

TEXT – Luke 4:14-21

Introduction: So where are you going? What are you up to? What's on your schedule for today? Rarely will we have an entire day with nothing to do and nowhere to go. We're doing something. We're going somewhere. Some of the things we do are very routine even mundane and kind of boring. Jesus' life involved many of the same things we do every day. He ate. He slept. He worked. He relaxed. He visited with friends and family. He traveled and met new people. He spent private time alone in prayer. He went to church and worshiped. He even attended weddings and funerals. His life was similar to ours and yet at the same time it was very different. Jesus' life was different in that the whole world was depending on him to be what we as sinners could not be – perfect and sinless. Jesus had to be the perfect Savior that God promised for sinners. On the basis of our gospel reading we are reminded that **JESUS IS THE PERFECT SAVIOR.**

Some time after Jesus' encounter with the devil, defeating each of his temptations with God's powerful Word, Luke tells us, "**Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit.**" This was now Jesus' second appearance in Galilee. His first time in Galilee he had turned water into wine at the wedding in Cana. Jesus came back to Galilee in the power of the Spirit. This is the same Holy Spirit who anointed Jesus at his baptism and equipped him with the necessary gifts to carry out his public ministry as our Savior. Luke reminds us that the Holy Spirit also empowered Jesus in his daily living to keep the law as our Substitute, our perfect Savior. And the word was getting out. Luke says that **news about him spread through the whole countryside.** Just what these reports were we don't know, but news was traveling fast about Jesus. The news about Jesus still needs to get out. Paul says, "**How can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard?**" We have the greatest news anyone has ever heard – that Jesus saves sinners. Paul writes to Timothy, "**For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men.**"

Jesus was sent to carry out his heavenly Father's mission as our perfect Savior. Luke tells us what much of Jesus' early ministry involved when he writes, "**He taught in their synagogues, and everyone praised him.**" Jesus worshiped with his fellow Jews in their synagogues or churches. All the people enjoyed listening to him and praised him. But such praise was not always the right kind of praise. Some were praising Jesus as their Messiah but not the one who would save them from their sins, rather as their savior from the Romans. It's the same kind of praise Jesus sometimes receives today. He is praised when people are really in need. Does such praise last or does it fade when things return to normal. Jesus is being praised at least by some for being spared the disaster in Haiti, but will such praise last a few years down the line when things return to normal. Churches were full days and weeks after 9/11, but are they full now. Look at our own lives. Is our praise of Jesus consistent? Have we always been faithful to Jesus especially when things do return to normal?

Jesus visited the various synagogues in and around Galilee. He even returned to the synagogue he grew up in. Luke adds, "**He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom.**" Those in Nazareth were people he probably knew quite well. They were classmates and family friends, perhaps even some close relatives. It was Saturday, which was the Sabbath, a day of rest and worship. Jesus obeyed the Third Commandment and went to church every Sabbath to hear God's Word. This Sabbath day was unique in that Jesus, the hometown boy, was the guest preacher. Luke writes, "**And he stood up to read.**" As a rabbi or teacher, Jesus was asked to read the Scripture lesson and then expound on it. No preacher could ever equal Jesus. But we still hear the Word of God as it is read and preached in our worship services today. We also pray as they did in Jesus' day and sing songs to the Lord. It is by far the very best time of the week. For one hour we are able to gather around God's Word with our brothers and sisters in Christ. We are spiritually strengthened and encouraged in our faith by the Holy Spirit and with a little help each day from our own private study of God's Word, we are able to make it through another week as we serve the Lord. Paul certainly had this in mind when he wrote, "**Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.**"

During the synagogue worship service Jesus read his text and preached his sermon. Luke continues, "**The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written.**" The synagogue worship service in Jesus' day was quite simple. It is most likely to have consisted of the *Shema* – "**Hear or Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one,**" along with certain portions of Scripture. The *Shema* was followed by some synagogue prayers. A section of the Torah, the first five books of Moses, was then read. A reading from the prophets followed. The teacher then expounded or preached on one of the readings. The service concluded with a benediction. The Scripture selections were written on scrolls or rolls of parchment wrapped around a wooden stick at both ends. At the service in Nazareth the attendant opened the ark or cabinet where the sacred Scriptures were kept and handed Jesus the scroll of Isaiah the prophet. Jesus unrolled until he came to the place from which he read. The

highpoint of the service then as it is now is the Word of God. This is the reason believers get together to worship. We do a lot of talking and spouting off at the mouth, and it's not always in a God-pleasing way. In worship we hear the Lord our God talk to us. He has much to say, all of it for the benefit of our faith and to help us grow in our faith and trust in Jesus as our Savior. We may not comprehend it all, but it is food that our hungry soul craves. When we hear God's Word our faith is fed and we mature in our faith. Peter writes, *"Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good."*

After unrolling the scroll Jesus came to Isaiah chapter 61 verses 1 and 2a. Jesus read his text, **"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."** In this passage Isaiah described the work of the Savior of sinners whom God had promised. First of all the Savior would be anointed by the Holy Spirit. Jesus was anointed by the Spirit at his baptism. The work of the Messiah or the Christ, the Anointed One would be to preach good news to the poor. Poor is a good word to describe the sinner's situation. You think people are financially poor. Let's consider our spiritual bank account before God as sinners. Not only are we spiritually bankrupt, we also owe God for every sin committed – an eternal debt in hell for each and every sin. This debt is enormous, beyond payment. But the Savior comes with good news for the spiritually poor. This good news is forgiveness, forgiveness for the entire debt. Isaiah pictures this as giving freedom to those imprisoned by their sin or sight to blind sinners who walk around in spiritual darkness. The good news of forgiveness is like the news of freedom to those who are oppressed, literally those who are broken in pieces, because of the guilt and consequences of their sin. Another way Isaiah sums up the work of the Savior, the Anointed One of God is that he proclaims the year of the Lord's favor. This is a reference to the Year of Jubilee that the Israelites celebrated every 50th year. In this year all slaves were set free, all debts were cancelled, and whatever land or property that had been sold was returned to its original owner. This was a year of Jubilee. With Jesus as our Savior, every year is a year of Jubilee. Through Jesus who bore the guilt and punishment we deserved we are freed from our slavery to sin, death and hell. Through Jesus who poured out his precious blood on the cross our debt of sin is completely canceled. Through Jesus our eternal inheritance in heaven is intact and waiting for us. Welcome to another year of Jubilee. Peter reminds us, *"Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls."*

After Jesus read Isaiah's beautiful description of the Savior's work, Luke tells us what amazing thing happened next, **"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.'"** No other preacher could preach Jesus' short but powerful sermon. Only he could say that the very portion of Scripture he had just read regarding the Savior's work was fulfilled in him. Jesus perfectly fulfills the words of Isaiah and all other prophecies that were made of the coming Messiah. Imagine what it must have been like for those who were in attendance in Nazareth's synagogue that Sabbath day. The one standing in front of them was their only Savior, God's Son sent from heaven. Jesus is also among us not just in his promise to be with us always, but through his Word. What a privilege and joy it is to have Jesus among us today as we hear his Word. Some little kids have mistaken me for Jesus. They think it is Jesus up here preaching. Thankfully the parents correct their child, hopefully without laughing too hard. "That's not Jesus. That's just the pastor who talks about Jesus." But maybe there's more truth in their words than we think. I'm definitely not Jesus. That's ridiculous. But the words I speak and the message I preach are Jesus' words. When Christian Day School teachers and Sunday School teachers tell their students about their Savior, it is as if Jesus was standing right in front of them. When parents share Bible stories and the truths of God's Word with their children, it is truly Jesus speaking through them. As Jesus said, this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing. When we speak the words of Jesus, as speakers and hearers we have the confidence that these words are being fulfilled. Jesus' word is true, dependable and certain. Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 1, *"But as surely as God is faithful, our message to you is not 'Yes' and 'No.' For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by me and Silas and Timothy, was not 'Yes' and 'No,' but in him it has always been 'Yes.' For no matter how many promises God has made, they are 'Yes' in Christ."*

Conclusion: So, what are you up to today? What's your schedule for the rest of the day? Jesus did many of the same things we do every day. Jesus even went to church to worship God as was his custom on every Sabbath. Jesus is the perfect Savior in the sin-free life he lived, in the saving message he proclaimed about himself, and in the sacrificial death he died on Calvary's cross. May we never tire of hearing this good news of Jesus our perfect Savior, and may we never tire of sharing him with a world that is oppressed by sin. Amen.