

January 17 2021

The Sermon at Nazareth

Luke 4:14-30

Children's Message: IN the reading this morning we hear how some people in Jesus's hometown want to kill Him. Jesus's message really upset them to the point where they wanted Him dead. What He said wasn't all that bad and didn't deserve death. Jesus only warned them about what He saw coming in their society. That it would change to include all people and make their lives better. Jesus delivered the message that He needed to tell them. Some did not like Him or appreciate Him.

That is why Jesus said in verse 24, "Assuredly, I say to you, no prophet is accepted in His own country." There will always be people who do not like you or the things you say and do. Jesus knows this and He still opened the eyes of the blind, made the lame walk, the deaf hear, cleaned the lepers and raised the dead. He did all these great things and still some complained. Yet Jesus did all of this anyway. Jesus gives us an example that sometimes it is hard to do the right things. Especially, when some people always complain about it. Yet if you know in your heart that it is the right thing to do, then do it. Those who

complain will always complain. Be courageous and know that the Holy Spirit will always be with you as you do God's work.

God inside of you, encouraging you on, is far greater than those complaining and trying to discourage and tear you down. Always rely on God for encouragement and continue on. In this morning's story God protects Jesus from the murderous mob and He escapes from them. God looks after us when we are doing His work. I can tell you that He has looked after me all these years as I tried to serve Him and His children. He will look after you too.

Big People's Message: There are so many tangents one could go off on in this morning's reading. What seems to be a very usual and common passage contains inflammatory material for so many. Many times we lose the historical context that Jesus preached it.

I find it ironic that the passage handed to Our Lord was Isaiah. This passage sums up the whole of Our Lord's ministry among us. Isaiah is the prophet that Jesus quotes the most in the Gospels. This is a social justice passage about equality for all. This passage challenges the status quo of the privilege of some Jews. They fully understood what Jesus was saying. That is why they wanted to kill Him as soon as the words tripped off His tongue.

These Jews had the privilege of being God's chosen people. Their Talmud said it was okay for Jews to cheat Gentiles in commerce and business and to keep them as slaves. This was mandated by God who revealed this to the Rabbis who wrote the Talmud. Gentiles are not God's chosen people. They are less than Jews. Jesus is challenging their long held concepts of privilege, both spiritually and socially. What could possibly go wrong? Then Jesus gives them great examples of how God has favored the Gentiles. We read this in verses 25-27 and that only riles up the Jews even more. I find it mind blowing that people find it easier to believe in aliens than to believe in God and His loving grace and mercy.

Jesus is pushing His luck by bringing up those on the margins of society. If you're walking on thin ice, you may as well dance. Jesus starts with the poor, brokenhearted, the captives, the blind and oppressed, who are not considered worthy to have their lives improved. The common belief of the day was that they are the way they are because they do not have God's favour. For many Jews of the day, this was how they thought and framed their world views. Why would you waste your time to help these people?

The Son of God is very concerned about improving the lives of everyone. All of us are children of God. Our social, ethnic or economic situation does not exclude us from that family bond. This idea was so important to Our Lord that it became an important practice in the early church. This family bond that we all share and the welfare

of each other is what shaped the early church and moved it forward. Years later it would be the bedrock of Liberation Theology in South America and Armenia.

Jesus is using this passage from Isaiah as the cornerstone for building the Kingdom on Earth as it is in Heaven. This is the blueprint for reshaping society so that all are included. So important is this topic that it forms the nucleus of how He wants His disciple to pray. It is all in the Lord's prayer.

I am sure that Jesus's audience heard this passage from Isaiah many times. They must have thought that these words would someday come to pass. I think it was verse 21 that set them off, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing". This speaks to the power of the word to create reality. To move an intention or idea into action and make it a reality. The privilege Jews feared that this new reality was going to cost them their privilege. A reshaped society based on equality was a bad idea to them. This new reality would cost them but in a way they never saw coming. Jesus's reality of reshaping society was not done at the point of the sword, but from a loving heart that included all who came to believe that Jesus was the Son of God.

AS we saw in Luke's Acts of the Apostles, this reshaping of society would come slowly and gradually. From hearts lead by mercy and compassion. This is what guided the Christians to create the early church. Isaiah's passage would become a reality expressed through the

church and proclaimed by Jesus. It would be accomplished inwardly from hearts guided by the words and examples given by Jesus. The only thing it may have cost the privileged Jews was their narrow way of thinking. Having your mind and world views expanded can be very fearful for some. God Bless and Happy New Year, I guess no Malanka this year, Pastor D