

January 26, 2025



Daily Reflections

Photo by Sr. Karin Nürnberg, CSJ, from the Abbey St. Hildegard in Eibingen, Germany

PROCLAIMING

By Julie Mussché

Today's Gospel

Since many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the events that have been fulfilled among us, just as those who were eyewitnesses from the beginning and ministers of the word have handed them down to us, I too have decided, after investigating everything accurately anew, to write it down in an orderly sequence for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may realize the certainty of the teachings you have received.

Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news of him spread throughout the whole region. He taught in their synagogues and was praised by all.

He came to Nazareth, where he had grown up,

*and went according to his custom
into the synagogue on the sabbath day.
He stood up to read and was handed a scroll of the prophet Isaiah.
He unrolled the scroll and found the passage where it was written:
The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring glad tidings to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,
and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord.
Rolling up the scroll, he handed it back to the attendant and sat down,
and the eyes of all in the synagogue looked intently at him.
He said to them,
“Today this Scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing.”*

LUKE 1:1-4, 4:14-21

Reflection

The Gospel reading today offers a beautiful juxtaposition of story. The beginning introduces the purpose of the writing in a letter to Theophilus with the intention of affirming the teachings and accounts of Jesus. A short detour: would you agree that the meaning of Theophilus, “friend or love of God,” is significant to the story thread? Back to today’s reading: following this introduction, the narrative fast-forwards through the Christmas story, Jesus’s childhood, baptism, and the temptation in the desert, to the beginning of his ministry in the Galil.

I have always have enjoyed Luke’s passion and intricacy in telling the story of Jesus. His writings breathe life into the chronicle and expand the detail about the time and place of Jesus. Luke, traditionally thought to be a physician, shows us Jesus the humble healer, the compassionate and merciful, the mediator, the teacher and redeemer.

The reading today only provides a glimpse of Jesus’s home visit to Nazareth. Jesus, lit on fire by the Holy Spirit, begins his preaching ministry in Galilee. His fervor resounds throughout the region and then he makes his way to the town where he came of age. Attending services at his home synagogue, he proclaims the promise and fulfillment of redemption of Israel as prophesied by Isaiah. And there today’s reading ends.

Understandably, the significance of the statement, “Today this Scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing,” punctuates the moment. Yet, there is more to this story that, for me, is a significant part of Jesus’s proclamation. Following this affirmation, Jesus engages in a dialogue and the synagogue erupts with anger and Jesus barely avoids harm. What was everyone upset about? Luke elaborates more on the discourse between Jesus and the congregation. Matthew and Mark also share this event, and all three Gospels confirm Jesus as the son of Joseph and proffer that a prophet is not accepted in their home town. Matthew and Mark elaborate on Jesus’s family of origin while Luke goes a different direction in detailing Jesus’s proclamation of the fulfillment of the scripture passage from Isaiah.

Broadly summarizing, Jesus announces that his healing and miraculous ministry will not be shared with his home town but instead, like the prophets Isaiah and Elisha, he was sent to help those outside of the norm, the widow and foreigner. This declaration had all sorts of implications for his listeners, as it might well today, and it is easy to understand why folks reacted the way they did. What an extraordinary proclamation.



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For Pondering

If you have a moment today, spend some time walking through Luke 4:14-30. Imagine yourself there in synagogue listening to Jesus. The invitation: engage your senses. What do you see, hear, smell, feel, what's the texture of the moment? Where are you in the room and in relation to Jesus? As Jesus proclaims, what is your feeling as you listen, how are you intuiting the mood in the room? As you listen deeply with mind and heart, and are witness to the surprising movements of the message and moment, where is God guiding you and what will you hold fast? What would you like to share with Jesus?

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