



My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The gospel today is a continuation of last week's gospel. Last week, we heard how Jesus went to his hometown of Nazareth and read from the book of the prophet Isaiah. The gospel concluded by saying, "**Today this scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing**" (Luke 4:21). This is where today's gospel picks up, repeating that line. Watch the transformation of the crowd, though. The crowd begins by being amazed:

And all spoke highly of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth. (Luke 4:22)

But by the end of the gospel:

When the people in the synagogue heard this, they were all filled with fury. They rose up, drove him out of the town, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their town had been built, to hurl him down headlong. (Luke 4:28-29)

In His preaching, Jesus called the people deeper in their understanding of their relationship with God. He did not want to leave them in their mediocrity. He spoke hard truths to them. And they reacted violently! Why didn't Jesus just speak things people wanted to hear? Why could He not just keep them amazed at his "gracious words."

Short answer: *Because He loved them!*

He loved them enough to want them to become so much more. He spoke truth to them in order that they might break free from their humdrum relationship with Almighty God and enter more deeply into the Wedding Feast of the Lamb (see Revelation 19:9). He knew it could prick their pride and make them react, but He loved them too much to leave them where they were.

In the second reading today, we hear that St. Paul also points to this quality in love. We often focus on St. Paul's description of love as being patient and kind (see I Corinthians 13:4), but may miss out on how love "**does not rejoice over wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth**" (I Corinthians 13:6) ... even when that truth is hard to hear! Anyone who has had to lead an intervention knows that the truth, even in love, can be hard to hear.

Many times, we expect all of Jesus' words to comfort our hearts and bring us the "warm-fuzzies." But love speaks truth – in kindness, yes, but always truth. Sometimes that loving truth is there not to comfort us, but to pull us out of our comfort zones, so that we can grow. Jesus wants us to become the saints He made us to be, and that means we can't stay where we're at – we need to be challenged to grow.

This is what He was doing in Nazareth that day. This is what He did with so many of the Scribes and Pharisees. This is what He does for us. When we hear a truth from the Church – for instance, about the sacred dignity of human life even from the point of conception, making every direct abortion an intrinsic evil; or when the Church speaks clearly on there being only two genders (male and female) and that marriage by its very nature can only be between one man and one woman – do we react with humility, asking God to form our way of thinking, or do we react with vitriol against the truth? Do we realize that this truth is given to us in love from the Heart of God, or do we reject it as did those in Nazareth?

May God open our hearts to every word of love that comes from His Heart – even when it's hard to hear.