EVEN THE ORDINARY BECOMES EXTRAORDINARY

1. Jesus worshiped regularly for us
2. Jesus fulfilled the Scriptures for us

What an unremarkable event before us today! But there is nothing wrong with that! I think at times, we all appreciate days that are quiet and customary, ordinary and just plain dull. In fact, there is an old Eastern proverb that says: **May you live in uninteresting times!**

In many ways, this lesson from Luke describes events that are ordinary and uninteresting. It was just a customary day in Jesus’ life. Jesus spent some time close to home. He got up and went to church. Nothing special, just like everyone else in Nazareth—probably not a whole lot different than what you did today! Just ordinary, everyday stuff! But with Jesus, even the most ordinary often becomes extraordinary. Consider how Jesus took this unremarkable, run-of-the-mill Sabbath, a customary, ordinary thing and made it extraordinary.

In the first part of his gospel, Luke tells about events took place early in Jesus’ ministry. He records Jesus’ baptism at the Jordan (we heard about that 2 weeks ago). From there, Jesus went into the wilderness to face Satan’s temptations (we will talk more about this on the first Sunday in Lent). Then Luke says: **Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside.** He went to his home town, and on the Sabbath he went to church. Pretty ordinary, especially after all the wonders that surrounded Jesus’ baptism and temptation in the wilderness!

If you would have gone to church with Jesus that day, what would you have seen and heard and done there? First, you enter the synagogue building. A synagogue was a group of bels who gathered each week on the Sabbath (Saturday) to hear and study God’s Word. The service would begin with a series of prayers. You would sing Psalms— the Psalms were your hymnal. Then, you would listen to a reading from the Torah—the first five books of the Old Testament. Shortly after would come a reading from one of the prophets, like Isaiah. Next, the synagogue leader or someone he picked would comment on a lesson. Somewhere along the way, you would speak the Creed of Judaism: **Hear, O Israel, the Lord, our God, the Lord is one.** Several more prayers would be spoken, and the service would end with the Aaronic benediction: **The Lord bless you and keep you...**

That was your ordinary service at a synagogue, and much of it sounds familiar to us. Luke tells us it was Jesus’ custom to go to church on the Sabbath. He made it his custom to go every week! He had also begun to establish a custom of getting up and offering to speak. Throughout Galilee, Luke says: **He taught in their synagogues, and everyone praised him.** This Sabbath in Nazareth, Jesus **stood up to read.** Standing up meant he was volunteering to speak.

Of course, the leader picked him; Jesus was gaining quite a reputation at this point. Now this local boy had come home. They gave him the book of Isaiah to read, but Jesus opened it to a passage he chose—words we heard a few moments ago in our Old Testament reading. They were very familiar words. Everybody knew them because they were words that pointed to the Savior God would send, who would preach good news, who would proclaim freedom and release, who would restore sight to the blind, who would usher in the **year of the Lord’s favor**—a great jubilee year which freed slaves and canceled debts and stopped labor and governed by trust in God and his goodness. The Spirit would mark this Savior and anoint him for this special purpose.

Then Jesus rolled up the scroll and handed it back to the attendant. He sat down. He was ready to speak. What was he going to say about this very important prophecy? Is it any
wonder: The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him? This passage had riveted their attention to his words. They waited – silence – tension – anticipation - expectation. What would he say? He simple said: Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.

This customary, ordinary trip to church on the Sabbath in Nazareth had suddenly become extraordinary. With the words he read, with the opening sentence of his introduction, Jesus declared for all time and eternity: I am the anointed Savior who is come to fulfill every Word and promise the Father has made! I am your Savior! What an extraordinary message! What an extraordinary day!

But Jesus’ words and actions here pose a question to us: How do your priorities, your customs, compare with Jesus’ custom? We are told: On the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. Jesus went to the synagogue. He went to hear God’s Word. If anyone could have gone a couple a weeks without going to church, it was Jesus. He did not need forgiveness. He knew all this stuff, right? But, he went, even as the perfect, all-knowing Son of God. He went to honor and keep the commandment: Remember the Sabbath Day by keeping it holy. He went because he needed to hear his Father’s voice - he needed to hear the Gospel.

How does that compare to us whose memories are less than perfect and whose knowledge is less than complete? Where do spiritual concerns rank with me? How important is the spiritual health of my family to me? Do I treasure the 3rd Commandment like Jesus did, making time for God and his Word? Or do I take the little dab will do ya approach? Am I happy to make it a priority even when nothing else is going on? Would I feel comfortable telling Jesus: I know all this pretty well already. I am confirmed. I went to Sunday School. I am covered. It won’t hurt me to miss now and then. Yet Jesus, whose memory never fails, went every Sabbath.

Why is this such a big deal? I can miss church or Bible Class or personal devotion time occasionally without losing my faith, right? True, but you also need to understand what is at stake. Jesus has freed you from the prison of sin and the oppression of the devil. He has opened your eyes to the truth of salvation.

Satan hates that! He works every day to pull you back into captivity. What is more: part of you wants to go back! Your sinful nature craves the captivity of sin. It wants to feel the devil’s whip and to let him drive you where he wants you to go. Your flesh allies itself with Satan. Their goal is your eternal destruction. They will not stop working and fighting for it until they win or you are out of their reach. Such a small, ordinary decision can have extraordinary, eternal consequences!

So what makes the difference in this struggle? Is it just that your bottom warms the pew here more often than not? Is it because you reached the minimum number of gold stars on God’s attendance chart? No, it is not anything like that.

So what is the difference? In the synagogue that day, Jesus read Isaiah’s prophecy: The Spirit 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. What extraordinary freedom the Savior will bring! What an extraordinary victory he will win! What an extraordinary future he will ensure for his people! Then Jesus said: Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.

I am your Savior, Jesus says. He accomplished all of those blessings for you. They are yours right now. Jesus is the difference for you in this struggle. He has freed you from captivity to sin and the power of your flesh. He has released you from Satan’s oppression. He has opened your eyes to God’s truth. He has opened your ears to hear the good news. Now
is the year of the Lord’s favor! Sin cancelled. Freedom restored. Gospel proclaimed.
Salvation accomplished. Eternity won!

Such extraordinary knowledge reorders the priorities of our ordinary days! Jesus is the
anointed Savior! He has accomplished salvation and wants you and me to have it! That is the
most important thing, not just for this life but for eternity! Those spiritual priorities and
concerns must rise to the top of the list, not just when nothing else is going on or when I
absolutely have to be here. I want to hear the Gospel because I need to hear the Gospel. I
need the reminders of who Jesus is and what he did. I need to learn how he helps me fight
this battle against my flesh and then the next and the next. I need to remember how he
defeated the devil and accomplished eternal victory for me.

What extraordinary help I find to accomplish these things right here at church! When I
walk in, the baptismal font is the first thing to meet my eye. It tells me that I am baptized into
Christ. I take comfort in the message: I forgive you all your sins in the Father and of the
Son and of the Holy Spirit. I hear again and again the message of Jesus’ victory for me. I
savor the foretaste of heaven that comes to me in Jesus’ true body and blood: the very price
of my salvation. I encourage those around me with my words and songs, feeble though they
are at times. I encourage them by being here with them just as they encourage me.

These things too seem very ordinary, but how often Jesus causes the ordinary to
become extraordinary. He did that with a customary Sabbath in Nazareth. He did it so often in
his ministry, even in his death. He still does it through the Gospel in Word and Sacrament.
Give him the opportunity to do that for you! Amen.

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