

2018-19-11 Luke 4:20-32 God's message has authority. Listen to it! Epiphany 4 February 3-4, 2019
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Grace, love, and truth belong to God our heavenly Father and have been revealed in Jesus Christ. Amen.
God's Word to give us certainty of His love and to help us speak the truth is written in Luke 4:20-32
This is Your Word heavenly Father. Through the Word's authority, help us believe and be saved! Amen!

Dear Christian Friends,

Last week we heard how Jesus read from Isaiah 61 and then He claimed that God had sent Him as the Savior to preach that good news, to heal the sick, and to set people free from their sins. The closing verse of the Gospel was that people were amazed that Jesus spoke with such confidence! As impressed as they were with how Jesus spoke, they were just as angered by what He spoke. Everyone in the town of Nazareth knew Jesus as one of their own. But, what they couldn't believe is that the boy they had seen growing up among them could also be called the Son of God and the Savior!

Today, many people have the similar problem with us. If we are the children of God through Jesus, where is the evidence or benefit? Are we free from colds or the flu? Do we have less problems in life than non-Christians? They may ask, "What good is Jesus if He doesn't answer my prayers, if He doesn't help me get me out of debt, if he doesn't take away my pain, help me pass a test, or to find a spouse? We are hard-pressed to come up with answers to all these questions. We need God's Word to speak truth that is beyond sight and our daily lives. Jesus is the Son of God and our Savior who loves and helps us through every time of need. There is only one way that we can know these truths.

God's message has authority! Listen to it!

First, why is it so difficult for people to listen? After the townspeople of Nazareth got over their initial shock of how well Jesus spoke, they thought about the claim that He made to be the Savior. It shocked them. "*They asked, 'Isn't this Joseph's son?'*" (Jesus could have shocked them and answered: No! But, He said to them, "*Surely you will quote this Proverb to me: 'Physician, heal yourself! Do here in your hometown what we have heard that you did in Capernaum'*" (v.22-23). As they heard Jesus' claim to be the Savior, they thought: Those are big words for anyone to say. We will not believe Him unless He proves it with great miracles!

These people demanded signs of Jesus. They weren't satisfied with His Word. They weren't satisfied with the kind of miracles Jesus did. They always wanted more proof. But, the problem was not with the proof, it was the unbelief of the people. The people of Nazareth thought that they were God's people without Jesus because they could prove that Abraham was their ancestor. They were filled with sinful pride, instead of faith in God. Their pride had no room for Jesus. Someone too proud is not willing to listen to others, but always wants to speak and be heard. Job's friends were like that. They only wanted to talk and they thought that they had all the answers. They were of no comfort to Job and they offended God who knew the truth. So, it was with the people of Nazareth. In their sinful pride, they thought they knew everything they needed to know. Even God's Word was not going to change their opinion!

Yet Jesus tried. He gave two examples from the Old Testament that showed they needed to be more than descendants of Abraham. They needed to hear God's Word and follow it in faith. When the Prophet Elijah received death threats from wicked King Ahab, he fled to a foreign country. God worked a miracle through Elijah to provide food for a foreign widow and her son. She ate for almost a year on a small amount of grain because when Elijah told her to make food for him and that God would provide she believed God's Word and was well fed! The second case is when Naaman, an enemy of Israel, came to the prophet Elisha to be healed. He was healed because he accepted God's Word and by faith was cleansed.

These examples that Jesus spoke of angered those in Nazareth. *“All the people in the synagogue were furious when they heard this. They got up, drove him out of the town, and took him to the brow of the hill on which the town was built, in order to throw him down the cliff”* (v.28-29). In the middle of this riot of rejection, Jesus performed a miracle. Before the mob of people could push Him over the edge of the cliff, Jesus used His mighty power to part the people. He walked right through the middle of them without anyone touching Him. You would think that this show of power may have caused some of the people to think about who Jesus was and what He had come to do for them. In time a few did believe.

Despite the rejection of some people, **second, God’s message will accomplish His good purpose!** After Jesus left Nazareth as far as we know He never returned. *“Then He went down to Capernaum... and on the Sabbath began to teach the people. They were amazed at his teaching, because his message had authority”* (v.31-32). What does it mean to have a message with authority? Think of an ambassador, a person who speaks with the authority of a ruler. Jesus spoke for God. He was not talking about opinions or theories. He was talking about the truths of God like: God was angry because people have sinned. God in judgment should throw all sinners into the fiery pit reserved for the devil and those who follow him. People have no works or words good enough to save them. As some people heard His message, especially those who had been baptized by John, they repented of their sins. They despaired of their family connections or goodness to save themselves. They looked to Jesus to save them because the authority His Word gave them faith to trust in Him.

Think of the power of God’s Word! On each of the 6 days of creation, God said, “Let there be” and everything was made according to His Word. Even in Nazareth, there were a few people who believed in Jesus that were healed. God’s Word of authority continued to change the hearts of some as Jesus traveled. At Capernaum, they became Jesus’ disciples. Even as a growing number of Jews rejected Jesus as the Savior, Peter replied, *“Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God”* (John 6:68-69).

The Gospel of Christ is still the *“power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes.”* (Romans 1:16) Faith itself comes from hearing the message of Christ (Romans 10:17). How thankful we should be that we are here today as believers in Jesus. One reason we are here is to listen to God’s Word so its authority will speak to our hearts. Jesus promised, *“Blessed are those who hear the Word of God and keep it”* (Luke 11:28). How blessed we would be, if we could be more connected to His promises! God’s Word will *“accomplish what He pleases”* (Isaiah 55:11). We are living proof of that by the God-given faith that we have in Christ. If someone wants to argue about it, we don’t need to worry. We just need to open God’s Word and let it speak for itself. *“God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life”* (John 3:16).

Not everyone in the world will like or accept what God says about them as sinners or about Jesus as the only Savior. God’s truthful message may stir up anger in some. But for us who believe, we’re thankful! In Christ we can be certain of God’s love and of a place won for us in heaven. We can be certain of God’s forgiveness in Christ because God’s Word has promised it. And we will not only believe the authority of God’s Word, we will speak that truth so others can be amazed at the love of Christ. Amen.