3rd Sunday after the Epiphany
Rolling Meadows - 1977

Rev. Carl F. Thrun

IN NOMINE JESU

ST. LUKE 4: 14-21

JESUS returns to His HOME TOWN of NAZARETH as a REAL CELEBRITY. Following His BAPTISM and His CONFRONTATION WITH THE DEVIL in the wilderness, JESUS' MISSION and MINISTRY really began. ..... He came out of the desert a CHANGED MAN. He was not only "IN THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT" --- He must have been RECOGNIZABLY "IN THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT!" His FAME and REPUTATION went everywhere. He was regarded as a PROPHET ~~of~~ and a MAN OF GREAT WISDOM. We are told that "A REPORT CONCERNING HIM WENT OUT THROUGH ALL THE SURROUNDING COUNTRY. AND HE TAUGHT IN THEIR SYNAGOGUES, BEING GLORIFIED BY ALL."

So when He arrived at His HOME TOWN of Nazareth, He was WELCOMED with OPEN ARMS: "We've heard about You, Boy. You've made quite a reputation for Yourself. The fact is, You have put our little town of Nazareth on the map." (It must have been something like PRESIDENT CARTER putting the little town of PLAINES, GEORGIA, on the map).... Well, to show their appreciation for their SUDDEN RISE TO FAME, they accorded JESUS an HONOR that was reserved only for the MOST RESPECTED MEMBERS of the JEWISH CONGREGATION. He was invited to READ THE SCRIPTURES in the SYNAGOGUE and MAKE A SERMON. This is something that LAYMEN were permitted to do -- but only the MOST RESPECTED members of the congregation.

The text that JESUS chooses is from the Prophet Isaiah. It was part of the ENTHRONEMENT or ROYAL CORONATION RITUAL for a NEW KING. "THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME, BECAUSE HE HAS ANOINTED ME TO PREACH GOOD NEWS TO THE POOR. HE HAS SENT ME TO PROCLAIM RELEASE TO THE CAPTIVES AND RECOVERING OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND, TO SET AT LIBERTY THOSE WHO ARE OPPRESSED, TO PROCLAIM THE ACCEPTABLE YEAR OF THE LORD." ..... When JESUS is finished reading, the attendant rolls up the scroll. All EYES are GLUED to Him. They can't wait to hear what the "HOME TOWN BOY" will have to say. And without batting an eye JESUS says to them very SIMPLY and DIRECTLY: "TODAY THIS SCRIPTURE HAS BEEN FULFILLED IN YOUR HEARING." That is to say, "The day of deliverance has come and I am the prophet of that deliverance!" It is a simple as that.

Notice how JESUS turns SCRIPTURE in upon HIMSELF. On another occasion He said: "YOU SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES BECAUSE IN THEM YOU THINK YOU HAVE ETERNAL. THEY ARE THEY WHICH TESTIFY OF ME." To paraphrase that: "You're right -- there is eternal life in the Scriptures -- but only if you let them witness and TESTIFY OF ME." Or on Easter Sunday with the TWO DISCIPLES on their way to EMMAUS, we are told: "AND BEGINNING WITH MOSES AND ALL THE PROPHETS, JESUS INTERPRETED TO THEM IN ALL THE SCRIPTURES THE THINGS CONCERNING HIMSELF."

I have said this before -- but I want to say it again because it BEARS REPEATING! CHRIST IS THE HEART, AND CORE, AND CENTER OF ALL OF SCRIPTURE! BOTH IN PROPHECY AND FULFILLMENT CHRIST IS THE ONLY THING GOD HAS TO SAY TO US! And in case there are any DOUBTERS still around who have QUESTION MARKS of my faith and orthodoxy, I want to REAFFIRM to OATH I took at the time of my ordination: "I shall continue to honor the Scriptures as the pure fountain, rule, and norm of the WORD by which the HOLY SPIRIT begets FAITH and NEW LIFE. I shall "ASK, SEEK, AND KNOCK" toward grasping more clearly how CHRIST FILLS THE SCRIPTURES AND HOW HIS WORD PENETRATES HEARTS. I shall PROCLAIM THE GLORY OF CHRIST CRUCIFIED for the comfort of terrified consciences. For it is by THIS WORD that the SPIRIT gathers the CHURCH, forms it in the IMAGE OF CHRIST, CORRECTS, HEALS, and so KEEPS IT..... As a called and ordained servant of the WORD I shall also testify against "EVERY EVIL COUNSEL AND WILL WHICH WOULD NOT LET US HALLOW GOD'S NAME OR LET HIS KINGDOM COME.'"

The reason I REPEAT this is because there is SUCH CONFUSION regarding the WORD OF GOD. The NEW TESTAMENT clearly and consistently identifies "THE WORD OF GOD" with JESUS HIMSELF in His VISIBLE, FLESHLY HISTORY and also with the GOSPEL WHICH PROCLAIMS HIM ---- but NEVER with the SCRIPTURE as such. ..... Now there are many people who DON'T UNDERSTAND THIS nor can they GRASP ITS IMPLICATIONS. They tend simply to equate "THE WORD OF GOD" with the BIBLE as DIVINELY-AUTHORED.

And hence their COMMON PIETY does not distinguish between BELIEVING IN CHRIST and BELIEVING EVERYTHING THE BIBLE SAYS.

Thereby the WORD OF GOD is TURNED UPSIDE DOWN. The INFALLIBILITY OF THE BIBLE is now SURETY FOR THE TRUTH OF THE GOSPEL -- not vice versa. The BIBLE is viewed as the ORIGIN OF THE GOSPEL -- not the GOSPEL OF THE BIBLE. "Bible-believing" becomes a kind of PRIOR FAITH without which "Christ-believing" has no certainty. The GOSPEL OF CHRIST is not the FULLNESS -- but only PART of the WORD OF GOD...... All this leaves the Gospel CONFUSED, CONAMINATED, WEAK, CRIPPLED, EVEN UNKNOWN. The GOOD NEWS becomes one of many doctrines --- and seldomly is it PROCLAIMED to COMFORT HEARTS or to LIFT EYES IN HOPE to CHRIST ALONE.

Just think about the FALAACY of this kind of thinking --
"You are saved by being a "Bible believer" not a "Christ believer" -- not a "Gospel believer." ..... Let me say it as simply and concisely as I can: XXXXX XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX "It is not the BIBLE that confirms CHRIST. It is CHRIST who CONFIRMS the BIBLE. He is the FULFILLMENT of ALL SCRIPTURE." So go ahead and STUDY your Scriptures. Ask your questions. Let the SPIRIT work. Let HIM bring you to HEW HORIZONS of understanding --- but always to the GLORY OF CHRIST! He is your DELIVERANCE -- your LIFE AND SALVATION -- your LORD AND SAVIOR. Amen.