

Fulfilled In Your Hearing

Neh. 8: 2-4a, 5-6, 8-10; Ps. 19; 1 Cor. 12: 12-30; Lk. 1: 1-4, 4: 14-21

When a person is accused of a crime, unless he/she pleads guilty, the case goes to trial. If all the evidence points toward an obvious verdict, it is called an 'open-and-shut' case. This means that the jury hears the evidence, deliberates for a short time, and renders a verdict quickly. The trial begins and, very soon, it ends.

In the Gospel for this Sunday, we read of another open-and-shut case. Jesus went into the synagogue in His home town of Nazareth and was given a scroll to read. He read fifty-one words from the Prophet Isaiah, closed the scroll, and sat down. With everyone watching Him intently, he said: *'Today, this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.'*

The reading from Isaiah prophesied that God would send a Messiah to deliver the Jewish people from oppression. Jesus declared that He was the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophesy. Initially, the people were impressed with the way Jesus spoke but then they remembered that He was the carpenter's son that they had watched as he was growing up and they began to doubt Him. Later their doubts turned to anger that Jesus would dare call Himself the long-awaited Messiah, anointed by God.

The people's reaction was in contrast to that of their ancestors, hundreds of years earlier, who wept as the Law of Lord was read to them by Ezra after they had returned to Israel from exile. They were so happy to hear God speaking to them through the reading of the Torah. But their descendants did not weep tears of joy when Jesus, the Son of God, spoke to them in the synagogue. Instead, they were sceptical.

Perhaps what Jesus said seemed too good to be true. The Jewish people had been conquered many times during their history and were waiting for someone to free them from their Roman oppressors. Could a carpenter's son do this? Certainly Jesus, the Son of God, could have vanquished the Romans, but He was sent for a higher purpose. He was sent to free the people from the bondage and oppression of their sins through His healing, His teaching, His compassion and His love. Jesus accomplished all of this during His short public ministry but the people did not recognize Him as the fulfillment of the prophesy.

Just as Jesus was anointed, so also have we been anointed. At our Baptism, the priest anointed us with sacred chrism saying these words: *'As Christ was anointed Priest, Prophet, and King, so may you live always as members of His body, sharing everlasting life.'* We have been anointed as members of the Body of Christ, called to continue Jesus' mission of love in the world.

St Paul tells us that each of us is equally necessary to carry out this mission, just as each part of our body is necessary to have a functioning whole. No one is more important than the other. Each member of the Body of Christ is unique with individual gifts and talents. Sometimes a person with one set of gifts is needed in a certain situation. In another situation, a person with different talents is required.

Jesus, through His ministry, brought the Kingdom of God 'near at hand'. He left this world for us to use our unique gifts and talents to bring the Kingdom of God near at hand for those that we encounter in our daily lives.