

October 9, 2016

I Want to Know Jesus

"I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead."
Philippians 3:10-11

"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." Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.
Luke 4:14-30

"When the sun was setting, the people brought to Jesus all who had various kinds of sickness, and laying his hands on each one, he healed them."
Luke 4:31-44

After his temptation in the wilderness Jesus returned to the area where he grew up; to Galilee and eventually to Nazareth. On the Sabbath Day he went into the synagogue where he had probably been trained as a child and requesting to read he was given the scroll of Isaiah. He read the passage found in Isaiah 61, and then he said, ***"Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."***

For nearly all of his thirty years Jesus has lived in this tiny village. He knew these people, he knew their families and he had undoubtedly even done work for many of them. And, they knew him. So, when he read this passage from Isaiah which they all knew referred to the Messiah, and then claimed himself to be that Messiah they were amazed. But when he pushed them, and their understanding of who the Messiah was intended to be, they very quickly turned on him and even tried to stone him to death.

I think Jesus returned to Nazareth the village where he had grown up because he wanted these people especially to turn to him and accept him for what he was. They didn't and maybe they couldn't. They not only rejected him as their Messiah; they even tried to kill him. From this time on Jesus, as far as we know, never returned to his home there, and he moved his headquarters to Capernaum, the home town of Peter, Andrew, James and John.

In Capernaum Jesus begins to heal, just as the Prophets had foretold that he would. Among his earliest miracles is the healing of Peter's mother-in-law, and with the beginning of this display of his miraculous powers Jesus' ministry grows exponentially.

From that early display outside Peter's home Jesus heals those who make their way to him and through these miraculous displays he draws crowds who hear him ***"...preach the good news of the kingdom of God...because,"*** as he said, ***"this is why I was sent."*** (Luke 4:43). It is easy, when we read of the miracles that Jesus performed before crowds of people, to lose sight of the reason for these miracles. Jesus did not come primarily to heal people of their illnesses and injuries. Jesus came to preach the ***"...good news of the kingdom of God."***

For believers like you and me, it is no less challenging for us not to lose sight of our primary focus. The people who saw Jesus do miraculous things and who even personally experienced those miracles wanted him to stay with them and go on doing those things for them. ***"At daybreak,"*** we are told, ***"Jesus went out to a solitary place. The people were looking for him and when they came to where he was, they tried to keep him from leaving them."***

The people who had seen and experienced his power wanted to go on experiencing that power. They wanted to keep him for themselves. They wanted him to stay with them and take care of them.



As believers, I believe we can fall into a similar trap in our relationship with the Master. Having experienced his salvation and become a part of his body, the church, we can begin to think that the church and the things of the church are what really matters. We focus on the church and we enjoy our time with other believers, but our primary task is not here with the church. Our primary function, like our Lord's, is to preach "*...the good news of the kingdom of God.*" The Master could not stay just with the people of Capernaum any more than he can stay just with us. He must preach and be preached. That is why he came.