

MINISTRY BY MAIL
Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship
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Second Sunday After Christmas, January 5, 2025

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 126, 131:5, 66, 297:1-5, 297 :6.

Lessons: Psalm 104:24-35, Ephesians 5:22-33, John 1:35-42.

Sermon Text: Luke 4:16-24.

Sermon by Pastor M. H. Eibs

In Christ Jesus, dear friends,

Our Lord Jesus has an official name besides his personal name of Jesus. His official name is Christ. This name means the Messiah, the Anointed One, the Promised One. In his official function as the Christ, our Lord has three offices, that of **High Priest, Prophet, and King**. As our **High Priest** Jesus both kept the Law of God for us and suffered and died for us, thus atoning for our sins and reconciling God and sinners. As our High Priest Jesus still intercedes for us, praying to his heavenly Father on our behalf. As our King, Jesus governs and rules all things in the universe, and especially rules as the one and only Head of the Holy Christian Church, the Communion of Saints. As our King, Jesus will reign over all things to all eternity.

In our text we are concerned especially with Jesus' office as Prophet. As our Prophet, Jesus has all knowledge, wisdom and truth. It is especially important to know this when we learn from him the way to salvation. The salvation of mankind is what Jesus proclaimed in his earthly ministry. Before Jesus ascended into heaven, he sent out his followers to preach the good news of salvation to people everywhere. Jesus also made it possible for us to hear the truth of salvation by instituting the office of the Holy Ministry. In this way he still functions as our great Prophet today whenever the Word of God is proclaimed in agreement with all that he has commanded.

Let us today see how Jesus functioned as the great **Prophet**, as we learn about:

JESUS PREACHING AT NAZARETH

1. **His sermon shows him to be the Christ in his office as Prophet;**
2. **His preaching, sad to say, was rejected in unbelief.**

“He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom.” Jesus had begun his ministry in the province of Galilee. He had been in Galilee before when he performed his first miracle, changing the water into wine at the wedding of Cana. Now he returned, coming back to that little town where he had been brought up. Here in Nazareth Jesus had spent the years of his childhood and grown to be a young man. Here Jesus lived with his mother Mary and his foster father Joseph. Here he had received his education. Here the Lord had labored as a carpenter, the trade he learned from Joseph. Here he lived the greater part of his earthly life in perfect holiness as true God and true man.

Here at Nazareth on this particular Sabbath day Jesus went into the synagogue. This was his custom. He always fulfilled the Third Commandment perfectly. If Jesus, as the Son of God and sinless man that he was, felt the need to go to God's house of worship regularly, how much more should we be concerned about attending the house of worship? This we should do, not merely as a habit, but rather because the Word of God tells us: *“Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another --and all the more as you see the Day approaching,*” Heb. 10:25. Furthermore, God promises us: *“Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it,”* Luke 11:28.

On this Sabbath Day the Lord Jesus stood up to read. It was customary to grant this privilege to visiting rabbis or teachers. So Jesus was accorded the privilege to read the second Scripture lesson for the day. In their order of worship the Jews read from the Law of Moses first and then from the prophets. Our text tells us: *“The*

scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him.” The attendant in the synagogue who carefully took it from the case in which it was preserved gave the roll of parchment to Jesus. Unrolling the parchment Jesus found the words he wanted to read in the prophecy of Isaiah in chapter 61. Our text quotes those words: **“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”** This was certainly a most fitting text for Jesus because the prophet Isaiah was speaking of the promised Messiah. Let us examine these words to see how Jesus fulfilled the prophecy as our great Prophet. Isaiah writes that the promised Messiah was especially chosen and blessed for his work as Prophet. Jesus, who is God from all eternity, had all wisdom, knowledge, power and honor already. But it was God’s plan of salvation that his only-begotten Son should have all these divine attributes also according to his human nature as a true man. Thus he was given the gift of the Holy Spirit. This was in accord with the prophecy of Isaiah in these words: **“A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him - the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD -and he will delight in the fear of the LORD,”** Isaiah 11:1-3. The Bible also tells us that in Christ: **“are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge,”** Col. 2:3.

Having had all these gifts of the Holy Spirit poured out upon him, Jesus, the Anointed One, could do his work as our great Prophet, preaching the message of salvation. When we hear in our text how all people of this world are described, we see how much they need the good news of salvation. They are described as **“poor . . . prisoners . . . blind . . . oppressed.”** This is how we all are by nature because of our sinfulness. We learn this from the Law of God, for the Bible says: **“through the law we become conscious of sin,”** Rom. 3:20. It is essential that we have this knowledge of our sinfulness, for otherwise we would not appreciate the good news of salvation. So many people in this world are trying to earn their way to heaven by doing what they consider to be good works. They are ignorant of the teaching of God’s Law which tells them: **“There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one,”** Rom. 3:10-12. When we have this knowledge of our sinful condition, we are ready to hear and will welcome the good news of the Gospel of Christ.

In our text we are called **“poor”** because we are like poor beggars who appear before God as utterly wretched and helpless in our sinful condition. In this condition we should also be **“poor”** in spirit, for the Lord tells us: **“This is the one I esteem; he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word,”** Is. 66:2b. We are also described as **“prisoners”**, for we are held captive by Satan, the arch-enemy of God and man, who wants people to remain in their sinful condition and go to hell. Of ourselves, we have no power to set ourselves free and have no hope of escape from Satan’s dominion. We are also described as **“blind”**, as people who have just come out of a dark dungeon, weeping because we cannot see. The final word in our text to describe us in our sinful condition is **“oppressed.”** We are shattered, crushed, our life utterly wrecked because of the sins we have committed.

The good news which Jesus came to bring poor sinners is that our salvation is prepared and complete. This is proclaimed to us in the Gospel. There’s **good news** for poor sinners, **freedom** proclaimed for the prisoners, **recovery of sight for the blind**, and the **oppressed** are released. How did this all come about? Paul tells us: **“When the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons,”** Gal. 4:4-5. Isaiah foretold what the promised Messiah would do as the Divine Substitute for sinners: **“he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all,”** Is. 53:5-6. So it was **“that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them,”** 2 Cor. 5:19. This is the precious salvation Jesus earned for us. Our sins are not counted against us anymore. We have been saved by God’s grace, by his undeserved love for us for Jesus’ sake. This is what we are to believe, and **“whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life,”** John 3:16. Could there possibly be any greater good news?

When Jesus preached this good news at Nazareth, proclaiming *“the year of the Lord’s favor,”* a time of grace for the people, his preaching, sad to say, was rejected in unbelief.

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Jesus, having read from Isaiah’s prophecy, *“rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him, and he said to them, ‘Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.’”* What the prophet had foretold, that, Jesus said, was now fulfilled in him. He was in essence telling the people that he was the promised Messiah, the Anointed One. But most of the hearers did not accept this. Our text says: *“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.”* The people marveled at the gracious manner of speaking. They could not help but admire his knowledge and manner of speaking. But the truth of what he spoke they rejected in unbelief. They did not think of him as their Messiah, but only as the son of Joseph the carpenter.

Jesus rebuked them for their unbelief by applying a proverbial saying to them. *“‘Physician, heal yourself! Do here in your home town what we have heard that you did in Capernaum. I tell you the truth,’ he continued, ‘no prophet is accepted in his home town.’”* Jesus knew what these people were thinking. You want me to prove that I am the Messiah by doing miracles as I did in Capernaum. Then you say you will believe! But Jesus did not perform miracles for them at Nazareth because they rejected what he had preached to them. By their unbelief they closed the door of their hearts to their Messiah. By their own fault they brought God’s condemnation upon themselves.

How should we apply Jesus’ words in our text to ourselves today? By God’s grace we have had the precious good news of salvation preached to us. We have had many an opportunity to hear what Jesus has done for us poor sinners that we might be saved and have eternal life in heaven. Indeed, it is a rare opportunity we have today in our church, for we can still hear the Word of God preached instead of some man-made philosophy or a message about social, economic and political problems in our day. May we by God’s grace receive the precious good news in Christ Jesus. May we rejoice in Jesus our Savior who died for our sins and made us righteous. May we look to him for our only comfort each time we in weakness of faith fall into sin and yield to the devil’s temptations. May we put all of our trust in Jesus, not in ourselves. Then we can rejoice together with all believers in heaven to all eternity. Amen.

Revised from a Ministry By Mail sermon for January 19, 2003.