

“Who Do You Think You Are?”—Luke 4:28-30

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “Who Do You Think You Are?”, is Luke 4:28-30 → *When they heard these things, all in the synagogue were filled with wrath. And they rose up and drove Jesus out of the town and brought Him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they could throw Him down the cliff. But passing through their midst, He went away.* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

Where would you consider the safest place with the least possibility of accidents and fatalities? Consider the following “safety tips”:

- **Do not ride in automobiles**—they are the cause of 20% of all fatal accidents.
- **Do not stay at home**—17% of all accidents happen in the home.
- **Do not walk on the street**—14% of all accidents happen to the pedestrian.
- **Do not travel by air, rail or water**—16% of all accidents are the result of one of these activities.
- **Go to worship**—only .001% of all fatal accidents occur in church.

Whoever compiled these statistics obviously believes the safest place to be is at worship in your church. After all, referring to it by many people

as a “sanctuary” could leave one with the impression that it is a safe place. Yet, there are thousands upon thousands of baptized children of God who are staying away from worship . . . because they don’t consider it a safe for them?

Worship proved fatal for Jesus one Sabbath day at a synagogue in His hometown of Nazareth. It was customary in synagogue worship for people to read from the Scriptures (kind of like a “lector”) and even share a message of encouragement with the congregation (kind of like a “sermon” (i.e. Acts 13:15)). After reading a Messianic prophecy *from the scroll of the prophet Isaiah* (cf. Isaiah 61:1-2), Jesus *sat down*. Luke 4:20 gives us the impression that the people were expecting Jesus to give them a *word of encouragement* based upon the text, since *the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on Him*. His message was radical indeed: *He began to say to them, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”* (cf. Luke 4:21)

It appears that the home town folk were immediately impressed *and marveled at the **gracious** words that were coming from His mouth*, as well as befuddled, asking, *Is not this Joseph’s son?* (cf. Luke 4:22) Their question is in keeping with the radical nature of Jesus’s words: ***Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.*** In other words, Jesus was telling them that the promised Messiah-Deliverer was amongst them in the flesh! Imagine how you would have reacted if someone with whom

you grew up in your small town appeared in your midst one day claiming to be the Son of God. It would be hard to ward off the skepticism and believe it.

Maybe the statistic quoted about worship attendance at the beginning of this sermon really isn't true. Actually, the purpose of the sermon in worship is to kill . . . and make alive. It is God's desire that everyone die to their own sinful self and rise to live as a new creation in Jesus. In fact, Yahweh declares His work in Deuteronomy 32:39 → *See now that I, even I, am He, and there is no god beside Me; I kill and I make alive. I wound and I heal.* He is referring to His *strange* work (cf. Isaiah 28:21) of killing people spiritually so that they recognize their sin, cast themselves in repentance before Him, pleading for His mercy and forgiveness which brings His proper work of making them alive spiritually in Jesus. This was the purpose of Jesus's preaching to these people in the synagogue.

Unfortunately, the people with whom Jesus was worshiping that day did not drop to their knees in humble repentance of their sins but rather reacted much as their ancestors did when the prophets called them to repentance: "Who do You think You are?" His reference to a prophet not being accepted in his hometown, along with His examples of the prophets Elijah and Elisha helping and healing Gentiles, while many in Israel could have been helped, was powerful law spoken to their sinful behaviors (cf. Luke 4:24-27). And . . . that in a sermon at church! Who did

He thing He was?

He declared that He was the promised Messiah, sent to deliver them from their bondage to sin and give them new life in His reading of Isaiah 61:1 → *The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me, because the LORD has anointed Me* (i.e. which had recently happened in His baptism) *to bring good news to the poor* (i.e. which He referred to as *the poor in spirit* (cf. Matthew 5:3), burdened under the Law and the guilt of their sin); *He has sent Me to bind up the brokenhearted* (i.e. those suffering because of sin placed upon them by others), *to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound* (i.e. those who are enslaved to their sin and the devil along with all their idolatrous behaviors).

Jesus's claims to be the Messiah, the Son of God, along with the miracles He performed and His preaching and teaching were very clear to the Jews of His day. While they recognized that He was claiming to be equal with God they considered His claims, His miracles and His teachings to be blasphemy and worthy of death **in God's sight** according to God's Word in the Old Testament. Thus, their reaction in verses 28-29 of our text: *When they heard these things, all in the synagogue were filled with wrath. And they rose up and drove Jesus out of the town and brought Him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they could throw Him down the cliff.*

Wow! I'm glad I'm not the pastor of their church! How could people act like that in church? Hmm . . . seems like I've heard that judgment before and . . . sad to say . . . have even thought or spoken it myself. How? Just like a sinner to take the defensive when the word of God penetrates to the heart, revealing my sin that I want to remain hidden deep, deep inside for no one to see. Hebrews 4:12 says: *The word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit . . . and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.* The sinner avoids exposing those sinful *thoughts and intentions of the heart* so God must expose them Himself in order to deal with them for us.

God came to deal with your sin once and for all in the Person & Work of Jesus. He is exactly Whom He claimed to be during His earthly ministry—God in the flesh. He lived perfectly in obedience to God's Law for you and offered Himself as the perfect sacrifice for the forgiveness of your sins. Thus, His rejection turned out for your justification and sanctification. You are forgiven as you trust in Him and you are renewed in a life which desires to live for Him.

“Who do You think You are, Jesus?” His response to these people displayed exactly Who He was. Notice verse 30 of our text says: *But passing through their midst, He went away.* This was not some *passing through their midst* by “shouldering” and pushing His way through the

crowd. They were in no mood to give Him any “wiggle room” for getting away from their grasp. This action—*passing through their midst*—was another miracle displaying the illocal presence of Christ. In other words, Jesus, according to His divine nature is not bound by time and space. Thus, a crowd could not hold Him hostage. When He passed *through their midst* He literally walked through their bodies.

One can only imagine at this point how many of those people who experienced this miraculous movement of Jesus now knew Who He was and could do not other than drop to their knees and place their faith in Him as God in the flesh. This is what Jesus would have desired would happen since He came that all people *may have life and have it abundantly* (cf. John 10:10). But that life is yours by His **willingly** laying His life down for you, not by anyone taking it from Him. He says in John 10:18 → *No one takes My life from Me, but I lay it down of My own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from My Father.* He has laid it down and taken it up so that you can die to sin and live in His forgiveness now and eternally! Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding,  
keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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