

How Will You React?

Pastor Jay Bickelhaupt

“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.”

Isaiah wrote these words, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me” but he was not speaking of himself. In the Gospel we find Jesus in his hometown of Nazareth speaking these words 700 years after Isaiah wrote them. Jesus just returned home after beginning his preaching and teaching ministry in the small sea side village of Capernaum only 17 miles from Nazareth. It was the

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Sabbath, and gathered in the synagogue to hear the hometown boy were relatives, friends and neighbors who were eager to listen to one of their own speak. This occurred near the beginning of his ministry and word was starting to spread fast about this powerful teacher. Jesus was eager to share God’s word with them and after reading from the scroll he rolled it up and sat down to teach. Silence gripped the congregation as their eyes were fastened upon. What would he say? What would he do? How would his words affect them?

The prophet has spoken

How will his words affect us? Isaiah also wrote that God’s word will not return to him empty but will accomplish what he desires and achieve the purpose for which he sent it. There will always be a reaction when the word is spoken. That was true for the individuals of Nazareth and that is also very true in our lives as well. We are surrounded with the word that changes, that tears down, and builds

up. How will we react to the prophet that has spoken in the past and to the prophet that is still speaking today?

The one who is speaking in the Gospel lesson is like none other. Those who heard the gracious words of Jesus were amazed because he spoke with authority unlike the teachers of the law. He spoke boldly as he carried out his Father’s will and work. The entire synagogue admired he who grew up among them. Initially as we read these words we may think that the people were on the right track. They should

Luke 4: 20-32

Then 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, and he began by saying to them, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”

All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips. “Isn’t this Joseph’s son?” they asked.

Jesus 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.’ “

“I tell you the truth,” he continued, “no prophet is accepted in his hometown. I assure you that there were many widows in Israel in Elijah’s time, when the sky was shut for three and a half years and there was a severe famine throughout the land. Yet Elijah was not sent to any of them, but to a widow in Zarephath in the region of Sidon. And there were many in Israel with leprosy in the time of Elisha the prophet, yet not one of them was cleansed—only Naaman the Syrian.”

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. But he walked right through the crowd and went on his way.

Jesus Drives Out an Evil Spirit

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.

OUR MISSION

As God’s disciples, we the men, women and children of Apostles are united in the preaching, teaching and sharing of God’s Word in its truth and purity.

By God’s grace, we will nurture believers and joyfully spread the Word of God in our community and throughout the world, all to His glory.

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have been impressed at Jesus who was speaking to them. They were amazed, however, at the fact that such gracious words could be spoken by such a common ordinary man. Isn't he simply one of us? Is this not Joseph's son?

With this question they reacted, but by their reaction they revealed unbelief. To them Jesus was nothing more than a mere man. His mother lived amongst them. He was no better than any of them, so they thought. Their eyes were fixed upon him not because he was the Christ but because they heard he did great things in Capernaum, the city to the east. News was spreading of what he did outside of Nazareth, just think of what he would do when he came home. Yet, we do not hear Jesus doing many miracles amongst his family and hometown companions. The Gospel of Mark even tells us that he only healed a few sick people because of their lack of faith! Their eyes were fixed on him in the synagogue not because they were ready to listen to the truth that he came to share but they wanted to be dazzled. They wanted to be amazed at signs and miracles. Jesus reveals that they even expected Jesus to wow them and stun 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." Dazzle us, and entertain your old friends and those you grew up with. Prove to us that what we heard is true. But Jesus did not come to dazzle with miracles. Worship did not equal entertainment nor does it today. Jesus would not be coerced in doing acts of power but he freely allowed his power be seen where and when it pleased him. Their minds were thinking, "Physician, heal yourself. Do miracles amongst us." Their hearts cried out for him to be quiet because after all he was only poor old Joseph's son. They reacted to the word and proved that no prophet is welcomed in his home town. But Jesus was the prophet. He spoke with the authority of God and the Father was well pleased with his message. Ah, but the sinful heart begged to differ. Unbelief triumphed while tempers flared as they took offense at he who claimed to be the Savior. Unbelief ruled in their hearts as they drove him out of town and were going to put an end to this nonsense by ending this man's life...by committing murder on the Sabbath. The prophet has spoken, the humble mouth piece of God was not welcomed. The Word of God incarnate, but the truth was not wanted by his own.

The prophet is speaking

Is he wanted by us? When the prophet speaks to us through his word how do we react? Do we long to have a Jesus who dazzles us with an abundance of blessings, a good life here on earth, a good job that pays well but are indifferent about his word? Entertain me Jesus and keep the good things coming! Like the village of Nazareth have we become dictators to our Savior giving to him a list of expectations that must be fulfilled our way right away? The sinful

heart is slow to listen, so slow to hang on every word that flows forth from Jesus' lips and all too often our mouths are too quick to utter demands. How do we react when Jesus speaks because all that is said is not pleasant to our sinful ears? Jesus tells us to repent because we are sinners and we tell ourselves that we really are not that bad. Jesus tells us that those who disobey the Father will inherit punishment in hell and yet we do not take him seriously as we dance around with temptation and brush sin off as if it were no big deal. How do we react when the prophet speaks of that which makes us feel uncomfortable? Do we run to the cliff holding onto the teachings that we simply do not care for? Do we hold over the edge doctrines that make us feel uneasy or expose us as the weak sinners who deserve damnation in hell? We try so hard to make Jesus into the God that fits our lifestyle, our terms and our ideas. God did not make us so that we could live with him as equals but he made us to live under him. We are to listen when Jesus speaks to us in his word. Jesus is much more than a magician who performed miracles for his hometown! He is much more than a good luck charm. He is much more than someone who fulfills our wish lists. These words are spoken so that we may believe that Jesus is the Christ, not the son of Joseph but the Son of God and we are to take his words seriously. Today recognize who is speaking to your heart! How will you react when the prophet speaks?

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Our first reaction should be one of repentance. We need to confess of the times that we are indifferent to his word and care only about how he blesses us physically. We need to ask for his forgiveness for when we are quick to dictate expectations but are so slow to listen. You and I need to ask for mercy for questioning the truth and throwing what we don't like off of the cliff. My heart and yours needs to take Christ's warnings and his law seriously.

How will we react? We need to react out of trust and belief in his promises. React by taking God seriously when he speaks to you the good news about who Jesus is. He is the prophet who came to enlighten us with the truth that he is the Christ, the Savior from sin. He came for you to forgive you freely. Jesus came as the prophet to proclaim the good news of salvation to your poor sinful heart and mine. As the prophet he came to set us free with the truth and to give sight to the eyes of faith so we can see him for who he really is, so that we can experience the Lord's favor in this life and in the next. As our prophet Jesus came to proclaim to

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your heart and mine the message that frees us from sin and hell and through that message every single one of us has not only seen a miracle but has experienced the miracle of faith. The power of God and his gospel lives in your heart. How will you react? Thank him for proclaiming the law that made you recognize you were in desperate need of a Savior. Thank him for proclaiming the gospel which reveals to us a righteousness that is ours through faith.

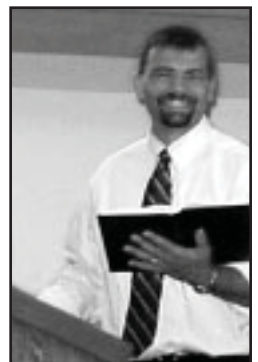
The prophet has spoken in the past and the prophet is still speaking today. No, Jesus does not sit in synagogues in bodily form on the Sabbath but he speaks to us through the pages of Scriptures. He speaks to us in worship services, through sermons, and the truths that are proclaimed in our hymns. Jesus spoke through the prophets, the apostles, the evangelists and he continues to speak through you and through me. He speaks to hearts that take the gospel to the streets and to the unchurched. You are all mouthpieces of God. Now, how will you react? Do we join with Jeremiah and say, "I don't know how to speak. I am only a child. I don't really know much about Jesus. Thank you for the invitation but send someone else. I really don't want to go." Oh, but we must go! We must speak. How will the voice of Jesus be heard if we do not take it to others? The mes-

sage is not just for a specific group of people. The village of Nazareth wanted their own personal miracle worker and town prophet. But Christ clearly taught them through Old Testament lessons of Elisha and Elijah that his word was for all people, foreigners, and lepers. Let us not make Jesus our own personal Savior who is only enjoyed by us and no one else. I pray that we are not content with that but that we embrace the privilege to speak for and of Jesus.

You have the privilege of being the mouthpiece of God. You talk for God. You can bring salvation to those who throw Jesus off of the cliff every day. You and I together can give life to those who are spiritually dead. How will we react? We will react in the power of the Spirit not because we have to but because we are compelled to by his love and amazing grace. We will react out of belief because his forgiveness that is proclaimed to us through his amazing message has breathed life into our spiritual hearts. We can proclaim the forgiveness of the Lord because we know who the prophet is and we know that we are saved by him and that is an amazing miracle that allows us to react out of faith.

Amen.

Jay Bickelhaupt is serving as pastor at Apostles Evangelical Lutheran Church in Billings, Montana. For contact information, please visit us at www.apostlesmt.net.



Apostles Evangelical Lutheran Church
Billings, Montana

Worship Services Sunday at 10:30 a.m. and Monday at 6:30 p.m.

Sunday School and Adult Bible Classes Sunday at 9:15 a.m.

Men's Bible Study Monday morning at 6:30 a.m.

Heights Bible Study Tuesday evening at 7:00 p.m.

Women's Study Wednesday morning at 10:00 a.m.

Contact the pastor at (406) 656-7141 about the opportunities to join a **Bible Information Class**.

More information and resources are available on our website at www.apostlesmt.net or by contacting the church office at (406) 656-7141.

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