**2/2/25**

**Salvation Can’t Be Kept All In The Family**

**Vicar Vince Piekarski**

**Luke 4:21-30 (NRSVUE)**

“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” (2 Corinthians 1:2, NRSVUE) (2) **Amen.**

Today is one of those rare few days that I could have taken an alternate route with the service and my sermon, as today is also marked on our calendar as Presentation of Our Lord. Now, I debated it for a second, but I found this story more compelling, and I found it more purposeful as it is a continuation from last week. It is where we get to experience second verse same as the first, as we go right back to the heart of the matter. We travel back to the final words from last week’s Gospel Reading. We are reminded of the living proof and that very confirmation as we hear yet again in verse 21 “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” (2)

That very boom and mic drop that you may or may not remember from last week are in a different context this week. However, we get some more content. We get some more filler. We get some more qualifiers. We get some more disqualifiers. We even get some more uncomfortable things here. I for one am glad this reading is split up into two weeks so that we do not end up missing key details, and so that we can focus on the overall message and purpose for the people back then, the people over the course of time, and for those of us right here and now as well.

Jesus definitely has us going on a slightly different trail this week as he continues his talk to the people in his home synagogue. The context is slightly changed when the confirmation is moved from the very end of the reading to the forefront. Of course, you may be sitting there and scratching your head, or you may even be wondering what I mean by that. Well, good, I am glad you are listening and paying attention! And I say welcome to worship to those of you out there on the conference call, and those of you out there in the pews. What a blessing it is yet again to be in community with you all and really explore things here.

So, let me tell you as we dove into this scripture on Monday during our Pastoral Bible Study time it actually led to one clear and defining summary statement for me, and that is… **Salvation Can’t Be Kept All In The Family**. We get that clearly in today’s Gospel Message, and if you did not hear it loud and clear, then perhaps you pictured it as the people went from speaking well of Jesus to wanting to throw Jesus off of a cliff in just eight short verses. I mean, that is nothing short of what I do at times in our Church Council or Committee Meetings, or even when I talk with my wife, my mother, and my mother in-law at times. A strong personality and a person led with conviction is one to be desired, and at times it is one to be rejected. We know this because looking in the mirror is very uncomfortable, and further being called out on those things or being made to think an alternative way is often uncomfortable as well, and quite frankly it can even be annoying. However, that is precisely what Jesus does here within this message, and it is precisely what we are called to do for one another in context of our faith. So, let’s explore this a little deeper, and let us figure out how this can be inserted into our times now, and not just have it be a story in the past. Let’s make this completely and totally what it is expected to be, and that is the Living Word.

So, the people know, or think they know who this Jesus fella is. We do as well at times too. They of course are only looking at what they know and see, and they are not privy to the entire story like you and I are as we sit here and explore this message many years later. They simply assume him to be the son of Joseph, and they are rather shocked that he can deliver such teaching and mindset. So, their minds and hearts were not as open as they should have been to hear or even experience the very word that was present in front of them. Just as ours is not all the time when we read or listen to the word in church or at home. Then, of course the people expect the hometown boy to deliver them some kind of grace and some kind of special healing. We expect that too at times because we are Christians. However, this is not what Jesus does at all! For He knew their ramblings and their questions, as well as their confusions before they even occurred. Just as he knows ours as well. Jesus also knew their sense of entitlement right off the jump, and yep, ours as well. However, they were quickly introduced to a Jesus who serves and loves all people. They were reminded of a God who does not and will not serve only one nation of people, or just a select few. We are reminded of this time and time again as well. They, along with us, get the quick reminder and introduction to the very fact that **Salvation Can’t Be Kept All In The Family**.

Now, one may ask why that is. One may ask why Jesus would not want to bless and benefit the people who raised him and who he grew up with. Why he would not want to benefit those of us in the pews or on the conference call each Sunday. Well, that is because we do not serve or worship a limited God. Our Triune God is not one of limitations. Our Triune God is not one who only serves the people in front of him, or people in the past, but our Triune God is one who serves in the present and the future as well. Our Triune God is the very representation of what we are all called to do and be. Yes, this is not very easy, and yes this does not always seem attainable, and yes there often are mountains to climb and rough people and situations that all of us disciples must deal with in his service. However, that is where we are precisely reminded of no limits. That is where we hear yet again of God sending to all people, even those that the people, or maybe even you and I would not even expect at times. For all are worthy of the Good News, of healing, of love, of grace, and of forgiveness.

After all Jesus’ death and resurrection was not for some, it was to remove all of our sins and our debts. It was to make us right with our very Maker, and it was so that we would not be bound by the Law any longer. The Gospel, the very Good News, is that all would be saved and redeemed as long as we came to faith. As long as we come to believe and love our neighbor, and most importantly by doing so with no exclusions!

**Salvation Can’t Be Kept All In The Family** was and is a message that continues to ring out. There are people that are on the ground doing the very work. You and I are called to do that work as well, and I am sure we do each and every day, and that is if we even realize it or not sometimes. We are reminded that there is no score card, and that there is no specific criteria. Sometimes the very ministry is just that of being present, and sometimes it is that of listening or doing. Regardless of the case of the how, and the where, and the why; it is for anyone and everyone.

As we start the month of February, we often hear of several influential people like the Reverend Doctor Martin Luther King, Jr., Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Mary McLeod Bethune, and even Reverend Jarena Lee who was born right here in Cape May, NJ in 1783. The list goes on and on of other famous African-Americans who have followed the very footsteps and example set forth by Jesus here on this earth. They have stood up and stood out for anyone and everyone, and even for those people that most might not consider or even see. Jesus was and is the most awesome advocate of all. Thank goodness he set the very example for those folks, and for you and for I!

Now, whether we admit to it or not, we all need help, we all need healing, we all need a shoulder to cry on, we all need strength, we all need the very Triune God that is, was, and forever shall be. However, the hard part is realizing that sometimes things are not ordained on this very earth because our God is not of this world. We think that because we have God sometimes that we do not need to go through the very struggles, hardships, and issues because we are his selected children. Let me remind you that this was not the very case for Jesus. Furthermore, this was not the case for the people in our Gospel Reading, and this is not the very case for you and I either! We all go through the struggles, and we do so sometimes to the disassociation of those we called family or friends because God has a higher calling and purpose for every single one of us. We climb the mountain and we fight through the valley because we are the very living example of what faith is, was, and will forever be. We trust in our Triune God, and sometimes it is practically impossible to put that into words. That is why we commit our actions and our heart to the message, and that is where that very boom and mic drop are delivered that I talked about last week. The call is to be “little Christs” as Martin Luther truly knew all of us believers were to be, or to be Christlike in our very words and actions so that others can learn and come to have faith, and come to love our Triune God.

Now, none of us ever imagines taking it to the very point that we are going to be killed. However, sometimes that killing or death is not a physical one at all. It is a death to self, it is a death to our past ideals and mindset, it is a death to the very world that we physically live in as compared to the very world that Christ calls us to live in. We are always marching towards the cross with Jesus, and just as much as we realize that it is a symbol of destruction and humiliation, we also realize that is the very symbol of glory and honor. The cross is and was where it is at!

We do not serve a soft or phony God. We serve the most high and the most awesome. When it is our time, he will indeed call us to him by name. However, when it is not, we will slip right through the crowd just like he did at the tail end of our Gospel Reading today because he has much more in store for us. God does not ordain the ways of the wicked. He ordains the way of his children who are growing, and changing, and loving on one another on this very earth that he has created. Our God did not create junk, and he did not ever intend for us to be out on our own. He continually calls us and loves us. We were all once outsiders, but not any longer! Let us be reminded of, and let us remind others of the very truth of the matter as we call them into our very church doors and our hearts. For we are indeed reminded that **Salvation Can’t Be Kept All In The Family**.

**Amen.**

**References & Study Points**

(1) Sundays and Seasons

Preaching

Year C 2025

February 2nd, 2025

Fourth Sunday after Epiphany

(2) BibleGateway.com

(3) The Four Pages of The Sermon

Revised and Updated

A Guide to Biblical Preaching

Paul Scott Wilson

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Abingdon Press

(4) WorkingPreacher.org

Fourth Sunday after Epiphany

Contending with a culture of distraction

February 2, 2025

Commentary on Luke 4:21-30

Abraham Smith

(5) WorkingPreacher.org

Fourth Sunday after Epiphany (Year C)

Just as with last week’s lection from Luke 4, good news is bad news is good news.

February 3, 2019

Commentary on Luke 4:21-30

David Schnasa Jacobsen

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Fourth Sunday after Epiphany

What are the names and stories of your community’s prophets?

January 30, 2022

Commentary on Luke 4:21-30

Shively Smith

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Fourth Sunday after Epiphany (Year C)

The whole passage (Luke 4:14-30) is structured around a pattern of proclamations

by Jesus and responses from the hometown synagogue audience.

January 31, 2016

Commentary on Luke 4:21-30

Ruth Anne Reese

(8) SermonCentral.com

Beyond A Comfortable Faith Series

Contributed by Kevin Ruffcorn on Jan 26, 2007

Scripture: Luke 4:21-30

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We Worship God, Not The Bible

Contributed by Ronald Harbaugh on Jan 30, 2010

Scripture: Luke 4:21-30

Denomination: Lutheran

**Luke 4:21-30 (NRSVUE)**

People in Jesus’ hometown are initially pleased when he says that God will free

the oppressed. Their pleasure turns to rage when he reminds them that God’s

prophetic mission typically pushes beyond human boundaries so that mercy and

healing are extended to those regarded as outsiders.

21 Then [Jesus] began to say to [all in the synagogue in Nazareth,] “Today this

scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” 22 All spoke well of him and were

amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth. They said, “Is this not

Joseph’s son?” 23 He said to them, “Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb,

‘Doctor, cure yourself!’ And you will say, ‘Do here also in your hometown the

things that we have heard you did at Capernaum.’ ” 24 And he said, “Truly I tell

you, no prophet is accepted in his hometown. 25 But the truth is, there were many

widows in Israel in the time of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years

and six months and there was a severe famine over all the land, 26 yet Elijah was

sent to none of them except to a widow at Zarephath in Sidon. 27 There were

also many with a skin disease in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none

of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian.” 28 When they heard this, all in

the synagogue were filled with rage. 29 They got up, drove him out of the town,

and led him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they

might hurl him off the cliff. 30 But he passed through the midst of them and went

on his way.