

Congregational Study: Luke's Epiphany

January 16, 2025

Home Study: Luke 4:14-15

INTRODUCTION

Do you have any experience with returning home? Maybe you've gone back for weddings, funerals, or school reunions. Today most of us are far removed from our hometowns; but Jesus' earliest ministry activities took place only a few miles from his hometown. All the people of Jesus' time were very familiar with the miracles Jesus did. Many people were astonished, and many were afraid.

What are some of your experiences returning to your hometown? Were they pleasant? Did they people of your hometown see you as you were instead of as you are? Sometimes we try to forget where we come from. For some their hometown is filled with difficult times and challenges. Maybe it is the hometown relationship we thought that was the "one." Maybe it's the roles you portrayed, like homecoming king or queen, or maybe class president or class clown. We all are remembered in different ways when we return home.

When Jesus left Nazareth, he left as a carpenter; but Jesus returned to his home teaching with authority and wisdom as God's Son.

TODAY'S READING

Open up your Bible and read Luke 4:14-15.

What do you think it was like for the people of Nazareth to see the grown-up Jesus back in their midst?

Do you think it was difficult for them to see Jesus as a divine authority figure? What might have made this difficult?

Note that there is a very important phrase in this text: "in the power of the Spirit." After being tempted by Satan in the wilderness, Jesus is led by the Holy Spirit to return to Galilee and then to Nazareth.

Why do you suppose the Spirit led Jesus back to his hometown? Do you think Jesus and the Spirit had a dialogue about this, or do you think Jesus was just following orders? Remember, the Bible teaches us that Jesus and the Spirit are one.

Think of a time when you were in the Spirit. The Word of God takes root in our hearts by the power of the Holy Spirit. Sinners come to faith in Jesus only by the work of the Holy Spirit. Our saving faith is sparked, nurtured, and protected by the Spirit.

Can you see different ways in which you have been led by the Spirit, too, in your spiritual life?

How might you describe your current spiritual situation? Did you feel empowered in your faith?

In our daily experience, many are the times when we might feel like we are not in the Spirit. However, the Spirit dwells in our hearts, according to the Bible; and he is always at work connecting us to Jesus. If you're taking the time to read this, perhaps it is that same Spirit that led Jesus to Nazareth that is sowing a seed in your heart, and helping it to grow. You may not feel it right away, but when we remember who Jesus is and what he has done for us – with the Spirit's help -- we are ready to return home as a new creation.

PRAYER

Lord Jesus Christ, thank you for making a home for me with you. Help my heart to be good soil for the seed of your Word. Thank you for your many blessings you have given me in my temporary home. May the difficulties and pleasures of life help me to know you have prepared a place for me in eternity with you. Teach me how to generously sow your Word to all people. Amen.