

## **Sermon Draft**

**Text: Luke 4:16–30**

**Sermon: “Another Sunday”**

Another week, another church service. “Do I have to?” “What difference does it make anyway?” “It’s the same thing every Sunday.” Even if we never say it, that’s what our old sinful nature thinks. It’s why we sometimes find ourselves dragging our feet to come to church. It’s why we find it so much easier to make a habit out of something—anything—else on Sunday morning. Because there are so many important things in life, aren’t there? It’s why we become satisfied with less Jesus, rather than more, and why our daily devotions suffer. During the week when help is needed or Wednesday evening when there is another opportunity to come and worship our sinful nature doesn’t want us to be here. But we also know we can’t trust that sinful nature.

The sinful nature knows exactly what’s good for it—keeping us out of God’s Word and away from Jesus. Good for our sinful nature, but bad for us. So that’s why this whole church thing can be a fight.

We're always up against ourselves to make it here. Sunday service or just coming to church to help out should be the most natural thing in the world for us, but it isn't.

It's not natural for us, but it is for Jesus. ***“He came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day”*** (v 16). How about that? And Scripture is his Word! Yet as a child, he studied and learned it by heart. And now as an adult, he's just as devoted to it. He attends services faithfully. His custom and habit is to love the Word. Wouldn't that be something? To come to church not as a duty or burden, not out of a sense of obligation, not as a “have to” or simply as a matter of routine, not even because we need it (though let's not kid ourselves, we do need it so long as that sinful nature refuses to move out)—but to come out of love for being here! That's the life of Jesus. He's the man who lives ***“not by bread alone”*** (v 4) but ***“by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord”*** (Deuteronomy 8:3).

He's the one described by the first Psalm: *"Blessed is the man"—Jesus—"his delight is in the law [Torah] of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither"*

(Psalm 1:1–3). It was normal and natural for Jesus to be in church, to hold God's Word sacred, and to gladly hear and learn it.

But this Sabbath Day was different from others. This time Jesus didn't come to the Nazareth synagogue because he was "the son (a descendant) of Joseph" (Luke 3:23). He's been an obedient son—for thirty years. This time he wasn't there to be a hearer of the Word. This time he went to the Nazareth synagogue as a teacher of the Word, a rabbi, a guest preacher in his home congregation. He went as Son of the Father in heaven. *"And he stood up to read. And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written, 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor."*

*He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor' ” (vs 16–19).*

The home folks in Nazareth had never seen this side of Jesus before. They'd never heard him like this. So, whether they came that day out of habit or obligation or even love of the Word, they got more than they expected. This wasn't just another service, according to custom—go through the motions and head home. *“And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him”* (v 20). Isn't that a great description? All eyes in the church are fixed on Jesus. No dozing in the pew after a late night, no daydreaming about the upcoming Super Bowl, no furtive glances at a phone or watch. Wouldn't it be great if those words described us today? *“Jesus came and the eyes of all were fixed on him!”*

Then came the sermon. It wasn't a lecture on theology, a list of ten steps to a better you, or a rally for some social issue. In a simple and profound way, Jesus applied God's Word to the people right there:

***“Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing”*** (v 21).

“What Isaiah wrote,” Jesus says, “is about me.” It's as if the words of the prophet walked right off the page and stood in front of them—like one of those movies where the characters of a book come to life as you read. Except this was no fairy tale or story. This was real—real scroll, real Jesus, real words from his mouth to the real ears of his hearers. He fills out the Word in four dimensions, in time and space.

Jesus is the Word in human flesh—the Word that's living and active, present in this place for us. The Spirit of the Lord is upon him. He's the Anointed One, the Christ. That's why he went to the synagogue that Sabbath Day, and they couldn't believe their ears! ***“All spoke well of him and marveled at the gracious words that were coming from his mouth. And they said, ‘Is not this Joseph's son?’”*** (v 22). No, not really.

Tre's "the Son of God" conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary.

That's why he comes to church so faithfully still, including today: to deliver the Good News of salvation to us poor and needy, to proclaim liberty to us who are in debt with sin, to give sight to us who walk in darkness, to set free those who are in bondage, and to let us know that the Jubilee Year of the Lord has begun. It all happens "in our hearing"—literally in our ears. That's how Jesus makes himself and his forgiveness known to us. It's like Paul said: "***Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ***" (Romans 10:17). So, today in our hearing, this scripture is fulfilled again: Jesus, the Christ, come with the Lord's favor for you and for me.

That's the point of every Sunday. Flesh-and-blood Jesus, true God and also true man, steps into our service. He never grows tired of doing this. He loves to fulfill the Word again and again, to be the Word for poor, lost sinners like you and me. So, Sunday isn't about you and what you're doing here, though it's good that you are.

What matters is that he's here—here for the depressed and despairing, for the sinner and the sinned against, for all who are oppressed, victimized, abused, taken advantage of, and suffering. He's the answer to our prayer: "Stretch forth the hand of Your majesty to heal and defend us."

Not all who hear believe, like the people in his hometown. What do they want with Jesus? Apparently not the good news he proclaims, the liberty he brings, the sight he restores, or the freedom he promises. They want him dead. So, they drag him out of town and up to the cliff the city's built on. They want the Anointed One crushed for them, bruised and wounded, stricken, smitten, and afflicted. That hill wasn't Calvary, but it was close. Jesus came to be that Word, too, the despised, rejected, crucified Word. He came to suffer for our sins, for the way that we've groaned about hearing his Word, for our indifference to the Word, for the times we've allowed ourselves to be distracted or enticed away from it. And instead of taking his Word away and leaving us without hope or help, he continues to come.

He comes and extends the Lord's favor to us again. He doesn't have to be here. He doesn't have to do this. He doesn't need what we give him—our sins, our prayers, our offerings. But still he comes, week after week, service after service, forgiving, loving, and showing mercy to us and to all.

The joy of life in the church is that it's never just another service. Every week is a little Christmas and another Epiphany. Jesus himself is the rabbi, the teacher whose Word proclaims the Lord's favor. And he's more than that. He's God with us, right here in our midst, visiting us with his mercy and grace. And that's why we wish to be here even when we can't. *"How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord of hosts! My soul longs, yes, faints for the courts of the Lord"* (Psalm 84:1–2).

Amen