

## A Matter of Perspective

Wayne Waibel – 01/26/2025

In another time at another place this scene may have played out differently, but at this time in the city of Nazareth there was not a more perfect moment for the Son of Man to reveal His identity and His mission. The prophet Isaiah wrote precisely what the purpose of the Christ would be. And Jesus stepped out of the woodworking shop and into that role with the full weight of the Spirit upon Him.

The importance of scripture cannot be understated. It gives us a lens to look at this world and our lives through God's eyes. We read it. We sometimes study it. It swirls in our head, and it ultimately rests on our heart and gives us peace – and wonder – and hope – and delight - and understanding beyond all human ability. It also confuses and confounds and perplexes and dismays.

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To be sure, the folks in the synagogue on that day had the sense that they were witnessing something extraordinary. Jesus had a certain reputation by this time, but He was still – to them – a local boy who was handy with a hammer and nails. A craftsman.

They knew He was devout and loved His mother. They respected and admired His wisdom and knowledge of the scriptures. But no one saw this coming.

Luke's Jesus supersedes the violent wrathful God of the Old Testament. The passage in Isaiah that Jesus reads serves not only as an acute awareness of His methods and ministry, but a very real mission statement for us all. They didn't really know it at the time, but Jesus was reminding them of their purpose – of our purpose - as well as shouldering the burden of the world and taking it all unto Himself.

The die was cast. The path was set. The salvation of humanity had begun. When Jesus talks of the scripture from Isaiah being fulfilled in Him – He means it. If it sounds and feels like the prelude to a great adventure, that's because it is. He was about to embark on the greatest adventure of all time.

And His hometown family and friends were witness to it. We see in the ensuing verses that **they** were not marked by the event then as **we** are now. But that only serves to amplify the glory and fulfill the scripture that a prophet is not accepted in his own country.

The problem with familiarity is that it breeds contempt. We see it all the time, and it holds true in the case of Jesus in His neighborhood as well.

People have a hard time making the transition from – this carpenter, who is a good man, of course – to this prophetic healer who may very well be the Messiah they have been promised.

It's all a matter of perspective. While they were awaiting the "coming of the Messiah," it never dawned on them that **that** coming may be in the form of one who came from their midst.

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We do that as humans – make up our minds about what is and what will be without any real forethought or due diligence. How many times have we determined a balance or resolution based solely on an inkling or borrowed perspective? Vikings fans know precisely what I'm talking about.

One of the most difficult dynamics for us to master is the ability to entertain multiple viewpoints or sources and allow that awareness to wash over us and inform our enlightenment. We tend to rush into judgment based entirely on an emotional response. And when it's a highly charged emotional issue – that response can border on serious calamity.

It's nice when cooler heads prevail, but it doesn't always happen like that. Sometimes the hot head wins the day. And this is where we as Christians need to step in or step up. There are many things we can do on our own, but being a Christian is not one of them.

Luke has rearranged the chronology of Jesus' life because he wants to deliver this morning's text as a mission statement for Christ's ministry. It's all about the Holy Spirit for Luke.

First there is the baptism of Jesus where He is christened with the Holy Spirit – which then leads Him into the wilderness where He is tempted to follow the wrong path. Upon His successful resistance of those temptations, He is filled with the power of the Holy Spirit enabling Him to fulfill His mission, and the scriptures.

There is a particular peace in knowing your purpose and subsequent direction in life. Even though Jesus was very aware of His personal relationship with God, there was probably a moment of clarity as He read His mission statement in the book of Isaiah, and pronounced the scriptures fulfilled.

Luke has a marvelous tendency toward order in his writing, which makes the synoptic gospels complete in how they reveal the life of Christ through multiple perspectives despite the disparity in timing. Luke gives context to the content.

There are few passages that evoke as much power and direction as this short section in the book of Luke. In it, Jesus takes on the embodiment of all the qualities of the promised Messiah.

To do this in his hometown in front of His family and friends is a bold move indeed, and He knew full well what He was doing.

He was serving notice to all that the man they had come to know – this carpenter’s son who had grown up among them – was a new Man – immersed in, blessed by and filled with the Holy Spirit to the tune of freeing the oppressed people of His time from Roman imperialism – giving hope to the down trodden – preaching the good news of the gospel to the poor - standing with and healing the marginalized – restoring sight to the blind and proclaiming the acceptable year of the Lord.

So what we have right here and right now is a succinct and dynamic passage that serves as our Lord’s mission statement. It is what we as doers of the word embrace as our own because we emulate the life and work of our savior.

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Life in God should produce gladness. Belonging means participating. After baptism, we are more than just ourselves; we are by definition beings-in-relationship. Radical interdependence requires radical diversity. The Christian community at large simply needs to enact what it already is – much as you do here. Our little church is informed by Christ’s understanding of His purpose and mission.

This community of faith is well situated to perpetuate that mission, set forth long ago by Isaiah, and adopted by Jesus. As Paul reminds us through his first letter to the Corinthians – Christian unity cannot be *attained* by the members of the body, it is yet another gift of the Spirit to be received and *maintained* in the bond of peace. Amen.