

If Jesus were a teacher, would you sign up for his class? Would it be a fun class? Would it be easy? Would you like your classmates? Do you think if Jesus were your teacher, he would be an easy grader? Or would your parents be sending him angry emails and complaining about the stuff that he is teaching? Do you think you would ever get frustrated at his teaching? These are good questions to ask because Jesus was a Rabbi, a teacher. His followers were called disciples, which means students. And we, today, living 2,000 years after Jesus were made disciples of Jesus in our baptisms and we continue learning from Jesus, our Rabbi, as he teaches us in His Word to obey everything, he has commanded us.

This morning, we are going to get a look at what it looks like to be in the classroom of Jesus as we go back 2,000 years ago into the synagogue of Nazareth and hear the teaching of our teacher and Savior- Jesus Christ. In this account we are going to see that Jesus might not be the teacher that we expect, but he is the teacher that we need.

By the time our lesson from Luke takes place, Jesus had already been baptized, been tempted by the devil and been performing some miracles. News about him had been spreading and his fame had been growing. All of this had been taking place outside of his hometown in other areas, but on this Sabbath day, Jesus is coming back to his hometown of Nazareth, where he had grown up. People had known him, probably seen him working with his earthly father Joseph as a carpenter. But now he is beginning to make something of himself, and the people are eager to have him back.

So, Jesus entered the synagogue, the building where Jewish people would gather to pray, to study and to read the Scriptures. He got up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled it, and he found the place where it is written, which shows us that he took intentional effort to find and read the very words from Isaiah 61 and Isaiah 58 that are recorded for us in our lesson. He read these words: 18 *"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."* What beautiful words! These words from Isaiah had been written down around 700 years earlier and had been written about the promised one that would come to save God's people. Listen to what this Savior is going to do: *he is going to proclaim good news, proclaim freedom, recovery of sight, set people and proclaim the Lord's favor.* We love good news! We praise freedom! We need the Lord's favor! These are all amazing and astounding things. This is what Jesus read.

So, imagine Jesus was teaching these exact things in person today. If Jesus were teaching these same truths, and you heard rejoicing, laughter and celebration coming from the room, whom would you see inside? You look through that window in the door of the classroom, and you would see a homeless person, and that beggar you saw at Wal-Mart. You'd see people in orange jumpsuits having their handcuffs unlocked. You'd see blind people with their walking sticks putting them down and seeing. You'd see the refugee fleeing an oppressive country and finding peace and safety. Because freedom is a cause of rejoicing if you've been imprisoned, good news is needed when you're poor, freedom is a cause of rejoicing when you're oppressed, and being able to see causes the blind to be overjoyed. Would you want to go into that classroom?

So back to our lesson, he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down to teach. Luke tells us that the eyes of everyone were fastened on him, you can imagine them at the edge of their seat, and Jesus began by saying to them. *Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.*" Think about this- Jesus is saying that he is the Messiah- the promised one of God! The Holy Spirit descended on Jesus in his baptism, as he was anointed and began his public ministry. He spoke of forgiveness of sins, freedom from sin, and he was healing blind people and was bringing in a time of forgiveness, peace and joy in the work of God. The people listened to Jesus the teacher speaking such profound, deep and gracious words that Jesus was speaking, but then they also could remember him as an ordinary boy working with his dad. How could he be the Messiah, and so they asked, *Isn't this Joseph's son?* While all of Jesus' words were full of grace and beautiful, they couldn't believe that these great things would come from him.

So, what does Jesus the teacher do? Does Jesus say, "Hey, I get your confusion guys. Totally see where you're coming from. But just have some patience, and I'll explain it even more clearly." No, listen to what Jesus says: *Surely you will quote this proverb to me: "Physician, heal yourself!" And you will tell me, 'Do here in your hometown what we have heard you did in Capernaum.'*" I know you want me to prove my authority by doing miracles. You want me to prove my power to you. You're disappointed that I'm not doing here all the miracles you heard about, and I'm not giving you the signs and wonders you want, but the teaching you need- but you won't believe!

So, after Jesus points out their unbelief and wanting Jesus to do signs that had gotten them so excited, Jesus gives them two Old Testament accounts to show them their unbelief. He mentioned the famine at the time of Elijah

around 850 years before Jesus. Yet, this great prophet didn't help any widows in Israel at that time but rather helped a woman living in the pagan area of Sidon. And shortly after Elijah, Elisha the prophet didn't heal any of the Israelites with leprosy, but rather Naaman, a high-ranking soldier in the Syrian army. Jesus was saying, "God doesn't show his grace because he favors any one particular people or race. People of Nazareth, you don't have any right that I would show you any preferential treatment or have the right to demand that I do miracles in other places just because I grew up here. I am proclaiming my life-giving gospel here that I proclaim everywhere, and you are rejecting it- so this word will be taken to others."

When the people knew Jesus was pointing out their sin, they flipped out. In a chaotic scene they drove the son of God out of town and were ready to kill him by throwing him off a cliff. But Jesus' time had not yet come, so he just walked through this angry mob and left. He used his divine power to preserve his life now, so that he could give it up at the proper time.

And that day would come, when Jesus proved himself to be the greatest teacher ever. When the angry Jewish leaders would finally condemn him to death, beat him, and have him crucified on the cross. When Jesus would not walk right through the crowd but allow himself to be nailed up on the cross for the sins of the world. This is what the greatest teacher has ever done. He doesn't just teach, he gives- he gives his life for you, for me, for the world. It is beyond our comprehension how much Jesus the teacher loves his students, but it is good to sit in his classroom and be taught by him.

But you won't realize how good it is to be in his classroom unless you change the way you look at yourself. Because Jesus comes to bring freedom from sin, freedom from oppression, to give sight to the blind, and to give eternal riches to the poor. You need to see yourself as spiritually and completely poor, you need to see yourself in that orange jumpsuit before the judgment seat of God, you need to recognize your own blindness to the things of God without Jesus giving you sight to see them, and you need to understand sin's addictive and oppressive power over you. Then, you will hear and understand the freedom from sin and death, you will see how clearly Jesus teaches you to see the things of the world, and you will rejoice that you are in the Lord's favor.

Of course, the people in Nazareth did not recognize this, and they were furious. They were familiar with Jesus as the carpenter's son and were angry when he wouldn't do what they wanted. We too must understand that faithful teaching of the word of God will face rejection and resistance. We need to be wise when you try to discern why people reject the work of the church. You can go on YouTube and see all sorts of former Christians slamming and bashing the church of God. No doubt, some of them have been hurt or harmed by sins of Christians or church leaders. For our own sins, we ought to repent. But we ought not to repent when people speak evil of God's people or evil about what God's Word clearly teaches. Nor does God want us to see this as failure, but as a common way that His Word is treated. We ought not to expect better treatment than our Lord and Savior

But perhaps today there is a different warning for us besides outright anger or hostile rejection of the Word. Perhaps its temptation toward apathy. Have we become so familiar with the amazing news of Christ that we are tempted to fall asleep in the classroom of Jesus? We're bored when we come here into church, or we read our bible or when we pray. Our minds wonder as our brains are captivated by money, by our family, by success, by a comfortable life or the next thing that we think will give us some excitement.

This lesson today is a call to repent from a lazy hearing of the word of God, and an attitude of "we know all of this already." It's a call to meditate on "how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ and to know this love that surpasses knowledge" (Ephesians 3:19). That Jesus also lays out and gives his forgiveness to his disciples who know better, just as he had mercy on Peter who denied him, and all the others who ran away from him when he was arrested. Look at Jesus your Savior, with the nail marks in his hands calling out to you, "Peace!"

Dear Brothers and sisters in Christ, it is good to be a student in the classroom of Jesus. He has brought you into that classroom through the water and word of Baptism and as he plants the word of God deep inside of you. But Jesus never promises that his class will be easy. He never promises that it will always be fun. He does not promise us that everyone will be glad that you are in his class. He never promises you that he won't be frustrated, sad or perplexed. But he does promise you that as you listen to his words, you will learn. He promises you will be loved. And he promises that you've already passed because He took the test for you, and credits you with a 100%. It's good to be in Jesus' class. Continue to listen to him. Amen.