

**Grace, mercy and peace are yours in abundance through faith in our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.**

<sup>14</sup> Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside. <sup>15</sup> He taught in their synagogues, and everyone praised him.

<sup>16</sup> He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. And he stood up to read. <sup>17</sup> The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written: <sup>18</sup> “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, <sup>19</sup> to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

<sup>20</sup> 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, <sup>21</sup> and he began by saying to them, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”

**Dear Brothers and sisters in Christ,**

Sometimes when I’m driving on a 2-lane road at night with my wife I’ll ask her to help me watch out for deer. Or if we are looking for a place we have never been before or on a new road I might ask her to be on the look out so we don’t miss it – keep your eyes peeled, so to speak.

Today our Gospel lesson talks about a time when a group of people had their eyes fastened on Jesus. They were listening intently to the words he had to say. May we be just as attentive as we keep our eyes fastened on Jesus too. May the Holy Spirit help us to see him as qualified, As we listen to him we will not only see him as qualified, but we will also see that he was accustomed to worship, he was preaching the Good News and he was the fulfilment of prophesy.

**I. What qualifies Jesus as our Savior? We started to see his qualifications when the angel Gabriel came to Mary with the announcement of her involvement in God’s plan of salvation. Then the angels announced the birth of Jesus to the shepherds and declared that he would bring peace to all mankind. A few weeks ago we talked about Jesus’ baptism and after he was baptized the Holy Spirit descended on him and his Father spoke from heaven, “This is my Son whom I love, with him I am well pleased.” Last week we heard about Jesus turning the water into wine in Cana. What a wonderful display of his power and mercy as he helped a young couple even before they knew they had a problem. All these signs point to the fact that Jesus was qualified as our Savior, but Luke picks out how, “Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside. <sup>15</sup> He taught in their synagogues, and everyone praised him.”**

It was the Spirit that empowered Jesus’ human nature as he was encouraged by the love of his Father. With the power of the Spirit Jesus began his public ministry and people responded to it in a positive way. As Luke tells us, **“Everyone praised him.”**

Did you know that the Holy Spirit has come upon us as well? When we were baptized the Holy Spirit came into our hearts with the gift of faith. We know because we proclaim Jesus as our Lord and Savior and Paul reminds us, **“No one can say, “Jesus is Lord,” except by the Holy Spirit.”** (1 Corinthians 12:3). But how do we keep that faith alive and strong? Paul tells us,

**“Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.”** (Romans 10:17).

Being filled with the Holy Spirit prompts us to want to listen to our Savior and he speaks to us regularly through his Word. That is why it is so important to gather for worship – to keep our faith strong and to encourage one another as we journey through life. When we gather around God’s Word our Savior speaks to us through the hymns we sing, through the liturgy and through the lessons and sermon. He brings us words of forgiveness, peace and encouragement to live according to his will. Through worship he prepares us for another week in the world. As we fasten our eyes on Jesus we see that he was also accustomed to worship.

**II. “As was his custom, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day and stood up to read.”** Jesus was in his hometown and he was in the synagogue and they were used to seeing him there – that was his custom, especially growing up. I would hope that is your custom as well. I know we don’t always look forward to coming to church and some Sundays it is hard to pay attention as we worship but God’s Word tells us to, **“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.”** (Hebrews 10:25) We come to hear God’s Word and to encourage one another. That is why we are a church family. We gather together around the Word and pray for one another and encourage one another. That is God’s will for us and something we need on a regular basis. But there’s more. As we focus on Jesus today, we also see him as a preacher of the Good News and a fulfiller of the Old Testament prophecies.

**III.** That is why Jesus quoted these words of Isaiah, **“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed,<sup>19</sup> and to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”** and then to announce **“Today, this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”** The good news that Jesus preached to the poor is that he is the promised Messiah who has come to redeem them from their sins. In reality, we are spiritually poor and we need to hear the good news that Jesus redeemed our sins too. As he redeemed us, he freed us from the captivity of Satan. The Devil wants to bind our sins to us along with a load of guilt and yet Christ, by paying for our sins and bringing us forgiveness through the gift of faith has brought us freedom from our sins and released us from the hold of Satan.

Finally, he has proclaimed the year of the Lord’s favor. That was the year of jubilee when the inheritance and land was returned to its rightful owner and all debt was forgiven. We are living in the Lord’s favor because we are God’s Children and are heirs of eternal life in heaven. Our debts – that is our sins – have been forgiven and so we gather around the Word – around our Savior – and rejoice.

This was just one of over 400 prophecies that Jesus fulfilled to prove he is God’s Son and that he accomplished everything he said he would. So what does all this mean for you and for me?

By fulfilling all these prophecies Jesus guarantees us all the blessings Isaiah proclaimed for believers and it also assures us that Jesus will fulfill all the prophecies about the future. Yes, we know that the world will get worse as there will be wars, rumors of wars, natural disasters, false prophets, religious persecutions but the gospel will continue to be preached before the end of the world. Yes, Jesus will come to judge all people, the living and the dead for eternity. Yes, the world as we know it will be destroyed and God will create **“A new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness”** (2 Peter 3:13) where God’s children will enjoy a glorious body and eternal life in heaven with our God. Yes, **“today the Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing”** as God continues to bless us by keeping the promises of his Word in our lives today. For that reason, we can be sure that when you keep your eyes fastened onto Jesus, all that he did and says in the Word, you will always see great things! Amen.