

3rd Sunday After the Epiphany

January 24, 2016

Gospel: Luke 4:14-21

Epistle: 1 Cor 12:12-21, 26-27

Lesson: Is 61:1-6

Psalm: Psalm 113

From the New International Commentary on the New Testament: by Norval Goldenhuys

14, 15 In these two introductory verses Luke gives a general characterization of Jesus' actions during that period in Galilee. He particularly notes the fact that His appearance caused tremendous sensation and that He was at that time still in very high favor with the people.

16, 17 After His previous appearance in Galilee (verse 23) and in Judaea (John i. 35-iv. 44) Jesus at length came again to His old home-city of Nazareth, where he had grown up. By that time the inhabitants of the little town had already heard many rumors of Jesus' fame in Capernaum and elsewhere. During the thirty years or so that He was in Nazareth the inhabitants knew and honored Him as the Perfect Man (ii. 52). But at that time He had not yet performed any miracles or openly proclaimed His Messiahship. For this reason, after they had heard of His growing fame, they were curious to see Him again personally and to hear Him. If Mark vi. 1-6 and Matthew xiii. 53-8 describe the same visit of the Savior to Nazareth, we should picture to ourselves the course of events more or less as follows. A few days before the Sabbath Jesus had come there, healed only a few sick (Mark vi. 5) owing to the skeptical attitude of the inhabitants (the old acquaintances of a great person are but too often his keen critics and slow to believe in his greatness). For the time being, however, they had not yet clashed with Him, but adopted a waiting attitude until the Sabbath.

As He had been accustomed to do from His youth, Jesus on this occasion also went to the synagogue on the Sabbath. Someone else probably read the prescribed portion from the Law (the first five books of the Old Testament) in Hebrew and the official interpreter (*methurgeman*) translated it into Aramaic. After that, Jesus stood up as a sign that it was His wish to officiate for the rest of the service. It was customary to give such an opportunity in the synagogue to visiting rabbis; and especially as all were curious to hear Jesus, the head of the synagogue caused the book of the prophet Isaiah to be delivered to Him from which a portion had next to be read. Whether Jesus looked for a special portion that He wished to read or whether His eye immediately fell upon it we do not know; but probably it was a lesson from the Prophets (the *hapharah*) appointed for that Sabbath.

18, 19 He then read a number of verses from Isaiah lxi. 1, 2 with a single phrase from Isaiah lviii. 6 that

fitted it with the portion read first. As far as we know, He read in Hebrew and translated into Aramaic, the common spoken language at that time (see exposition at verse 21). G. Dalman finds reflections of the traditional Aramaic paraphrase (*Targum*) in the present passage in Luke

20 After this He closed the book (since it was a parchment roll, the meaning is that He rolled it up again), and gave it back to the “servant” (*hazzan*) who was subordinate to the head of the synagogue. Then, as was the custom, He seated Himself on the small platform intended for the purpose and proceeded to deliver His message by way of expounding the portion that had been read. Out of respect for the Word it was customary for the reader to stand while he was reading, but when a rabbi addressed the hearers in the synagogue he had to do so sitting. With the Jews the addresses or sermons were more in the nature of instructions than public orations.

So, after Jesus had sat down, the eyes of all (the old acquaintances in Nazareth) were fastened on Him expectantly.

21 We do not know everything that Jesus said: Luke merely gives a brief account of the main theme of His words. It amounted to a declaration by Him that the words which He had read to them had finally come to fulfillment -- in His own person. By this He really announced that He was the One anointed by God with the Spirit to proclaim the glad tidings to the poor. God had sent Him to heal those who were broken-hearted and found themselves in spiritual distress; to proclaim deliverance to those who were captives in the power of sin and in spiritual wretchedness; to give back to the spiritually blind the power of sight; to cause those who were downcast and inwardly bruised to go forward in triumph; and thus to “proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord,” i.e. to announce the Messianic age -- the period ushered in by His appearance, in which God will grant His salvation to His people.