Nehemiah 8:1–3, 5–6, 8–10;

**And all the people gathered as one man into the square before the Water Gate. And they told Ezra the scribe to bring the Book of the Law of Moses that the Lord had commanded Israel. 2So Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly, both men and women and all who could understand what they heard, on the first day of the seventh month. 3And he read from it facing the square before the Water Gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of the men and the women and those who could understand. And the ears of all the people were attentive to the Book of the Law. 5And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was above all the people, and as he opened it all the people stood. 6And Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God, and all the people answered, “Amen, Amen,” lifting up their hands. And they bowed their heads and worshiped the Lord with their faces to the ground. 8They read from the book, from the Law of God, clearly, and they gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading.**

**9And Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, “This day is holy to the Lord your God; do not mourn or weep.” For all the people wept as they heard the words of the Law. 10Then he said to them, “Go your way. Eat the fat and drink sweet wine and send portions to anyone who has nothing ready, for this day is holy to our Lord. And do not be grieved, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.”**

1 Corinthians 12:12–31a

**For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. 13For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.**

**14For the body does not consist of one member but of many. 15If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. 16And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. 17If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? 18But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. 19If all were a single member, where would the body be? 20As it is, there are many parts, yet one body.**

**21The eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you,” nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” 22On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, 23and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, 24which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, 25that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. 26If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.**

**27Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. 28And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, administrating, and various kinds of tongues. 29Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? 30Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? 31But earnestly desire the higher gifts.**

Luke 4:16–30

**And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read. 17And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written, 18“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, 19to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”**

**20And 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. 21And he began to say to them, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” 22And 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?” 23And he said to them, “Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, ‘Physician, heal yourself.’ What we have heard you did at Capernaum, do here in your hometown as well.” 24And he said, “Truly, I say to you, no prophet is acceptable in his hometown. 25But in truth, I tell you, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heavens were shut up three years and six months, and a great famine came over all the land, 26and Elijah was sent to none of them but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. 27And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian.” 28When they heard these things, all in the synagogue were filled with wrath. 29And they rose up and drove him out of the town and brought him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they could throw him down the cliff. 30But passing through their midst, he went away.**

What if Jesus came to our town this morning? What if he came to our church? What if he stood here in the pulpit and preached a sermon? Wouldn’t that be marvelous? A wonderful opportunity to hear a message straight from God in heaven!

Well, this is precisely what Jesus did when on the Lord’s Day He entered His hometown synagogue in Nazareth. The year was about AD 30. And the whole town turned out to see their famous son preach a sermon. So what happens:

It’s Jesus’ custom to go to church every week. He would maintain this custom throughout His life and travels. On this particular Sabbath, Jesus goes with family, friends, and neighbors to worship in His hometown synagogue.

We see that Jesus doesn’t try to worship God in his own way somewhere else, but rather He worships God as God desires, in God’s house and on the Lord’s Day. We might imagine that, being the Son of God, Jesus would not benefit from attending such a worship service. Yet, this is precisely what He does. He sees hearing the Word as precious!

During the service, Scripture is read and expounded by the leader of the synagogue or by a guest. On this day, Jesus is invited to read and comment. So, standing before the people, He opens the scroll to Isaiah 61. With anticipation at a fever pitch, He begins to read the great prophet: **“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.”**

When He finishes, Jesus rolls up the scroll and sits down, the typical position of a teacher in Jesus day. Then He drops a bombshell: **“Today,” he says, “this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”**

At first, the people speak well of Jesus. In fact, **“all spoke well of him and marveled at the gracious words that were coming from his mouth.”**  But as they consider critically what Jesus has actually said, they are offended.

The mood changes quickly. Jesus senses this and even anticipates their anger. He hears the voices in the congregation: **“How can this carpenter’s son claim to be the Christ, the Savior of God?” “This impostor came from down the street, not from heaven!” “How dare he claim to be equal to God?”** The people are incredulous and indignant and think that Jesus has blasphemed the holy name of God.

What they fail to consider is that Jesus is, in fact, the Son of God, the fulfillment of all of God’s promises, just as He said. This will be the same conclusion that Caiaphas and the other religious leaders will use to justify Jesus’ crucifixion. It’s just too much to believe that this ordinary hometown Jewish man is God’s own Son.

Now, it seems that the people are even resentful that Jesus performed signs in nearby Capernaum but not for them in his own hometown. Jesus tells them that they will quote a proverb that we still hear today: **‘Physician, heal yourself.’ What we have heard you did at Capernaum, do here in your hometown as well. . . . Truly, I say to you,”** he continued, **“no prophet is acceptable in his hometown.”**

Anticipating that the congregation would demand a sign to testify to his divine claim, Jesus reminds that many Gentiles of bygone days were more receptive to God’s Word than they are. Elijah wasn’t sent to an Israelite in the Bible, he was sent to Zarephath in Sidon to a gentile woman. And when it came to healing lepers, the prophet Elisha healed a Syrian, Naaman, not an Israelite.

This is outrageous! Oh they get it! Jesus is saying that just being one of the home folks of God’s people doesn’t get them a thing! And so, they reject their famous son. Because of this truth, they are so angry they even try to murder him. They grab Him and drag Him toward the hill on which the town is built, and plan to throw Him off.

Jesus eludes the crowd; they are unable to accomplish the evil in their hearts. But others will accomplish it. Their leaders will crucify Jesus, despite their own custom of providing liberty to a captive at Passover. A captive will go free, while Jesus goes to the executioner. The angry crowd then all cried out together, ‘Crucify, crucify him!’ So Pilate does.

Still, in the end, evil will fail to triumph over Christ. Christ will triumph over evil when God raises Him from the dead and receives Him into His heavenly kingdom, and thus fulfilling Isaiah’s prophecy. He is the Christ of God.

Isn’t it horribly ironic that the very people who could see Jesus in person, those who knew Him best and lived near Him, refused to see Him as their Savior? How blind they were! And sadly, as far as we know, Jesus left Nazareth that day never to return. Their rejection of Jesus seems to have been irreparable and complete.

Back to my original proposition, what if Jesus came to our town this morning? What if He came to our church? What if He stood here in the pulpit and preached a sermon? Wouldn’t that be marvelous? A wonderful opportunity to hear a message straight from God in heaven!

Today, Jesus has come to our town, as is His custom each week, and is present with us in this house of God. Today, Jesus is present with us in His Word and in the Sacraments. Today, in God’s house, Jesus “proclaims good news” to all who are poor in spirit. Here each week, “the Spirit of the Lord” is upon us, to release us from the oppression of our guilt and sin. Here each week, Jesus offers “recovering of sight” for spiritual blindness, so all might see him clearly as their Savior, whose forgiveness sets them free from fear and death. Today, you see, this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing. Yes, we hear from the very Christ Himself during our worship service on this and every Lord’s day.

Therefore, since it remains “the year of the Lord’s favor,” may His Spirit be upon us all. And may our presence in our Lord’s house today strengthen us for the week to come, as again Jesus says to us, **“Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing!”** Amen.