways to reach out to people. Personal witnessing is one of the ways that works best. Give yourself enough time when you are going to the store or some place in case you get in a conversation with someone. Take the time to answer questions and speak of our Savior and his gracious love. We are not alone when we do this.

Conclusion: They put nutrition labels on food. They are there to help us. We may ignore them until a doctor or licensed nutritionist tells us to pay attention to what we eat. If we ignore those voices that speak with authority, we can get in a lot of trouble.

There is an authoritative voice speaking in the synagogue at Nazareth. Jesus is the physician of our soul. He has a message of salvation. He wants us to continue to listen to that message. If we don't listen we may lose out on the forgiveness and salvation he is offering. As we walk in faith we also care about those who have not yet heard the message of salvation. With Jesus' help we bring that authoritative message to others. Amen.