**Luke 4:16-30 16He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. As was his custom, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day and stood up to read. 17The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written: 18The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed, 19and to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor. 20He rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. 21He began to tell them, “Today, this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.” 22They all spoke well of him and were impressed by the words of grace that came from his mouth. And they kept saying, “Isn’t this Joseph’s son?” 23He told them, “Certainly you will quote this proverb to me, ‘Physician, heal yourself!’ Do here in your hometown everything we heard you did in Capernaum.” 24And he said, “Amen I tell you: No prophet is accepted in his hometown. 25But truly I tell you: There were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the sky was shut for three years and six months, while a great famine came over all the land. 26Elijah was not sent to any of them, but to a widow of Zarephath, in Sidon. 27And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet, yet not one of them was healed except Naaman the Syrian.” 28All those who were in the synagogue were filled with rage when they heard these things. 29They got up and drove him out of the town. They led him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, in order to throw him off the cliff. 30But he passed through the middle of them and went on his way.**

Reception Uncovered

What if Jesus came to Fremont today? What if he came to St. John’s? What is he stood here in the pulpit and preached a sermon? Wouldn’t that be marvelous? A wonderful opportunity to hear a message straight from God! What a difference it would make if Jesus was here! Just think how people would respond.

“Do I have to?” “I’ve already heard his message?” What difference does it make anyway?” That’s the reception uncovered of what happens when Jesus appears. It’s why we find it so much easier to do anything else on Sunday morning. Because there are so many important things we think we need to do in life. It’s why we become satisfied with less Jesus, rather than more, and why daily devotions are almost nonexistent among us. You know your sinful nature doesn’t want you to be here. It would find excuses even though Jesus is here. But you also know you can’t trust your sinful nature.

Your sinful nature knows keeping you away from God’s Word is keeping you away from Jesus. That’s why this whole church thing which seems so simple is such a fight. You’re always up against yourself to make it here. Worship services should be the most natural things in the world for us, but it isn’t. And sadly, it is true that it’s getting worse.

It’s not natural for us, but it is for Jesus. **He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. As was his custom, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day and stood up to read.**It was Jesus’ custom to study God’s Word even though it was his own word. He learned it by heart. Now as an adult, he’s devoted his life to it. He attended services not because he must but because he needed too. His custom and habit is to love the World. Wouldn’t that be something? To come to church not as a duty or burden, not out of a sense of must but because of need. Not as a have to or simply as a matter of routine, but to come out of love knowing you need to be here! That’s the life of Jesus. He’s the man who lived blessed with a delight for God’s Word, to meditate on it day and night. He flourished as grew as a tree planted by streams of water. It was normal and natural for Jesus to be in church, to hold God’s Word sacred, and to gladly hear and learn it.

This Sabbath Day was, however, different from so many others. He didn’t come into the synagogue this time as a learner. He’d done that. For 30 years, this have been one of the main places he had learned from God’s Word. No, he didn’t come as a learner today; he came as a speaker. This time he was the rabbi, a guest preacher in his hometown synagogue. **The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written: 18The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed, 19and to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.**

This was different. Never before had this boy turned man that they knew so well do this. So, whether they came out of habit or obligation or even love of the Word, they got more than they expected. This wasn’t going to be just going through the motions or completely a custom. **He rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him.**A great image of attentiveness. All eyes in that church fixed on Jesus. No dozing in the pew after too late a night, no daydreaming or thinking about sports, no quick glances or wondering what or who caused your phone to buzz, no peek at your watch to check how long this is taking. Wouldn’t it be great if those words described us today? Jesus came and the eyes of all were fixed on him!

Then came the sermon. It’s wasn’t a hard to follow lecture on what you are doing wrong to show them their sinfulness. It’s wasn’t a how to deal with your life as a Christian. Jesus applied the passage he had read to those people: **Today, this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.** Jesus told them what Isaiah had written now came to pass right in front of them. This was real—real scroll, real Jesus, real words from his mouth to their real ears.

Jesus is the Word in human flesh—the Word that’s living and active, present in this place for you. The Spirit of the Lord is upon him. He’s the Anointed One, the Christ. That’s why he went to the synagogue that Sabbath Day, and they couldn’t believe their ears! **They all spoke well of him and were impressed by the words of grace that came from his mouth. And they kept saying, “Isn’t this Joseph’s son?”** Nope, not really. Jesus is the Son of God, conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary.

That’s why he comes to church so faithfully still, including today: **to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed,and to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.** Today, the Word once again has fulfilled the Scriptures.

That’s the point of every service, every Sunday (or Monday). Flesh and blood Jesus, true God and true man, steps into our church. He loves to fulfill the Word, to be the Word to the poor, captive, oppressed sinners. Sunday (or Monday) isn’t about you and what you’re doing here, though you need to be here. What matters is that he’s here—here for the depressed and despairing, for the sinner and the sinned against. For all who are abused, victimized, suffering, and beaten up because of their battle with their sinful natures.

Not all who hear believe. The reception of Jesus was uncovered in his hometown and it is uncovered here as well. What do they want with Jesus? Not the good news he proclaims. They want his dead. Gone from their lives. They want Jesus gone. Jesus came to be the Word, to fulfill the Scriptures. He came to suffer for our sins, for the way that we’ve groaned about hearing the Word, for our indifference to the World, for the times we’ve allowed ourselves to be distracted and enticed away from it. As our reception of his Word lacks, we carry Jesus to a cliff hoping to drop it over it. When will be the time he passes by you and go away?

He continues to come to speak that he is the bringer of the Lord’s favor. He comes and extends the Lord’s favor to us again. He doesn’t have to be here. He doesn’t have to do this. He doesn’t need what we give him—our sins, our prayers, our offerings. But still he comes, week after week, service after service, forgiving, loving, and showing mercy to us and to all. Today, Jesus has come to our town, as is his custom each week, and is present with us in this house of God. Today, Jesus is present with us in his Word and in the Sacraments. Today, in God’s house, Jesus proclaims good new to all who are poor in spirit. Here each week, the Spirit of the Lord is upon us, to release us from the oppression of our guilt and sin. Here each week, Jesus offers “recovering of sight” for spiritual blindness, so all might see him clearly as their Savior, whose forgiveness sets them free from fear and death.

What does your reception of the Word uncover? Instead of repentance, do you respond with the same rejection and hatred? When God’s Word is rejected, it is eventually taken to others who by the Spirit’s working through the Word welcome, treasure, and are amazed by the grace of God. You can’t say that it won’t be taken away from you if you continue to neglect and force if from your life.

Dear friends, it is through that powerful message of Jesus, that God the Holy Spirit has welcomed you into God’s kingdom, freed you from the oppression of sin, and promised you life eternal in heaven. What amazing things our God does through his powerful Word. May he help us to receive the Word and be continually amazed at its power and promises. Amen.

Points to consider as an individual or with a small group:

* Complete this sentence: This story of Jesus in the synagogue uncovers…
* Why did Jesus need to be at the synagogue?
* Give three reasons they people would have been excited to hear Jesus reading and speaking in the temple.
* Record two of your own thoughts as to why the people raged when they heard Jesus speak about Elijah and Elisha.
* Comment: It’s a bad things to be too similar with God’s Word.
* Give three ways knowing the reception of God’s Word will enrage and offend people helps with the Christian life.