

## ***“Jesus is on a Journey”***

Folks, Jesus is on a journey. St. Luke tells us that Jesus been going throughout Galilee teaching in their synagogues – but His ministry begins before that. At His Baptism, Jesus begins His public ministry. There, He who knew no sin became sin for us (2 Cor. 5:19). There the Heavenly Father declares – a booming, audible epiphany – “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.” (Luke 3:22).

The journey begun, continues in our text today – and throughout His public ministry we see that it is one of preaching, teaching, and healing. Jesus goes around to sinners and takes their sin away with His Holy Absolution – but where does this sin go? It becomes His – He who became sin for us. Jesus takes sin into His flesh.

For three years Jesus will journey from place to place – healing the sick and taking on their sin – releasing the demon possessed and becoming the target for the attacks of the evil one. As He journeys, teaching how God is now reigning on earth – He absorbs the misery, the brokenness, the chaos and the death of sinners – and bears it all. The Father is well pleased with His Son – because His journey leads to the cross.

Here in our text, St. Luke tells us that Jesus stands up in the synagogue and reads this Messianic prophesy from Isaiah – and then sits down and preaches a sermon that basically says – Isaiah was talking about me.

Indeed, the Spirit of the Lord was poured out on Jesus in His Baptism – and now – He is preaching good news to the poor, proclaiming liberty to the captives, recovery of sight and liberty and the year of the Lord’s favor.

St. Luke deliberately tells us that Jesus “began” to teach these things – in other words – it does not end here. Throughout His ministry He will fulfill this prophesy – for indeed, He is the Messiah, God’s beloved Son, the One anointed for sacrifice.

“Is not this Joseph’s son?” they say – even though it has been clearly taught that Jesus is God’s Son, not Joseph’s son.

And He knows what they are thinking. He knows they want miraculous signs as proof – like Thomas' who demands to see before they will believe. "What we have heard you did at Capernaum, do here in your hometown as well."

It is not just the sin that causes all kinds of physical maladies that Jesus must attend to – but also the sin of unbelief. And so the teaching begun, continues. It continues with lessons from of old.

In Elijah's day, the heavens were shut and it did not rain for 3 ½ years and there was a great famine – all because of the impenitence of Israel. That mighty sign was given to preach repentance – but God's people did not repent – and so Elijah is sent to the widow of Zarephath, a Gentile. There God manifested His glory by raising the widow's son from death to life.

So also, in the days of Elisha the prophet – revealing the glory of the Lord in the cleansing of another Gentile. Naaman, as you may recall, expected a great big show from Elisha to cure his leprosy – but he was only given a word of promise to believe.

This is what the Lord desires in all ages – that sinners would repent and live. The Lord preaches and teaches His good news – a Word that repents, that creates a faith that looks to Him for deliverance and life. For Naaman, the miraculous baptism by which he was cleansed came with receiving the prophet's word.

It is God's people gathered in a synagogue who hear the teaching of Jesus and are filled with wrath – so much so, that they "drove Him out of the town" so that they could "throw Him down the cliff."

WE are God's people. WE are the sons of God. You are throwing these Gentile examples in our face – as if WE do not deserve to have you do miracles for us!

In an unbelieving rage they seek to throw the Son of God down the cliff – but Jesus is on a journey – and He miraculously walks through the midst of them, right through their hands – so that He may continue on His way to the cross.

Jesus' ministry is one of preaching, teaching, and miracles – but the miracles are meant to serve the Word of God. They are epiphanies that show forth what God is doing, and has done, through the power of His Word.

Dearly beloved, we are the children of God who are synagogued here today – gathered together to receive the ministry of Jesus, His Divine Service to us. Are we like our forefathers? Do we set aside the Word with unbelief and demand signs?

Oh how tempting to demand that the Lord would heal Duane Arends from his cancer and spare his life – that He would restore Larry Harshfield to perfect health – that He would resurrect Diane Bolin.

Come, Lord Jesus – and do our bidding! Cast out the spirits of our depression, our addictions. Open your hand and rain down blessings upon us so that we may be fruitful, that our storehouses may overflow – that we might be successful, and powerful, and honored by all. Wave your miracle wand and deliver us from whatever is troubling us!

There were many who cried out to Jesus during His public ministry for healing – who cried out in faith – believing Him to be the Messiah, and trusting that He would be merciful to them. There were also those who demanded signs – apart from faith.

Jesus' ministry is not about using miracles to simply prove Himself – or to give sinners what they desire. His ministry is about faith in Him as the Savior – about forgiving sinners – about rescuing from sin, death and damnation – about giving eternal life.

The ministry of Jesus which began at His baptism – has not taken a break, as if He no longer preaches, teaches and heals – as if glorious and miraculous signs have been put on hold until He returns on the Last Day. What He “began” He continues.

However, His miraculous works in these days are hidden from our eyes – so that they might be received by faith – a faith that trusts in Him.

The Lord calls you to repent of wanting signs and not His Word – of wanting proof that He is merciful before you will believe. What a miracle it is when a sinner believes that Jesus has forgiven his sin!

Jesus' journey leads to the cross where He is sacrificed to ransom you – to turn away God's anger towards all who sin – to defeat death and give life. What He preaches to you in His Word today – He delivers to those with ears to hear!

Baptism now saves you! You are washed, cleansed in the blood of Jesus Christ – resurrected from death to life. As God's beloved children, we make no demands of Him – but confidently trust His promises – and delight to receive His grace.

His Word reveals the truth that is not seen with our eyes, our bodies, our families or our society. What is true even now, will be revealed on the Last Day. His victory now obscured, will then be lived to the fullest.

For now, His grace to you in Christ sustains you – even as He leads you on a journey – through the misery, suffering and death of this world – to the glorious life that has no end. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, guards your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.