

Luke 4:20-32

February 3, 2013 – 4th SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

S#1449

CW 347

Pastor Mark A. Cordes

Where Love Began and Died

† **The Rabbi reads.** (vv.20-22)

† **The Physician heals.** (vv.23-27)

† **The people need the Savior.** (vv.28-32)

In the name of Jesus, our shining Epiphany Lord, dearly redeemed family of God:

Isn't it true? One of the great blessings the Lord uses to keep us humble is our family. You can be someone really important at work, but at home you're just Dad or Mom or one of the kids. Familiarity is good except when it gets in the way. Our parents tell us something we need to hear, but we don't listen. As grown children become caregivers of their parents, we find out it's harder to correct your parents than your kids. We want to honor them, but as the saying goes, "Familiarity breeds contempt." Minnesota "cabin fever" needs diversions like Super Bowl Sunday. But even more we need the spiritual break just around the corner. We need the season of Lent to turn winter gray to spring green in our hearts.

Today we go back to where Jesus grew up, **Where Love Began** in His hometown of Nazareth. Would we be in the crowd whose **Love...Died? Where Love Began** let us listen as...

† **The Rabbi reads.** (vv.20-22)

It was normal for a rabbi to stand and read from the Holy Scriptures of the Old Testament, then sit down to teach. Any teacher knows it's not as easy as it looks. A woman once told me that research show one hour of preaching or teaching burns as much energy as a full day of manual labor. Sounded strange at first, but it's true. In my early ministry after one Bible class and worship service, my body felt like after a football game. Still today a Sunday afternoon nap reminds me of "*the words of the Teacher*": "*The sleep of a laborer is sweet...*" (Ecclesiastes 1:1; 5:12) That's not what happened for our dear Lord Jesus. He did not get that satisfaction in His home town of Nazareth **Where Love Began**.

Jesus was born in Bethlehem, but when the Lord brought Joseph's family back from Egypt, they settled in Nazareth. As a returning rabbi, Jesus read from Isaiah what we heard in last week's Gospel: "*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.*" (Luke 4:18f NIV84) Didn't the sad and lonely listen?

Of all our human senses, hearing is most important. If we rely on feelings, faith stays away. If we trust touch, these fingers will never feel the love of God. If taste is where we travel, a world of fine food can never give a meal that measures up to His body and blood. If eyesight seems most important, how can we see God's good in suffering all around us? Nazareth only saw the carpenter's son who grew in their streets. Their mouths rejected **The Rabbi**. But every mouth is flanked by two ears, God's double blessing to drink in His Word. If we focus on hearing God's Word, we will never miss the all-forgiving grace and mercy of God. And all our other senses will thrill with the sights and sounds of faith.

Faith is more than amazement at Jesus' gracious words. To welcome Jesus like a rock star can quickly turn to a contemptuous question of familiarity: "Isn't this Joseph's son?" Faith sees...

† **The Physician heals.** (vv.23-27)

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."* They were proving Jesus right. Word of His gracious, powerful miracles had already reached them. But **Where His Love Began** their love **Died**. So Jesus came and stayed to give them life again.

As the Master Preacher, Jesus is also the Great Physician of our bodies and souls. Did you notice the medicine He prescribed? Jesus brought out two bottles of Old Testament truth to drink with their ears. Their Jewish ancestors rejected famous preachers and prophets. Elijah was not sent to one of the thousands of Jewish widows. God sent Elijah to a Gentile widow who believed God's Word and took care of him. Likewise, Elisha, who succeeded Elijah. When enemy general Naaman needed healing from leprosy, Elisha healed him in God's Name, while many Jewish lepers back home stayed sick. As ancient Jews rejected prophets like Elijah and Elisha, their Jewish descendants rejected Jesus.

Strange how the physical reflects the spiritual. We Americans want medicine that tastes good – food too. So we turn up our nose at blessings like vegetables. Processed carbs taste so much better just like spiritual junk food feels good. Meanwhile, come back from travelling abroad, and you'll be shocked. Books have been written on leafy green vegetables for reversing diabetes, fibromyalgia, and many other ailments. But we want what we want. So we torture ourselves with dieting and exercise. Likewise, what we want to feed our souls can only make us sick. Oh, like folks back home in Nazareth, we...

† **The people need the Savior. (vv.28-32)**

This is sick: *“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.”* Who would dare to do that to Jesus? We wouldn't, would we?

Actually, our culture finds other ways to despise God's Son. Just don't go to church. Find a million other things to do besides hearing God's Word. Bustle so busy at home you can't put down the remote long enough to pick up your Bible. Say you don't understand the Bible, but keep asking friends to explain the shows you miss. Some can recite the names of all the players on both Super Bowl teams, but could you name ten prophets of God if your life depended on it? We're really cool – until someone exposes our American idols of food and sports. We don't drive Jesus over the edge because it's much easier for us to just walk away and ignore Him. We think we can always come back later.

Dr. Martin Luther put it this way in one of his sermons: “Right here let us be careful not to cheat ourselves with the false idea that salvation cannot escape us. Let it not be with us as befell the children of Israel...[who] would not accept their opportunity in the forty years while he gave them his Word and showed them his wonders, daily admonishing them and calling to repentance and faith. They tempted and provoked him more. So another admonition was given the people of God and a certain day appointed: ‘Today if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts.’ (Hebrews 4:7) [NIV84] Every day with us is ‘today’ and we are permitted to hear God's voice still imploring us not to waste the time.”¹

Dear loved ones of God, don't waste Today! The same Savior who went to Nazareth knowing He'd be rejected, has come to us. In spite of how they would react, Jesus still told His fellow citizens the Good News: *“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.”* (Luke 4:18f NIV84) When their **Love Died**, God's Love *“walked right through the crowd and went on his way”* to another mountain to bleed and die for all. And because He who died lives again, we too can live and enjoy God's blessings Today.

Remember the story of workers cleaning up after a forest fire? One saw a dead bird charred in place like a stiff, black statue. He bumped it and nearly fell over himself. Out from underneath her feathers ran a bunch of little chicks. As the fire raged nearer, that mother hen gathered her chicks under her wings to protect them. She died so that they could live. Living love can never die.

For the **Rabbi** to read He had to come. For the **Physician** to heal He had to stay. For the **Savior** to save He had to go away – all the way to the cross on which the Prince of glory died. Hide beneath the shelter of His wings. Stay here **Where Love begins and only Died** that you might live forever. Amen.

¹ *Sermons of Martin Luther*. Lenker, ed. Baker – re-printed 1988, Vol. VIII, p. 323. English updated. [M.C. 2/02/2013]
For the study behind this sermon or for copies email m.cordes@comast.net . New Life Evangelical Lutheran Church
You can also call: 651-484-1169. Hear the sermon at www.wels.us/newlife . 180 County Rd F - Shoreview, MN 55126