Luke 4:21 And he began by saying to them, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”

Do you see it? Do you see the world’s attitude toward Jesus? For that matter, let me ask you a few questions that I think important to contemplate when it comes to this history of Jesus.

Why did Jesus go there to preach? Jesus was the Son of God and surely He knew what the reaction to Him would be? So why did He go?

What was it that caused Jesus to say what He did? Was Jesus a bad evangelist? Surely Jesus knew their hearts so why didn’t Jesus say what was acceptable and win them to his side?

What did Jesus say that was wrong? What did Jesus say that would cause the men and members of this Synagogue to march him out of town to the local hill to throw him off? Clearly the intent was to do him harm?

And finally this question. What is it that you and I are to learn from this history? It is clear that all of this occurs for a cause and reason. It is clear that God has this recorded for a cause and reason. So what lesson are we to learn?

Those are the questions that popped into my head as I studied and wrestled with this history of Jesus. Let’s try and get them answered to the best of our ability under the theme: TODAY IS THE DAY!

I am going to guess that you recognize that our Gospel reading is a continuation of the Gospel that we heard last week. We heard how Jesus had gone to Nazareth, the town he grew up in and went to the Synagogue to worship, as was his custom. The Synagogue rulers, recognizing Jesus, and no doubt knowing Jesus’ scholarship, allowed Jesus to be a guest reader for that day. They handed Jesus the scroll of the prophet Isaiah. Jesus found Isaiah 62:1-5 and proceeded to read the lesson to the people. But it is clear that Jesus did more than just read. Jesus explained the text. Jesus spoke of what the text meant. He started by telling them, **“Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”** Then he spoke of the work of the Holy Spirit. Spoke of the One who was anointed by that Spirit. Spoke of the good news for the poor, the proclamation of freedom for prisoners, the blind seeing, the oppressed released…and maybe most of all, how all of this was to be so that people could grasp that God’s grace and mercy, God’s favor was to be found among the people. After, what I can only imagine must have been an awesome sermon, Jesus finished.

The reaction? The text records this: **“All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips.”** Those words tell us something important. Jesus was a good speaker. People were impressed with the delivery and it tells us they are also a bit surprised. Surprised because the words of Jesus are “gracious.” The words are not law demanding, law oriented but rather are filled with kindness and gentleness. The words of Jesus were moving and, I am going to guess, a message of such nature as had not been heard before. A message of love and deliverance. A message of salvation, with spiritual joys laid forth for all to enjoy. The sermon and its message were awesome and fully God’s truth.

So what happened? The realization of what Jesus had said. Despite the gracious words of love and deliverance, that is not what was focused on by so many. Jesus had told them these words were fulfilled before them, fulfilled “Today.” Wait a minute, everyone knows that passage of Isaiah is about the Messiah. It is a prophecy telling what the Messiah, the Son of God will bring. Jesus said it was fulfilled? Jesus said He was the Messiah? Wait a minute, **“Isn’t this Joseph’s son?”**

That’s right, they heard Jesus tell them He was the Messiah. And despite the fact that his message was awesome and true, they did not care. Mind you, they didn’t have to get angry and upset, they could have simply taken the angle: “Well, those are nice words Jesus but to call yourself the Messiah is a bit much. You know what, we will just wait and see how this Messiah claim of your pans out in the time to come.” But that is not the way of the fervent Jewish believer. As far as they are concerned Jesus has committed blasphemy! Jesus has dishonored and spoken falsely about God. They are furious, anger consuming them and driving them to the only thing they can think of…”We must put him to death! We must shut this liar’s mouth and stop Him from spreading his godless tripe!”

Ah, these people are such a picture of those of the world. They think they know something, they think they have it all figured out. They find the message of God to be…well, they want the message of God their way. If it doesn’t fit what they think and how they envision it, well then, the world just turns away from it. And if you have been paying attention in today’s world, you will discover that they are no longer happy with just turning away from God’s Word, they want to silence God’s Word. They want to keep its message away from others and if given the chance the world will shout you down and shut you up!

Why? What is wrong with the gracious message of God? I have no doubt based on the Isaiah text that Jesus preached a message of salvation and deliverance from sin, death and the devil. I have no doubt Jesus spoke of God’s love and grace and how this salvation was going to be from and of God. Doesn’t matter. I am always amazed at how the world lumps the Christian message in with all the other work righteous religions, telling others that Christians are just like all the others. Christians just want to control your life and make you subservient to their ideas. They want to enslave you and take away your human dignity by having you grovel before the church and making you walk the moral line they have decided is best.

Yet that is not the message of the Christian Church nor was it the message of Jesus. The message of Christ is one of deliverance and peace. How God in love has sent His Son to atone for our sins, to call us to faith and in that call to faith grant us the promise of eternal life and salvation. God wants to save our souls. God wants to deliver us to heaven. God wants to embrace us with love and shower us with grace. God wants to give us His Spirit to help us, guide us, and be a guarantee of the eternal peace that is ours in Jesus.

But that is not what the world hears! The Nazarenes heard Jesus say he was the Messiah and that was it. They stopped contemplating the gracious words of Jesus and began a hostile turn of heart. Jesus met them head on. He knew their hearts. He had lived with them. He had perhaps even gone to school with many of the leaders of that Synagogue and certainly with many of the people there. He knew they would not believe. He knew they would reject and spurn him. I suspect that’s what they always did with Jesus.

I want you to think about this. Once Jesus began his ministry and the Jewish leadership began to hate Jesus don’t you think they sent people to his hometown to uncover any kind of dirt they could? What did they find? Nothing! Other than hearing that Jesus was the perfect child and student, a goody two sandals who they found irritating just because he was so good…they found nothing! There was no reason to doubt Jesus other than the fact that they didn’t like him because he was so good!!!

So Jesus takes them head on. He shares with them two histories of God’s Word, histories that relate how God’s people, those who should have known best come out looking worst. The people back then did not hear God’s truth and wonder from God’s prophets and now they were not willing and ready to hear God’s truth from God’s son either! Do you see the point of that question: **“Isn’t this Joseph’s son?”**

The world’s attitude. Jesus can’t be what He claims! He can’t be God’s Son. He can’t be the very fulfillment of all of God’s Word. He can’t be here to save my soul and grant me the gift of heaven? He can’t be because I am just not that bad! Go find someone who needs saving! Go find someone who isn’t as good and right as I am. Jesus you keep your claims and you keep your teaching out of my life!”

Now, I am going to guess that most of us here and maybe even most of those who might be reading or watching this sermon online are not of the bent where they would take Jesus out with murderous intent. But we trash Jesus in so many ways, don’t we? Be in Church? Jesus I have better things to do. Live a life to the glory of Jesus! I ain’t no Bible thumper! How many ways have you in your life been a part of that crowd that wanted to get rid of Jesus? How many of us have time and time again shown in our lives a disdain, a willingness born of sin that literally gives the message to Jesus, “Hey, why don’t you just go jump off a cliff!”

Do you want to know why Jesus was there? Because he loved them. He wanted to give them a chance to hear the gospel, give them a chance to be in awe at God’s gracious goodness. Jesus was there for no other reason but to try, to try and melt the hatred of their hearts and rejoice in the wonder that God’s Son lived among them. They would not have it. And what of you, when Jesus comes to you with the same gospel, with that chance to be in awe at God’s gracious goodness, what of you? When you hear of sins forgiven because Jesus paid for your damnation, when you hear how you are freed from the threat of hell, released from the oppression of guilt over sin, what of you? When you are brought into the glorious light of God’s love and you see the darkness around you dispersed in Jesus, what of you? God’s gracious call to you in Jesus is to be his child, to be an heir of eternal life, to be filled with an inexpressible joy because your Savior has come. His name is Jesus. He has served as your Savior. He has won salvation for you and offers you that gracious gift every Sunday through the pastor He has called to tell you of forgiveness and eternal life. What of you, my friend, what of you?

Now I do want you to notice how this history ends. This mob grabs Jesus, we are told they drove him out of town and up to the brow of the hill the town was built on. Somewhere in there you would think the voice of reason and faith would shout out, “Hey, what are you doing, just back off and see what God will do with this man.” But so many falsely believe that God, their gods, need them to defend his honor and fight for him. What, your god is too weak to defend himself? But they don’t stop. Their intent, in pushing and shoving, in herding Jesus to this hill is to throw him off. And then, Jesus just walks away!

Think about that! Jesus just walks away. An intense and incensed crowd and yet Jesus just walks away. I have often wondered just how it happened. As a younger person I imagined that Jesus waved his hand and then they just couldn’t see him anymore and he walked away. But now that I know the text before us and how God had it recorded for us, I think that Jesus did do something and as a result of that He just turned and walked away from all of them while all they could do, despite what they wanted to do, was watch Him walk away. They were powerless to touch him or hinder him in any way. It was a miracle.

A few more things to contemplate. As far as we know, Jesus did not return to Nazareth again to preach and teach. He walked away and did not go back. I have no doubt that there were some people there who eventually, after the resurrection came to faith in Jesus, but for the most part, most of those people who attitude was “Get out of my life Jesus” got their wish. I wonder how they feel about Jesus today? I wonder because the “today” Jesus gave them, they squandered. How do you think their today is?

I do think there is a lesson here for us. Today is the day to hear the gracious words of Jesus. Today is the day to contemplate who and what He is. Today is the day to learn of God’s love and how Jesus died and rose just for you. Today is the day to be filled with awe that God’s love is so complete and today is the day to embrace the wonder of Jesus. Do not be like the people of Nazareth who had their “today” and blew it. Hear today and believe God’s message of love, salvation and joy in Jesus.

Oh, and don’t you just love how this text ends. It says this, **“Then he went down to Capernaum, a town in Galilee, and on the Sabbath began to teach the people. They were amazed at his teaching, because his message had authority.”** It is just so awesome to realize that these people also got their “today.” It is clear that they heard. They were amazed at Jesus! Me too! And you? Amen.