

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church
Quincy, IL
Seminarian Ian Heinze

Epiphany 4
Saturday, January 29, 2022 at 5:00 p.m.
Sunday, January 30, 2022 at 9:00 a.m.

Luke 4:31-41

Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Dear saints, the Gospel text for today contains a magnificent narrative of the restorative work of our Lord, Jesus Christ. This is what Jesus does. He restores what has been corrupted. He mends what has been broken. He raises up the lowly. He heals the sick. The work of Christ is that of restoration and life.

In St. Luke's Gospel account, the ministry of our Lord has just recently begun. Last week we heard Jesus reading from the scroll of the prophet Isaiah and preaching in His home synagogue in Nazareth. Following His proclamation that *He* is the Messiah spoken of in Isaiah, and that He will be rejected by His own people, the residents of Nazareth rose up intending to kill Him. But Jesus gave them the slip and passed through their midst.

Having made His way now to Capernaum, we find Jesus doing what He so often does in the Gospel accounts: teaching in the synagogue. And it is in the Capernaum synagogue that St. Luke first unfolds the restorative work of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

“And in the synagogue there was a man who had the spirit of an unclean demon, and he cried out with a loud voice, ‘Ha!’ What have You to do with us,

Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us?” . . . Jesus’ response is short and filled with authority. “Be silent and come out of him.” And the demon is just whacked away; cast out of the man. The people in the synagogue are simply amazed. They realize that there is something before them unlike anything that they have ever seen. I mean, can you imagine?

Here is this man whose been possessed by a demon with the demon actually speaking through the man, and Jesus just sends the demon packing, kicks it right down the road—for the demons are no match for Christ. Now we don’t always like to talk about the demonic forces, but we should be aware of them, for they are real. They hate Christ and us as His people, and they desire to do nothing else but assault and attack us. Even in a culture the widely rejects the reality of the demonic, actually taking time to ponder what they are and reading about them in the Scriptures can be enough to run a chill down our spine.

But we rejoice as the people claimed by God as we read and hear the restorative work of our Lord, Jesus Christ in today’s Gospel text. For it is here, among many times in the Scriptures that we are reminded that Jesus is the Holy One of God, that He is Lord, the Messiah, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity. He sits enthroned above all things, wielding unlimited power at His disposal. The demons shudder and tremble at His name. For there is nothing they can do against Him. There is nothing they can do against those who have been claimed by God. St. Luke proclaims this great truth to us in our reading as Jesus casts the demon out from the possessed man.

You can picture the people gathered there in the synagogue, mouths agape with dumbfounded shock. The tension in the room swelling up until it finally bursts like a dam that has been destroyed, as the people pour out of the synagogue into every place in the surrounding region, shouting out what they had witnessed as they rushed to find family and friends to bring to this Jesus—for with Jesus, there is something unlike anything they have ever seen.

Onward they came to the house of Peter's mother-in-law, whom Jesus had just healed from a fever. The suffering and the abandoned leaning desperately upon one another for strength. Those who had long since forsaken hope as a deceitful enemy and cursed their own life. Onward they came. Those dealing with viruses, diabetes, asthma. The sick and the ill, with their festering sores and oozing skin. Their bodies riddled with cancer, shutting down with heart disease, kidney failure, dementia. Onward they came. Bodies twisted and deformed. Eyes clouded without sight. Limping. Crawling. Guided by others. Onward they came. With tears of anguish and pain, demented shrieks and howls. Onward they came.

Resolutely determined to make their way to the house of Peter's mother-in-law. For they had heard the cry of those who had been in the synagogue that morning. They had heard the message that had burst open and utterly flooded the region of Capernaum. They knew that inside the house was something unlike anything they had ever seen before. They knew that inside the house was Jesus.

They had heard of the Man who taught with authority. They had heard of the Man who healed those possessed by demons. They had heard and so they came, believing that perhaps this Man would also heal them. That this Man would also care for them—the suffering and the beaten down, the sick and the dying, those who previously had lost hope, those who were trapped in despair, the unwanted and the abandoned.

Onward they came.

And our Lord Jesus does what He does. He lovingly carries out His restorative work. The Light of the world, plunged into the darkness of a sin-plagued world.

Touching and healing the diseased. Embracing the despairing and depressed. Opening the eyes and the ears and the mouths of the blind and the deaf and the mute. Rebuking demons from the possessed. Smiling and laughing with the abandoned and rejected. No longer were the outcast and unwanted forsaken. For God had come to His people and made them His own.

Clear to all, the cry that had flooded the region of Capernaum had been correct: “There is something here unlike anything we have ever seen!”

Dear saints, you too have heard the Word go out. You have heard the Word that shattered the dam and washed over the entire world. You have heard the Word and have gathered together here as the church. For there is something here unlike anything that you have ever seen before.

For Christ the Lord—your Lord—is present as the church gathers around Word and Sacrament. Were two or three are gathered, there Christ promises to be in the midst of them. By His own merciful and loving work He has placed His name on you and united Himself to you. People loved by God, Christ certainly is present here.

The Light of the world is present in the midst of the darkness of this sin-plagued world. He is present in the midst of the darkness of our own lives. For we come to this place like all those people from the region of Capernaum who made their way to the house of Peter's mother-in-law that night.

Onward we come with our own bitter sufferings and heartbreaking anguishes. Weighed down by the crushing burdens of life, we drag ourselves into this place. Our bodies riddled with diseases that constantly remind us that the last enemy—death—lurks around every corner. Onward we come. Rejected, scorned, and abandoned by the world. Warring against hopelessness, despair, and depression. Fighting against the attacks of the world, the flesh and the devil. Onward we come.

Why? Because there is something here unlike anything we have ever seen before. Our Lord Jesus Christ.

And without a moment of hesitation He plunges into the darkness and says, "Dearly beloved, I have taken all that is yours, I have taken your bitter suffering and sickness, I have taken your sin and the death that it deserved. Into Myself I have taken it all, for you. And I have given you all that is Mine. You, dear loved

one, you are Mine. There is nothing, absolutely nothing in all of existence that could possibly pry you away from My hands. For I have given to you My own victory over sin, death, and the devil.”

You come into this place to hear the Word that shattered the dam. To receive the Word that flooded throughout the entirety of the world. The Word that snagged you in its current and washed over you in Baptismal waters. You make your way here to receive Jesus. Who has made you His own. Who has promised never to forsake or abandon you.

Dear saints, we still walk through this valley of the shadow of death for the present time, suffering and death surround us; yet we rejoice, we are given strength and assurance of all that Christ has done for us through His Word. We fix our eyes on Him, awaiting the sure and certain day that He will come again, the day that He will wipe away all the tears from our eyes, the day that suffering and death shall be no more, the day that we shall gaze upon the face of God and be welcomed to the victory feast of the Lamb.

And as we await that day, we gather here in the House of the Lord, realizing that, “here there is something unlike anything we have ever seen before. And in Christ, we will see and rejoice in it for all eternity. Amen.

And may the peace of God, which surpasses all our understanding, guard and keep you in the one true faith of our crucified, risen, and victorious Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.