

First Sermon (Jesus) (Vengeance)

Luke 4, Isaiah 61:1-2

The Basic Bible Truth

As Jesus began His ministry, he first went to the people of Israel. They were looking for a Messiah who would overthrow the oppressive Roman government and restore Israel to its rightful place in God's promised future. But Jesus did not come that first time as a conquering king, but rather as a humble servant in grace and mercy and love. But there is a day coming when He will return, and the world will see the judgment, vengeance and wrath unlike anything history has ever recorded.

The Object

(None)

The Lesson

The Bible is largely silent regarding the early life of Jesus. A few short moments are recorded for us as well as some very general statements. This we do know for sure: Jesus grew up as a normal human being. He experienced all that any of us might expect. And through all His experiences, He never sinned! Place yourself nearby that amazing idea for just a moment. What would it be like to know someone growing up who never lied, never hurt anyone, never teased anyone, never, ever disobeyed—imagine you had a friend like that. What would your personal feelings be towards that individual?

I believe it would be very difficult to not like someone with those qualities. Jesus grew up in Nazareth, and the entire little community probably knew Him well—and liked Him very much. When Jesus was approximately thirty years old, He began his earthly ministry. Immediately following His baptism by John, He was whisked off into the desert to be tempted for an extended period of time by the Devil himself.

As that episode ended he headed home to Nazareth. It was his custom to attend the temple services on Sabbath Day. He was invited to speak to the gathered group and what transpired there that day is one of the truly awesome stories found in the Bible. First sermons are always important. And this one was no exception. God saw fit to record many significant details of this address and we will look at a few of them today.

He was handed the scroll of Isaiah. Few Scriptures are as respected and loved by the Jewish people as is the book of Isaiah—even today. Many of the prophecies found there tell of an astonishing time in the future for Israel. A day, when Israel will be restored to her rightful place near to God, is the hope and confidence of many of the faithful in Israel. He unrolled the manuscript all the way to nearly the end. That itself took some time no doubt. He found what we know as Isaiah 61 (remember, there were no chapter and verse divisions then) and read two verses—almost! This passage was well known by all and He stopped just short of reading all of this familiar poem, rolled up the scroll and sat down. In the culture of the day, the customs required the listeners to remain standing as a sign of respect, and the one who taught to be seated. He then graciously explained that the passage that He had just read was being

fulfilled in their presence. It is notable what He did NOT read that morning. He completely disregarded the phrase referring to the vengeance of God.

Jesus did not come this first time in vengeance. He came in love. There is most certainly a day coming when He will return in vengeance and the world will see a righteous God ready to judge the sin of the inhabitants of the earth. God is a God of love to be sure, but He is also a God of righteousness. Failure to uphold His standards is punishable by death. There are many today who look upon the concept of Hell and its torment and say that a loving God would never do such a thing to anyone. A righteous God must.

The people in Nazareth turned on Jesus that day. They despised His message and genuinely tried to kill Him then and there! How could a hometown turn on one of its own? They misunderstood Him and took offense that not only was He not claiming to be the conquering king they envisioned Him to be, but He also told them that God's concern extended beyond Israel to the whole world. The passage in Isaiah reminded them that God set Israel apart as a special people, the apple of his eye. But they chose to ignore why He did that. It was to make Israel an example of God's grace and love and mercy to draw all men unto Himself.

Salvation is for all mankind, to the Jews first, but also to the Gentiles. The people of Nazareth were not ready to hear that truth.

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