

## **Christians Face New Year With Joyful Confidence.**

Text: Luke 4:16-21

1) Because their eyes are fastened on Jesus

Suggested Hymns:

2) Because they hear His word and keep it

559, 552, 4, 286, 554

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Luke 4:16-21, <sup>16</sup> *So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read.*

<sup>17</sup> *And He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written:* <sup>18</sup> *“The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me To preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives And recovery of sight to the blind, To set at liberty those who are oppressed; <sup>19</sup> To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.”*

<sup>20</sup> *Then He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on Him. <sup>21</sup> And He began to say to them, “Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”* (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

The new year is here. It stretches out before us: three hundred sixty-five days, unless eternity cuts it short. Think of its days, hours, minutes, seconds, and moments! Each day is important. The Holy Spirit says in Hebrews 3:7-8, *“Today, if you will hear His voice, <sup>8</sup> Do not harden your hearts.”*

But also the moments are important. The wicked *“spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down to the grave.”*<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, the Lord will water His vineyard *every moment. Lest any hurt it, He will keep it night*

*and day.*<sup>2</sup> And then *“we shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet.”*<sup>3</sup>

Will it be this year? In this new year God will cause your heart to beat more than thirty million times. It may beat even oftener for joy or less for fear. Which will it be?

Our loving God has mercifully drawn a curtain to veil the future. But for the child of God the entrance into a new year is not a leap into the dark. The future cannot be dark for him, because Jesus of Nazareth is with him. He is the Light of the world. He is the Light, He lights the way. Where there is light, fear vanishes.

Christ is the Good Shepherd, whose voice the sheep hear. Thus the Christian, the believing child of God, crosses the threshold of the new year without fear or wavering, keeping his eyes on the Light, hearing the reassuring voice of the Shepherd. Therefore Christians face the new year with joyful confidence. May the Lord bless our meditation.

## **1. Christians Face The New Year With Joyful Confidence Because Their Eyes Are Fixed On Jesus**

Our text begins, *So He came to Nazareth.* Who came? *“Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee.”*<sup>4</sup> Jesus had been teaching and performing miracles in Judea and now He came to Nazareth.

The name “Jesus” is of particular significance this day. New Year’s Day is also the day on which we commemorate the Lord’s circumcision. The brief Gospel for New Year’s Day states, *“And when eight days were completed for the circumcision of the Child, His name was called JESUS, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb.”*<sup>5</sup>

To Mary the angel Gabriel had said, <sup>31</sup> *“And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS.”* <sup>32</sup> *“He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David.”*<sup>6</sup>

To Joseph the angel of the Lord had said, <sup>21</sup> *“And she [Mary] will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins.”*<sup>7</sup> Matthew explains, <sup>22</sup> *So all this was done that it might be fulfilled*

*which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: <sup>23</sup> “Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,” which is translated, “God with us.”<sup>8</sup>*

When Jesus is present, God is with us. The person who fastens his eyes on Jesus fastens them on Emmanuel, the God-Man. He fastens his eyes on Jesus the Saviour, who would save His people from their sins. On this day you see Him shed the first drops of His blood for the sins of the world.

You see the Son of God, <sup>4</sup> *But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, <sup>5</sup> to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.<sup>9</sup>* Turning now to the Epistle for New Year’s Day, we hear the Apostle declare, <sup>26</sup> *For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. <sup>27</sup> For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.<sup>10</sup>* Children of God, with your eyes fastened on Jesus, why should you not face the new year with joyful confidence?

Jesus came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. For Him it was a homecoming. Although His work was still far from being finished, He did not return without fame. <sup>14</sup> *Then Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and news of Him went out through all the surrounding region. <sup>15</sup> And He taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all.<sup>11</sup>*

Over the years there have been a number famous of homecomings. We think of sporting heroes and other people who return home and are regarded as conquering heroes and were received with great acclaim.

Jesus came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. How would He be received? Nazareth was not known for the number of great men that came from it.

Philip said to Nathanael in John 1:45-46, *“We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote -- Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.” <sup>46</sup> And Nathanael said to him, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?”*

The Pharisees embraced all of Galilee in their disdain, saying to Nicodemus, *“Are you also from Galilee? Search and look, for no prophet has arisen out of*

*Galilee.*”<sup>12</sup> That settled the argument as far as they were concerned <sup>53</sup> *And everyone went to his own house.*<sup>13</sup>

How poorly they understood the Scriptures! No prophet out of Galilee? Scripture prophecies in Isaiah 9:1-2, ... *In Galilee of the Gentiles. <sup>2</sup> The people who walked in darkness Have seen a great light; Those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, Upon them a light has shined.* The Pharisees said that no prophet arose out of Galilee; yet the Prophet was to arise out of it.

When Joseph returned from Egypt with Mary and the Christ Child, he came and dwelt in Nazareth, *“that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene.”*<sup>14</sup>

So the Holy Spirit, through the Prophets, had indicated the importance of the fact that Jesus was to be a Nazarene. To Nazareth Jesus returned when, at the age of twelve, He had been in the Temple at Jerusalem and was subject to His parents. At Nazareth He *“increased in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man.”*<sup>15</sup>

Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit. He could not do otherwise. To Mary the angel had said, *“The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.”*<sup>16</sup> The angel of the Lord assured Joseph concerning his espoused wife, *“That which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.”*<sup>17</sup>

At the Baptism of Jesus the Holy Spirit descended on Him in a visible form, shaped like a dove, and a voice came from heaven, and said, *“You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased.”*<sup>18</sup> In the first verse of this chapter we read, *“And Jesus, being full of the Holy Spirit, returned from Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness.”*

And so Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee. The Spirit of the Lord God was upon Him.<sup>19</sup>

But how did the people of His home town receive Him? *“And they said, ‘Is not this Joseph’s son?’”*<sup>20</sup> Mark quotes them in this way, <sup>3</sup> *“Is this not the carpenter, the Son of Mary, and brother of James, Joses, Judas, and Simon? And are not His sisters here with us?” And they were offended at Him.*<sup>21</sup> Here

was the God-Man, on whom rested the Spirit of the Lord, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.<sup>22</sup>

They wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth.<sup>23</sup> To them, however, He was not Emmanuel, but only Joseph's son, the carpenter. Alas! <sup>1</sup> ***He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him.***<sup>24</sup>

Indeed, to see in Jesus no more than Joseph's son is not to receive Him. He is not an ordinary speaker of gracious words. He is not a mere Shakespeare or any other famous person you can think of. He is not a mere prophet like Elijah or Elisha. No, He is the promised Prophet of Nazareth. The demons knew Him, crying out, in Luke 4:34, ***Let us alone! What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Did You come to destroy us? I know who You are -- the Holy One of God!***

Pilate told the truth when he wrote, ***JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS.***<sup>25</sup>

On the question, ***Who are You, Lord*** Saul, the persecutor, received the answer, ***I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting.***<sup>26</sup> And it is this glorified Jesus of Nazareth on whom we fasten our eyes in the new year.

Jesus is a terror to demons and smites His persecutors to the earth. But in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, Peter and John, caused the man who had been born lame to leap up and stand, so that he entered with them into the Temple, walking and leaping and praising God.<sup>27</sup>

Indeed, we read in Acts 10:38 <sup>38</sup> ***how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.*** On Jesus we fasten our eyes with joyful confidence.

Only Jesus could do the things that He was to do, including His prophetic task to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. He was to preach, and we are to hear. The Father's voice came from heaven, ***This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him.***<sup>28</sup> Christians face the new year with joyful confidence, because they hear His Word and keep it.

## 2. Christians Face The New Year With Joyful Confidence Because They Hear His Word And Keep It

*“Come, follow Me, the Saviour spake, all in My way abiding. ... I am the Light, I light the way”* writes the hymnist.<sup>29</sup> Jesus lights the way also in the blessedness of hearing the Word of God and keeping it. To hear the Word of God one must go where it is taught.

Our text says *And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day.* The synagogue was the Jewish equivalent of our church. There the Jews heard the reading of the Law and the Prophets. For Sabbath Day we would now say Sunday. Jesus was a habitual church-goer. To go into the synagogue was His custom.

When His parents were amazed at finding their twelve-year-old Son in the Temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both hearing them and asking them questions, He said to them *“Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father’s business?”*<sup>30</sup>

Jesus, moreover, was not a passive churchgoer. He participated actively in the divine service. He heard the teachers in the Temple and asked them questions. Here at Nazareth He *“stood up to read.”* He had reached the rabbinical age at which He was permitted to do that.

Paul and Barnabas followed His example. We find them going into the synagogue at Antioch in Pisidia on the Sabbath Day; and after the reading of the Law and the Prophets Paul stood up to address the congregation.<sup>31</sup>

Times change; we no longer go into the synagogues but to church. There we hear the Word of God; there we pray, praise, and give thanks. But there too we may be active in service to others.

Hear the Word of God! When Jesus stood up to read, the book of the Prophet Isaiah was given to Him. The passage which He found and read is taken from the sixty-first chapter of Isaiah.

Some people today deny that Isaiah is the author of that chapter. They speak of a second Isaiah, who is not the true Isaiah of the Bible. Jesus removes all doubts with regard to the authenticity from the minds of those who will hear Him.

Having read a portion of the second part of the book of Isaiah, He says, ***“Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”*** With these words Jesus pronounced the quotation which He read to be the divine Word of God, given by inspiration of His Holy Spirit.

Only in this way could these words be prophetic of Christ and His work. Here, as elsewhere, Jesus put the stamp of divine authorship on the Scripture: the Law and the Prophets.

What a comfort to us as we face the new year. We have the same Scripture that Jesus had. But we have more; we also have the holy writings of the New Testament. Jesus is our Light and lights the way. With our eyes fastened on Him, we cannot go astray. We find Him in His Word; so we must hear and keep it.

In the quotation which Jesus took from Isaiah we have the Gospel. It proclaims the glad tidings of the grace of God in Christ Jesus. As Jesus addressed the people at Nazareth, it was fulfilled in their ears. He is the Messiah, the Christ, the Anointed: anointed with the Spirit of the Lord without measure.

He was anointed to preach the Gospel, the good news, to the poor, to those who were poor in the state of servitude, or so poor that they were sold into slavery for their debts. To them Jesus was to proclaim and did proclaim the year of jubilee, the fiftieth year, when liberty was proclaimed throughout all the land to all the inhabitants thereof and every man's possessions were returned to him and every man was returned to his family.<sup>32</sup>

Can you imagine the joy of those who are returned from slave labour to their families and estates? He was to heal the brokenhearted, crushed by sin and remorse; and to preach deliverance to the captives. We are reminded of the longing of the Jews when they were captives in Babylon. The Psalmist says in Psalm 137:1-2, ***1 By the rivers of Babylon, There we sat down, yea, we wept When we remembered Zion. 2 We hung our harps Upon the willows in the midst of it.*** But ***“when the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter and our tongue with singing.”***<sup>33</sup>

In ancient times the barbarous custom prevailed of leading vanquished people into captivity. The defeated were sold into slavery. From more recent observations we can readily imagine the misery of it all. What joy when the captives heard the news: *“You are free!”*

How the blind long for sight! And how those who lie beaten and wounded in prison long for freedom! Jesus was to proclaim liberty to the prisoners, heal the wounded, and give sight to the blind.

When John inquired of Jesus, *“Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?”* Jesus answered John’s disciples, *“Go and tell John the things which you hear and see: <sup>5</sup> “The blind see and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them.”<sup>34</sup>*

The miracles of Jesus testified to the fact that He is the promised Messiah, anointed with the Spirit of the Lord to do these very things. They were also to be the outward demonstrations of what He was doing in a spiritual way. He was preaching liberty to those who were in the captivity of Satan, sin, death, and hell. He was to give spiritual sight and spiritual life.

Turning again to the Epistle for New Year’s Day, we may say that Jesus was to free us from the Law and the curse of the Law to become the free and happy children of God by faith in Him. These things constitute the acceptable year of the Lord.

This acceptable year of the Lord will continue to the end of time, including also this year. The people of Nazareth demonstrated that the Lord’s Gospel can be rejected. Oh, why should it be? Who of us could be so foolish as to reject His love? His Gospel turns darkness to light, poverty to riches, captivity to freedom, and death to life. With our eyes fastened on Jesus of Nazareth and with our ears and hearts opened to His Word, we can face the new year with joyful confidence.

Let us conclude with the words of the hymnist,<sup>35</sup>

*Come then, O Lord Jesus,  
From our sins release us;  
Let us here confess Thee,*



*Till in heav'n we bless Thee. Amen*

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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- <sup>1</sup> Job 21:13
- <sup>2</sup> Isa. 27:3
- <sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. 15:52
- <sup>4</sup> Luke 4:14
- <sup>5</sup> Luke 2:21
- <sup>6</sup> Luke 1:31
- <sup>7</sup> Matthew 1:21
- <sup>8</sup> Matthew 1:22-23
- <sup>9</sup> Gal. 4:4-5
- <sup>10</sup> Galatians 3:26-27
- <sup>11</sup> Luke 4:14
- <sup>12</sup> John 7:52
- <sup>13</sup> John 7:52
- <sup>14</sup> Matt. 2:23
- <sup>15</sup> Luke 2:52
- <sup>16</sup> Luke 1:35
- <sup>17</sup> Matt. 1:20
- <sup>18</sup> Luke 3:22
- <sup>19</sup> Isa. 61:1; Luke 4:18
- <sup>20</sup> Luke 4:22
- <sup>21</sup> Mark 6:3
- <sup>22</sup> Isa. 11:2
- <sup>23</sup> Luke 4:22
- <sup>24</sup> John 1:11
- <sup>25</sup> John 19:19
- <sup>26</sup> Acts 22:8
- <sup>27</sup> Acts 3:8
- <sup>28</sup> Matt. 17:5
- <sup>29</sup> Hymn 336
- <sup>30</sup> Luke 2:49
- <sup>31</sup> Acts 13:14-15
- <sup>32</sup> Lev. 25:10
- <sup>33</sup> Psa. 126:1-2
- <sup>34</sup> Matt. 11:4,5
- <sup>35</sup> Hymn 4 v 4