

## 3<sup>rd</sup> Ordinary Year C

### Prologue and then The Beginning of Jesus' Ministry

**The law of the LORD is perfect, refreshing the soul**

**Luke 1:1-4; 4:14-21**

For readings ... see [here](#).

So where are we? ... in a pew ... in a church ... in Minnesota ... but what about from the Church's perspective ... on our yearly liturgical journey ... and what about our own spiritual journey ... Where are we?

2 weeks ago we finished the Christmas season with the Baptism of Jesus.

And then, last week, we had Jesus' first miracle, the conversion of water into wine at the Wedding at Cana ... even though Jesus said it wasn't his time yet.

Now this week, the start of the 3<sup>rd</sup> week of ordinary time, we have the beginning of Jesus' active ministry ... as written in St. Luke's Gospel. Just before today's Gospel, St Luke wrote about Jesus' temptation in the desert.

And now today the Gospel is mostly about Jesus returning to Galilee where he grew up ... as he returned from the desert and his temptations ... and going to a synagogue and reading those words from the scroll ... that Isaiah wrote ...

**“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord.”**  
**Lk 4:18-19**

These words are from the Old Testament and describe ... the coming of the Messiah ... Jesus starts his ministry ... by speaking these words with authority ... standing ... and then he sat down and said, **“Today this scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing.” 4:21** If we continue after today's Gospel ... in Luke we hear how everyone was amazed ... but then came doubts and questions like: **“Isn't this the son of Joseph?” Lk 4:22** ... Jesus strikes back ... **“Surely you will quote me ... Physician, cure yourself” Lk 4:23** ... and Jesus kept

pushing back ... his authority was questioned and he set things straight ... then ... his own town's people run him out ... as if to stone him ... kill him ... but he escapes.

Jesus speaks with authority ... after all, he is GOD ... we should take notice of this and other stories we have throughout the Bible.

Where are we on our spiritual journey? Do we follow Jesus and his Church or do we insist on being our own authority? Do we make our own judgments on what is right and wrong and good? Do we question God and his Church like his town's people ... who want to be their own authority? Do we think ... how can the Church be so behind the times and out of touch with today's "Modern" society?

In Genesis, we see Adam and Eve deny God's command and eat the forbidden fruit. They listened to the evil one instead of following God's authoritative word ... to not eat from the forbidden tree.

Years ago, I clearly remember making the decision that I would give up disagreeing and contesting the Church and just follow ALL her teachings. I started looking at that Catechism that my mother had given me when I was young. Initially, I had this uncomfortable feeling in the pit of my stomach ... what am I going to have to give up ... change ...? God gives us the strength to let go. Not only that, we are filled with a deep, profound, inner joy when we overcome our desires and truly unite and do His will, and follow His way.

Where do we get the answers? Do we look to God? ... or to CNN, Fox News, social media, public opinion, ... or just decide on our own? Are we like the townspeople that questioned and eventually chased Jesus out of Nazareth? Do we at times chase Jesus out of our lives, our family, our circle of friends, or do we invite him in and let Him drive?

In the first reading, we heard: "**Ezra the priest brought the law before the assembly, ... he read out of the book from daybreak till midday**" ... he read **for hours**. The people (the Jews) were searching for God, again, as they had strayed and were lost ... Ezra stood like Christ as he read and the people listened as they did in the Gospel. We heard:

**Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God, and all the people, their hands raised high, answered, "Amen, amen!" Then they bowed down and prostrated themselves before the LORD, their faces to the ground. ... Ezra read plainly from the book of the law of God, interpreting it so that all could understand what was read. ... Then those**

**instructing the people said: “Today is holy to the LORD your God. Do not be sad, and do not weep”— for all the people were weeping as they heard the words of the law.’ Neh 8:6-9**

Why were the people weeping? I searched through the writings of The Great Fathers of the Church ... some explain that they were primarily upset as they had broken many of the laws and felt separated from God. But Nehemiah and Ezra both exhort that they shouldn't be sad and weep. Instead, the reading ends with, **“Do not be saddened this day, for rejoicing in the LORD must be your strength!” Neh 8:10**

As popes and other Church leaders and saints have stressed over and over, if we are united with Christ, we should be joyful and not sad. The more we are united with God, the more we will experience a deep and profound joy. And, the way to achieve this union with God is through his word and instructions as the Church has worked so hard to elucidate. If we truly submit to the Church's authority and thereby follow Christ Jesus, we will experience that inner peace and joy. As we continue to journey in our spiritual lives, let us look at the Church through the Catechism, the Bible, and all of her beautiful teachings and leaders like our priests and bishops ... and continually adjust our lives to grow ever closer to Jesus who is the Way!

And I close with part of the psalm we heard between the readings:

**The law of the LORD is perfect, refreshing the soul; the decree of the LORD is trustworthy, giving wisdom to the simple. The precepts of the LORD are right, *rejoicing the heart!* Ps 19:8-9**