

## Do You Appreciate The Messiah?

Who is appreciated in his time? In Leipzig, Germany, the people there knew Johann Sebastian Bach. And they cherished him. But then, after he died, very few people knew of him. In fact, his son called his music ‘out-dated’. And his gravestone was lost until the early 1900’s. Now, looking back, it is hard for us to imagine this. For, today, he is held up as one of the greatest musicians and composers the world has ever known. And every student going to universities and colleges studying music have to learn *his* rules for composing.

Bach was not appreciated in his time. But, what about Jesus? The words we look at this morning answer that question. As we discovered a couple of weeks ago, Jesus was anointed with water and the Holy Spirit as our Prophet, Priest and King in the river Jordan. He performed his first miracle in Cana, blessing that wedding ceremony and giving them far more than they could ask or imagine. And then it is difficult to keep up with Jesus. Luke tells us: *"Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside. He taught in their synagogues, and everyone praised him."* (Luke 4:14–15 NIV)

Jesus went throughout the whole area of Galilee. And, if you read these opening chapters of Luke with any attention at all, you’ll find that he was doing two things. On every Sabbath he went into the synagogues and preached God’s word to the people. Imagine that for a moment. Imagine hearing a sermon, not from Paul or Peter or even me. No, instead you hear a sermon from Jesus, himself. What an amazing privilege they had.

So, he preached in their synagogues. And he performed miracles. He healed the sick. He gave sight to the blind. He drove out demons. Now, here again, Imagine what that must have been like. Imagine that you had a sickness for years and years, or your friend had a sickness. And this prophet from Nazareth does what no doctors can do. He does what your family members gave up on every happening. He healed you.

Jesus then goes back to his home town, Nazareth. Luke tells us: *"He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. And he stood up to read. The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him."* (Luke 4:16–17 NIV)

He went to his home town, to his home place of worship. And Luke tells us detail by detail what happened. First, he stood up. In order to understand this detail, you have to understand what worship looked like at that time. They would read lessons from the Law and the Prophets. And then, if someone had a “word of encouragement”, a sermon to preach, they would take volunteers. And when this happened, Jesus stood up. This was his opportunity to share with them who he was—not with simple and subtle gestures, but with bold and clear words and actions. He had spent thirty years waiting for this opportunity to publicly share with these people, his own people, the people he had grown up with, who he was, the *Anointed One* of God.

So, he stands up. The one conducting the liturgy hands him the scroll of Isaiah. Jesus opens up to Isaiah, chapter 61 and reads these words: *"The Spirit of the LORD is on me, because he 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."* (Luke 4:18–19 NIV)

Now here in these words we have the wonderful opportunity of seeing Jesus as a great teacher. He says that he was anointed to preach good news. And what had he been doing for that last several weeks and months? He had been traveling throughout Galilee doing just that. He says that he was anointed to proclaim freedom for the prisoners. And what had he been doing? He had been releasing from Satan’s power those who were possessed by demons. He says that he gives recovery of sight to the blind, and no doubt, he had healed people who were blind. He says that he would proclaim forgiveness to those who are oppressed by their sins. And that’s exactly what he was doing.

Jesus is dropping breadcrumbs all over the place for these, his own people. And then, just to make sure that everyone in the synagogue understood exactly what he was teaching them, he said: *"Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."* (Luke 4:21 NIV)

This is it! This is the moment he had been looking forward to for so many years. This is the moment when he publicly, perfectly proclaims that he is the LORD’S Anointed, the Christ, the Messiah. He announces to them that

he fulfilled all these prophecies and as a result is *The Messiah*. And he expects a response. He expects that his own people would see who he really, truly was. But, instead, what does he find? Nothing. He finds nothing. There is no recognition. There is no appreciation. There is no understanding. And worse of all, there is no joy. The LORD of all creation took on human flesh and blood and grew up in *their* town. He came to be their Anointed, their Messiah. And when he finishes his masterful, amazing sermon, there is nothing.

My brothers and sisters, I cannot see into your hearts. So, I do not know how you receive this amazing message that Jesus is the Anointed of God. But, I do know this: If there is appreciation in my heart, then there should be appreciation in my hands. But, so very often, what do I see? I see just the opposite. It is so very easy for my to yawn in response to what Jesus says here. And if there is joy in my heart, then it is so very easy for that joy to stop in my heart and not make it to my hands. And if this is true for me, a sinner, then it must also be true for you as my fellow sinners. How often do you hear the words spoken on Christmas morning, "A child is born *for you*." And there is very little joy and very little appreciation? How often have you heard these words that Jesus speaks to you, that he is the promised Messiah—and he proves it with his words and miracles, and in response, there is very little appreciation and very little joy? And even if there is joy and appreciation, as you look in your roles in your lives, that joy does not translate into your daily lives. If there is joy that Jesus took away your sins, then there should be joy in hearing God's word. There should be joy in serving the members of your family. There should be joy in serving the members of your church. But is there?

What a powerful condemnation of our sin we find in these words! Jesus comes to us and with all joy and sincerity he proclaims to us that he has fulfilled prophecy and that he is the Messiah. He says this great truth *expecting*. He says this expecting appreciation that affects our hearts and our hands. Instead, so very often, he finds nothing.

There is the problem. So, what is the solution? There is a voice inside us which tells us that the real problem isn't our lack of appreciation. It says the problem instead, is that we have *too much* of God's word. If we take a break from it, then we will appreciate it all that much more. And if you have had that voice speak to you, as I have, then ask yourself this question: 'do you cause yourself to appreciate food by not eating for a month?' The obvious answer is 'no.' The answer to this problem of our apathy and lack of appreciation is God's word. Listen again to the words that Jesus speaks: *"The Spirit of the LORD is on me, because he 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."* (Luke 4:18–19 NIV)

When Jesus spoke these words, he wasn't speaking them for the benefit of the people he helped and healed. He was speaking them to his own people, from his own town. And today he does the same. He preaches this good news *to you*. He has freed you from captivity. Which captivity is that? The captivity of your sins. You were once a slave to sin. But now you are a child of God. He has given you sight. For you were once blind. You once lived in spiritual darkness, stumbling around, just waiting to fall into the open pit of hell. But Jesus have you his light and his life. He has released you from your oppression. And, if ever there were a good description of sin, that would be it. Oppression. Our sins press down on us, loading us down with guilt and shame and powerlessness. But, look at what Jesus has done for you. The same Jesus who reveals himself as the Messiah did what only the Messiah could do. He took your guilt, your punishment, your pain on himself on the cross. And in exchange, he gave to you his perfection. You see, the solution to apathy is not starvation. The solution is a thorough, steady diet of God's word, so that every day and every week you are reminded that Jesus is not just The Anointed; he is your Anointed.

So then, my brothers and sisters, appreciated your Messiah. Appreciate him by hearing the words of Christ from the pulpit and reading his word from your bibles. Appreciate your Anointed with prayers in your hearts and prayers on your lips. Appreciate him in all you say and do. For he is not just The Messiah. He is your Messiah. Amen.