

“The Anointed One – For You – Today”

The teenager wants his father to replace the car he wrecked because he was on his phone – but doesn't intend to quit fixating on his phone while driving.

The alcoholic wants to be bailed out, to have the broken relationships restored that his drunkenness has destroyed – but isn't all that interested in being delivered from the addiction that's killing him.

So it is with the people in the synagogue at Nazareth who are fixated on Jesus and marvel at His gracious words – but end up wanting to throw Jesus off the cliff. And so it often is with sinners ... and with us today.

Jesus reads the Scripture reading from Isaiah that speaks of proclaiming good news to the poor ... liberty to the captives ... recovering of sight to the blind ... liberty to those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

“Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing,” Jesus says – and the crowd goes wild. “All spoke well of Him and marveled at the gracious words that were coming from His mouth.”

All of this sounds great Jesus – but wait – “Is not this Joseph's son?” How can what He says be true? We know Him. This sounds too good to be true. We'd love the healing of which you speak Physician – but prove it – “What we have heard you did at Capernaum, do here in your hometown as well.”

And that's when things take a turn for the worse. Where their fixation on Jesus and marveling at His gracious words – turn to wrath, and rejection, and a mob that wants to throw Him down the cliff.

What's happened? What changed? Why are their words that sound like songs of “Hosanna” – so quickly turned to shouts of “crucify Him, crucify Him”?

What has changed is their words and actions, but not their hearts. In the end, what they've done with their hearts they seek to do with their hands. They have rejected Jesus as “the Christ.” That's what “Christ” means – “the Anointed One.” The One anointed by God to save them from their sins.

“Truly, I say to you, no prophet is acceptable in his hometown.” Jesus knows the truth, the rejection that lurks in their hearts – and He’s warning them of the danger and damnation of rejecting the Lord’s Anointed One.

Pay attention here folks, I’m telling you the truth. You know Elijah – and how there were many widows in Israel in his days – but “he was sent to none of them” – but only to that Gentile widow in Zarephath. And you know the story of Elisha – how there were many lepers in Israel – but none of them were cleansed, “but only Naaman the Syrian.”

The prophets Elijah and Elisha were sent by God to call His people to repentance – to turn from their false worship and their wicked deeds – but they would not listen to the Word of the Lord.

That’s the pattern through the Scriptures. The people of God marvel at His parting of the waters and setting them free – they gladly fill their bellies with His manna from heaven and quench their thirst with water from the rock. They delight that He heals their diseases – fights off their enemies – and brings them to a land flowing with milk and honey.

But the people in the days of Elijah and Elisha had rejected the greater deliverance – the deliverance from sin, and its hell, and eternal damnation. Their false belief and unbelief convinced them that God’s favor was upon them. Their impenitence denied their sin, the seriousness of their sin – that the fires of hell and eternal separation from the Lord is what they truly deserved.

“Today,” Jesus says. “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He has anointed me.” I am the Christ sent to you to liberate you and proclaim the Lord’s favor to you. “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing” – but you only see me as “Joseph’s son” and tell me to “heal [myself].”

“Today” Jesus comes and fulfills this Scripture in your hearing. His proclaiming of good news to the poor and liberty to the captives sounds good to you. You marvel at His miraculous relief from paralysis, blindness and death – and you want to hear the gracious words of the Lord’s favor to you. But are you fixated on relief from the side effects that sin brings – rather than an eradication of the root problem?

“Today” – will the Prophet Jesus have no honor amongst you? For Jesus is the Christ, the Anointed One of God – who has come to save you from your sin. That’s the root of the problem – sin which leads to death – sin which enslaves you to a hell which has no end. Will that truth stir up a wrath that seeks to throw Him from your life?

“But passing through their midst, [Jesus] went away.” Jesus goes on His way to the cross – where ironically He will hear the people say – “He saved others; let him save himself, if he is the Christ of God, his Chosen One!”

Jesus is the Christ – the One Chosen by God to shed His blood and sacrifice His life. He did not come to heal Himself, or save Himself – He can to heal and save you! “Today” He comes to call the poor, the captives, the blind, and the oppressed to repentance – for He has taken your sin as His own, and redeemed you with His blood.

Dearly beloved, the Lord has called me to proclaim good news to you – that you have been set free by the Christ – that, in Jesus, the Lord’s favor rests upon you. Amen.

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