

Good Shepherd Lutheran Church
January 17 2021

Hi Friends,

Greetings brothers and sisters in Christ. As we continue to work our way through the cold and gray days of winter, know that my thoughts and prayers are with you and that I miss you.

The pre-school is looking for a Teacher's Aide for the Monday, Wednesday, Friday class beginning in February 2021. If you are interested or know someone who is interested, please contact Becky Watson at 610-858-1352. The pay is \$10 an hour for a 7 hour workday.

If you have prayer requested, please send them to me so that I can include them in my weekly newsletters.

Communion in the coming weeks:

Third Sunday of the month – January 17th

May the joy, the peace and the love of Christmas continue to warm your heart and enlighten your days throughout the new year.

Yours in Christ,

Pastor Denise

Home Phone 610-750-6432
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Luke 4:14-30

A reading from the 4th chapter of Luke beginning at the 14th verse.

14-15 Jesus returned to Galilee powerful in the Spirit. News that he was back spread through the countryside. He taught in their meeting places to everyone's acclaim and pleasure.

16-21 He came to Nazareth where he had been raised. As he always did on the Sabbath, he went to the meeting place. When he stood up to read, he was handed the scroll of the prophet Isaiah. Unrolling the scroll, he found the place where it was written,

God's Spirit is on me;

he's chosen me to preach the Message of good news to the poor,
Sent me to announce pardon to prisoners and

recovery of sight to the blind,
To set the burdened and battered free,

to announce, "This is God's time to shine!"

He rolled up the scroll, handed it back to the assistant, and sat down. Every eye in the place was on him, intent. Then he started in, "You've just heard Scripture make history. It came true just now in this place."

22 All who were there, watching and listening, were surprised at how well he spoke. But they also said, "Isn't this Joseph's son, the one we've known since he was just a kid?"

23-27 He answered, "I suppose you're going to quote the proverb, 'Doctor, go heal yourself. Do here in your hometown what we heard you did in Capernaum.'

Well, let me tell you something: No prophet is ever welcomed in his hometown. Isn't it a fact that there were many widows in Israel at the time of Elijah during that three and a half years of drought when famine devastated the land, but the only widow to whom Elijah was sent was in Sarepta in Sidon?

And there were many lepers in Israel at the time of the prophet Elisha but the only one cleansed was Naaman the Syrian."

28-30 That set everyone in the meeting place seething with anger. They threw him out, banishing him from the village, then took him to a mountain cliff at the edge of the village to throw him to his doom,

but he gave them the slip and was
on his way.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Sermon

Grace and Peace to you from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. AMEN

PRAYER OF THE DAY

God of the nations,
Show us how to love all the people of the earth, of all colors and kinds: those with technology and without; those who make do with very little and who use many resources; those with formal education and without; those who call upon your name and who do not; so that all your children may be glorified in the name of the One who brought glory and liberty, Jesus Christ our salvation. Amen.

Home Coming - Last week Jesus had traveled to the Jordan to be baptized by John and the heavens opened and Jesus was filled with the God's Spirit.

And then the Spirit leads Jesus into the wilderness for 40 days where he had been taunted and tested by the devil.

And today our text brings him back home to his family and friends in Nazareth. Nazareth, the place where he returned after his birth in Bethlehem, the place where he and his family returned to after they had fled for their safety in Egypt, and the place where he lived with his family until recently when he traveled to the Jordan to be baptized and then to the wilderness where he was tested and taunted by the devil.

So these are the people, who think they know him best. You can just hear the people talking - I remember the time that he caught his first fish - I remember the time when he stayed in Jerusalem and we had begun our journey home without him - I remember the time that he worked by Joseph's side on the table that they made for us.

There was a familiar relationship that Jesus had with the people of Nazareth. So, when they gathered at the synagogue on the Sabbath and Jesus was given the scroll, which contained the words from the prophet Isaiah, they listened carefully to the text that he chose to read.

As he read the text from Isaiah that foretold of the one who would come to be filled with God's spirit to preach good news to the poor, to announce pardon for the prisoners, to heal those with physical disabilities, and to free those who have been oppressed and abused. And his family and friends were amazed at how well their hometown boy spoke.

They were proud to call him their own as they reminded one another that this was Joseph, the carpenter's son. And then they listened intently on what he was about to say next for they had heard through the grapevine that he had done some amazing things on his way home in the neighboring town of Capernaum.

And surely, they would be next in line for the healings and blessings that he had to offer.

But, what they heard Jesus say was not at all what they expected. For he talked not about what he was being called to do for them, the hometown crowd, but that this good news that he was called to share was for all nations, not just the Hebrew nation.

And he reminded them of how in the past God blessings were never limited to the Hebrew nation. As God had sent the prophets of old to bless the foreigners.

Like the time of a severe drought, when the prophet Elijah was sent to a widow not in Israel, even though there were many widows in Israel, but God sent Elijah to Sarapta which was in the foreign territory of Sidon. And it was the widow in the foreign country that was blessed with the miracle of food that replenished itself for herself and her son until the drought ended.

And even though there were many lepers in Israel at the time of the prophet Elisha. The leper that Elisha had cleansed was Naaman the Syrian.

Jesus is telling them that yes, he is the one for whom they have been waiting. But his mission is not at all what they had in mind. For his mission was more expansion and more inclusive than his fellow Jews could ever imagine.

And from what Luke tells us happened next, we can be certain that Jesus' message of God's abundant blessing for all people was not at all well received. As those who had been shocked by what they had heard; threw him out of the synagogue, dragged him to a nearby cliff with the intent to push him over the edge to his death. But somehow, Jesus broke free and slipped away.

But that did not stop Jesus from being faithful and obedient to the

work that God had called him to do, as he fled to the neighboring region of Galilee. And there Jesus continued to proclaim the Good News of the coming of God's kingdom where ALL people would be blessed by God's amazing grace, God's abundant mercy, and God's unconditional love.

This sermon was not only hard for his hometown friends and family to hear, because the people of Nazareth had a vision of what their long-awaited Messiah would do for them. They thought that they clearly understood what God's promise of a new covenant was all about and that this new covenant would favor them. And it was shocking to hear that after all these years, their vision was not at all what Jesus was portraying in his message to them that morning.

It's like they had a box that they believed that their God fit into perfectly and Jesus was telling them that God would never fit in their box. That God and God's grace and God's mercy and God's love were not only bigger than

the box they had imagined, but was bigger than any box they could possibly imagine.

And how often do we try to do the same with not only God the Father, but also with Jesus. We want Jesus to fit in our box that we have envisioned for him. A box where we get to set the parameters of who should be worthy of his blessings and his forgiveness. A box where we get to dismiss and disregard the commands and the directives that make us uncomfortable. The box where we decide when Jesus gets to be part of our lives and when he does not.

But that is not who Jesus is revealing himself to be. He will not be defined or confined by us as he has come to bring good news about God the Father to all people.

The message of God's love, God's mercy and God's grace that lives

on through us, in us, among us and in spite of us.

So that all God's children:

those of all colors and ethnicities;

those with technology and those without;

those who make do with very little and those who use many resources;

those with formal education and those without;

those who call upon your name and those who do not;

may know that in God's kingdom we are all blessed as beloved children of God, the Father.

AMEN

Blessing

May
The love of God,
The light of Christ,
And the joy of the Holy Spirit
Abide with you on this day
and forever more.

AMEN