

Luke 4:14-21

Epiphany 3; January 24 & 25, 2016

“Who Is This Jesus Who Speaks Good News?”

Homecomings are special times for many different people. Perhaps no better evidence exists of how much homecomings mean than the numerous stories that are told of soldiers returning home. There are an innumerable number of these videos on the web showing the surprise homecoming to a waiting family or spouse. These videos are touching and bring a smile to the face of any person that might be watching not to mention the shrieks and tears of those actually involved. We have all seen them. Maybe even some of us have been a part of that kind of a homecoming. A homecoming allows people a chance to express their gratitude for that soldier's service to his country. No matter what branch they may serve in, they all deserve a welcome homecoming from a grateful nation.

This morning, in our text, we watch a homecoming unfold in front of our eyes. **“Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside. He taught in their synagogues, and everyone praised him. He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom.”** This was early in Jesus' ministry. Up to this point He had been baptized. After that He went by Himself into the wilderness where He was tempted for 40 days and nights in order to keep the Law for us. Next Jesus spent several months in and around Jerusalem preaching and teaching and performing miracles. Finally He made it back to Galilee and eventually to His home town, Nazareth.

The people of Nazareth were proud of their Jesus, the carpenter's son. The word was getting around about the miracles Jesus was performing such as changing water into wine and healing sick people and casting out evil spirits. Large crowds gathered around him to hear him speak. It should not surprise us that when Jesus came home they wanted him to read the lessons in the synagogue and it should not surprise us that a large crowd was there.

He unwound the scroll to Isaiah, the 61st chapter. And this is what he read: **“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.”** Everybody knew that passage. It was one of the most famous passages in the Old Testament. They knew Isaiah had written these words. They also knew that he wasn't talking about himself, but instead those words were talking about the Messiah that would be coming to rescue the world from its sin. The people knew that when God sent the Messiah, all their troubles would be gone and all their problems would be solved.

The mission of this Messiah was not to come and preach good news to the *physically poor*; he would not come to proclaim freedom to *physical prisoners*; he would not give sight to the physically blind or release those whose bodies were *oppressed*. No – this Messiah would come to save the *spiritually poor*, the *spiritual prisoners*, the *spiritually blind*, the *spiritually oppressed*. Every one of those words from Isaiah paints a different picture of what this Messiah was going to bring to this world – forgiveness of sin.

The truth is, we're all guilty. We've all sinned. We've all done things God doesn't want us to do and not done things God wants us to do. If we don't feel guilty, we should! The trouble is we're stuck with it. We can't buy our way out of guilt because we're penniless before God. We can't escape the prison of guilt because we're guilty. We're blinded to God's freedom because we always focused on our guilt. We're oppressed by guilt and we're slaves to guilt and there's nothing we can do to get rid of it. Yet, that is the beauty of these words of Isaiah. God was sending a Savior to rescue those who were being crushed under the weight of sin.

It is no wonder that the people of Jesus' day couldn't wait for that Messiah to come. They couldn't wait to be set free. But what happened next was not what they were expecting. Jesus reads these beautiful words of Isaiah, he rolls up the scroll, and then he speaks one of the shortest sermons in the world: **“Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”** You can almost hear their jaws dropping to the floor. Did they hear it right? He said what? Then their minds turn from shock to being furious. How could the carpenter's son make such a claim? **WHO IS THIS JESUS WHO SPEAKS THE GOOD NEWS?** In the words that follow our text, we are told that the people were so furious that after the worship service they

wanted to drag him out of town and throw him over a cliff. Jesus' hometown people wanted to admire him as their hero, a great prophet sent from God with miraculous powers, but they were not willing to accept Jesus, the carpenter's son, as their Lord and God. Yet, Jesus would not allow them to carry out their plan. He simply walked out through the crowd.

Who is this Jesus who speaks good news? He's the Savior who will remove the guilt of sin in our lives. He does. He kept God's laws. He had no guilt. He took your guilt off your back. He carried your guilt to the cross. He paid for your guilt with his blood and death. He came back alive and rose from the grave. He later would speak another sentence that is very short, but sums up Jesus' mission in three little words: **IT IS FINISHED!** Our guilt is gone; we can be sure.

Every weekend we hear that good news in the words of Scripture. We see that good news as our sins are washed away through the waters of baptism. We eat and drink Christ's body and blood that is in the Lord's Supper to assure us that God has forgiven our sin.

Jesus has done all of this so that we can have a homecoming that is out of this world. The homecomings of this world will eventually go away. The cameras will return to the next story. The confetti will be swept up and thrown away. The homecoming will become just a cherished memory. The homecoming that we experience as we walk through the gates of heaven is more glorious than we could possibly imagine. Who is this Jesus? He's the one who says: **"Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."** Amen.