

"What Went Wrong?"

Text: Luke 4:16-30

Grace be to you and peace, from God our Father, and from our Savior Jesus Christ, who saved mankind by doing what no one else in all of human history could ever do. Amen.

Dear Fellow Christians: it is a question that both carries information and makes assumptions: "What went wrong?" Whenever you hear that question, or ask it yourself, it is always in the context of an understood plan or goal that went sideways. It is asked only when both the one asking and the one who is asked share an understanding of what was trying to be accomplished. You were trying to get somewhere or accomplish something, and it didn't happen. So what went wrong? The other *assumption* is that that understood goal was good or desirable. If, for example, someone said, "The Nazis planned to exterminate all of the Jews in Europe," only the most depraved would respond with the question, "So what went wrong?"

This is important groundwork that has to be laid as we prepare to apply this question to our text for this morning, as well as to other aspects of the Christian faith. "What went wrong?" carries information and makes assumptions – both of which need to be challenged if we are to avoid the snares that have destroyed others.

The text that will form the basis for our study this morning is found in the Fourth Chapter of St. Luke's Gospel:

ESV Luke 4:16-30 *And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read. ¹⁷ And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written, ¹⁸ "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, ¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." ²⁰ And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. ²¹ And he began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." ²² And all spoke well of him and marveled at the gracious words that were coming from his mouth. And they said, "Is not this Joseph's son?" ²³ And he said to them, "Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, 'Physician, heal*

yourself.' What we have heard you did at Capernaum, do here in your hometown as well." ²⁴ And he said, "Truly, I say to you, no prophet is acceptable in his hometown. ²⁵ But in truth, I tell you, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heavens were shut up three years and six months, and a great famine came over all the land, ²⁶ and Elijah was sent to none of them but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. ²⁷ And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian." ²⁸ When they heard these things, all in the synagogue were filled with wrath. ²⁹ And they rose up and drove him out of the town and brought him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they could throw him down the cliff. ³⁰ But passing through their midst, he went away.

This is the Word of God. May God the Holy Spirit give each of us a wise and receptive heart so that we accept these as the words of God alone, and utilize and treasure them accordingly. To this end we pray, "**Sanctify us by Your truth, O Lord. Your word is truth!**" Amen.

Has there ever been a Child of God who has not felt inadequate in one way or another (or perhaps in nearly every way)? Who ever feels that he knows enough, reads enough, studies enough of God's Word? Who believes that he prays enough, is wise enough, is strong enough in the faith? Who imagines that he can grow no more, witness no more, encourage no more? Who among us can claim perfection – or even near perfection – *in anything?*

The good news, thanks be to God, is that that is not the basis for our eternal hope and confidence. We have no perfection of any kind apart from the perfection of Jesus Christ – the goodness that was not *earned* by us but that is now *credited* to us. God the Father did not send his Son to save the good and righteous. Jesus came for sinners - wretched, helpless failures. The Lord did not look down from heaven and see strength and wisdom and compassion. He saw weakness, foolishness, and brutality. In other words, he saw each one of us as we really were – stubborn, rebellious, unlovable ingrates. God the Father's reaction? He gave his most treasured possession to redeem and rescue us.

Rejoice then, fellow sinners. You have been washed clean, and you stand now before a just and holy God without spot or blemish. You are

perfect in his sight. All has been paid by our precious Savior, Jesus Christ.

The question we ask first this morning is, *how did this happen?* In other words, since this is the condition in which we now find ourselves (justified, forgiven) God's plan for our salvation obviously worked beautifully. No one here, in other words, would ever think to look at where we were and where we now are and then think to ask, *what went wrong?* Yet when you follow the Bible's narrative of the life and death of Jesus Christ, it seemed even to his closest followers that almost nothing at all went *right*. The problem, again, was that both their assumed information and their goals were dramatically off.

We apply our question ("*What Went Wrong?*") first to our text, because something obviously seemed to go very wrong there.

It is curiously jarring, even for many Christians, to be reminded that Jesus was a church-going man. Our text begins: "**And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day.**" Many today find this simple statement disconcerting, in large part *because it flies in the face of their adoption of the devil's propaganda concerning regular church attendance.* "Yes, of course, I want to be just like Jesus, but I don't go to church because I am against organized religion." To put it a little differently, "I want to be just like Jesus, but I've decided not to do what Jesus did. I've decided not to follow his example by going to church." One of the more curious justifications is that "churches today are full of sinners and hypocrites." And yet Jesus routinely went to church with those who were not only hypocrites, but who actually tried to murder him – for speaking the truth. Our Lord's first message in our text: *Go to church.*

Still we need to ask and answer just what went wrong in that church service? From a human perspective, it's undeniable that something happened that altered the trajectory dramatically. It began with Jesus reading a text that he had preselected. Jesus looked for and found a specific text that he had in mind. We learn something from this. First, Jesus obviously hadn't wasted the time between his birth and public ministry; he had used that time to prepare. He knew his Bible, which at that time meant the Old Testament. Second, Jesus' preaching was pointed, directed. It had a purpose and a goal. He didn't just accept the scroll of Isaiah and start reading random verses, hoping that his audience would get something out of it. Third, he refused to shy away from the hard truths that had to be communicated. He gave the people what they needed, not what they wanted.

Note the progression in our text. When Jesus read: "***The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed,*** ¹⁹ ***to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor***" the people sat in rapt, adoring attention. They were captivated by this man who was saying such wonderful, positive things about them and their future. They adored him. In the words of our text: ***And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him.*** ²¹ ***And he began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."*** ²² ***And all spoke well of him and marveled at the gracious words that were coming from his mouth.*** Of course they loved him. Everyone loves an Osteen message that all is well, you are wonderful, and better times are just around the corner.

And they desperately wanted to believe what they *thought* Jesus was saying, but one thing troubled them: "***Is not this Joseph's son?***" Jesus was a hometown boy. He was known to them. They were questioning his credentials. Jesus knew exactly what they wanted: ***And he said to them, "Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, 'Physician, heal yourself.' What we have heard you did at Capernaum, do here in your hometown as well."*** By "***physician, heal yourself***" he identified their need for him to validate both his credentials and thereby also his message by performing miracles for them. Jesus refused because he refused to confirm them in their misunderstanding and unbelief. Had he then and there performed some miracle in their sight, their inevitable takeaway would have been, "***Great! Now we can be sure that all the wonderful things you said about us, and promised to us, were true and immutable.***" So what went wrong?

It depends on who you ask, doesn't it? From the world's perspective, something obviously went terribly wrong because the crowd went from loving and adoring Jesus to wanting to murder him – *in the space of two absolutely true, thoroughly Biblical, sentences.* "***But in truth, I tell you, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heavens were shut up three years and six months, and a great famine came over all the land,*** ²⁶ ***and Elijah was sent to none of them but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow.*** ²⁷ ***And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian.***" The Jews turned on Jesus the moment they came to realize that the good things that Jesus had mentioned earlier

were not promised to them, as unbelieving Jews, but to the people of faith of every people and nation. Instantly the words that had moments before tasted so sweetly of “good news” turned to bitter dust in their mouths. They knew exactly what Jesus was saying, and they instantly hated him for it. That, to the world, was what went wrong.

But what do you suppose Jesus would say if you asked him *what went wrong* during that synagogue service? I would expect him to say, “*Nothing at all went wrong.*” The words that Jesus spoke were law, and (as he knew it would) the law had its *expected* and *intended* effect on the unbelieving Jews. It’s important to recognize that nothing at all changed *during that service*. Jesus’ words of truth didn’t change those who heard them; his words simply brought the evil that was already hidden in them into the light. Jesus didn’t go there to praise those who were in good standing with God, through faith in the Promise of the Messiah. He went to remind them that they were not. In that venture, nothing at all went wrong. Jesus used the law to confront the preexisting evil and unbelief that had long before enslaved them.

Throughout the Bible, fallible human beings made faulty assumptions, only to then wonder *what went wrong* when God achieved *his* goals. Judas had a plan, which was very likely to force Jesus into starting the Zionist revolution that he had come to assume was Jesus’ mission. As events unfolded, Judas was tormented by his own personal *What went wrong?* Had Jesus had opportunity to answer, his answer could well have been, “*As far as my plan was concerned, nothing went wrong. As far as your plan was concerned, everything.*”

Nor were the other apostles immune. They were undoubtedly asking themselves the same question following Jesus’ arrest and crucifixion, “*What went wrong?*” John the Baptist effectively asked the same question from prison when he sent his disciples to Jesus. He had evidently made assumptions about Jesus’ plan, and about what carrying out that plan would look like. Where was the “fire”? Where the “justice” and the “winnowing fork” of divine retribution and punishment? *What went wrong?* Jesus’ reply: “*I’m the One. The Scriptures prophesied of me, and of the exact words and actions that you are seeing. Nothing went wrong. Your assumptions about what my work would look like are wrong. Trust me.*” The Christians in Jerusalem after Jesus’ resurrection and ascension may well have wondered the same thing. God gave them peace and prosperity for a time while they learned and grew in their faith, and then suddenly death, terror, and persecution. *What went wrong?* God’s answer: “*Nothing. You need to go now and share with the world what you have been given.*”

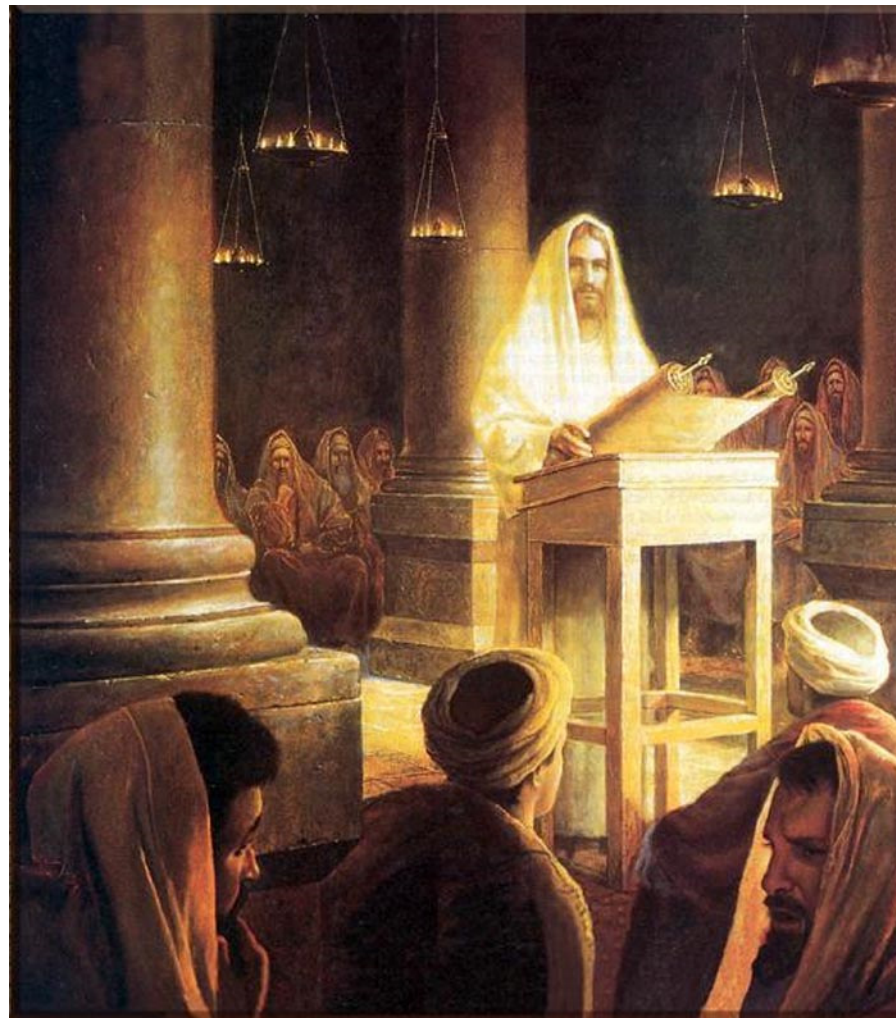
Fast forward to today. How many things in our lives today seem to be going so wrong only because we have made faulty assumptions about how things should be? “*Our finances looked so good, and now look at them! What went wrong?*” Answer: “*You are assuming, my beloved child, that what you wanted was best – that it was also what I wanted for you, what I knew to be best for you. Recognize my love in where you are now, and refocus on that one thing needful.*” Many look at the evil and the insanity that has changed our beloved country so profoundly and ask, “*What went wrong?*” Hasn’t God answered in our text? Did the evil that is now so evident just begin, or is it now finally being seen as it has long existed, masked by unappreciated wealth and prosperity, and taken for granted as a right and entitlement?

Adversity doesn’t define us. It is how we react to that adversity. God’s truth does not change, but our relationship to him is defined by our attitude toward that truth. The Jews in our text were given nothing but truth, and their reaction was to attempt to kill their Savior, their own Promised Redeemer. What went wrong with Jesus’ mission to save the world? Absolutely nothing. He accomplished exactly what he set out to accomplish by paying our sin-debt in full. He then called us to faith and has preserved us in that faith. His perfection, his forgiveness, is ours through faith. His perfect plan brought us perfection and eternal life. Finally, don’t miss the terrible alternative with which our text ends. Rejecting their Savior, driving him from his own place of worship, and then trying unsuccessfully to kill him, our text ends with these terrible, heart-breaking words: ***But passing through their midst, he went away.*** This. This, is only “gone wrong” that we absolutely cannot afford. Preserve us in our faith, dear Savior. Amen.

ESV Nehemiah 8:4ff. And Ezra the scribe stood on a wooden platform that they had made for the purpose...⁵ And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was above all the people, and as he opened it all the people stood.⁶ And Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God, and all the people answered, "Amen, Amen," lifting up their hands. And they bowed their heads and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground. ...the Levites, helped the people to understand the Law, while the people remained in their places.⁸ They read from the book, from the Law of God, clearly, and they gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading.⁹ ¶ And Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, "This day is holy to the LORD your God; do not mourn or weep." For all the people wept as they heard the words of the Law.¹⁰ Then he said to them, "Go your way. Eat the fat and drink sweet wine and send portions to anyone who has nothing ready, for this day is holy to our Lord. And do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength."

ESV 1 Corinthians 12:12-27 For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.¹³ For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body--Jews or Greeks, slaves or free--and all were made to drink of one Spirit.¹⁴ ¶ For the body does not consist of one member but of many.¹⁵ If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body.¹⁶ And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body.¹⁷ If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell?¹⁸ But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose.¹⁹ If all were a single member, where would the body be?²⁰ As it is, there are many parts, yet one body.²¹ The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you," nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you."²² On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable,²³ and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unrepresentable parts are treated with greater modesty,²⁴ which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it,²⁵ that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another.²⁶ If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.²⁷ ¶ Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.

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The Third Sunday after Epiphany – January 23, 2022

The Opening Prayer by the Pastor

The Opening Hymn – (On Screens only)

"Lord of All Hopefulness"

The Order of Service – Supplement page 12ff. (Brown Hymnal)

The Scripture Lessons: (Printed on the back page of this bulletin)

The First Lesson: (Nehemiah 8:4ff) The Christian faith was always intended by our God to be a balancing act – in many ways. There is a time to be sad and a time to rejoice; a time to sorrow over sin and a time to rejoice in forgiveness. So also in our first reading we recognize that the children of God, above all others, ought to be able to rejoice in the goodness of our God and in the joy of our salvation.

Psalm 51 (Supplement page 31) (Brown Hymnal)

The Second Lesson: (1 Corinthians 12:12-27) Our entire society works, in part, because we are not all the same. Every individual has different gifts. So God has also given a variety of gifts to His children. All are to be used to His glory and for the building up of each other. So let it be among us.

The Confession of Faith -

The Nicene Creed – revised (On Screens only)

The Pre-Sermon Hymn – (On Screens only)

"When Peace, Like a River"

The Sermon – Text: Luke 4:16-30 (Printed on the back page of this bulletin)

"What Went Wrong?"

The Offertory – (Supplement page 16 insert)

The Prayers

The Installation of the 2022 Church Council

The Pre-Communion Hymn – 307 (Stanzas 1&3) (Red Hymnal)

"Draw Nigh and Take the Body of the Lord"

The Preparation for Holy Communion (Brown Hymnal page 17)

The Distribution

The Nunc Dimittis and Thanksgiving (Brown Hymnal page 20)

The Benediction

The Closing Hymn – 655 (Red Hymnal)

"I Pray Thee, Dear Lord Jesus"

Silent Prayer

Welcome! - We warmly welcome any visitors worshipping with us this morning and invite you to join us each Sunday at this time. We are glad you are here!
To our Visitors seeking Holy Communion – In obedience to God's Word, we practice "Close Communion." This practice stresses both our concern for others, not wanting anyone to receive the sacrament to their harm (1 Cor. 11:27-30) and the importance of unity in confession and faith (1 Cor. 10:16-17). For this reason we ask that anyone who has not established this unity through membership in a CLC congregation please meet with the pastor to discuss this Scriptural doctrine before communing. This is a practice that we follow out of love and concern for you, and out of obedience to God's Word, not in judgment of anyone's Christian faith.

Attendance – Sunday (30) Average (30)

This Week at St. Paul:

Today	-9:00 a.m.	– Sunday school and Bible Class
	-10:00 a.m.	– Worship Service w/Holy Communion
	-11:15 a.m.	– Fellowship Hour
	-11:30 a.m.	– Church Council Meeting
Wednesday	-6:00 p.m.	– Confirmation Class
	-7:00 p.m.	– Midweek Bible Study
Next Sunday	-9:00 a.m.	– Sunday school and Bible Class
	-10:00 a.m.	– Sunday Worship Service
	-11:00 a.m.	– Fellowship Hour

CLC News – Teacher Andrew Roehl has accepted the call to Grace School of Valentine. Prof. John Ude has returned the call to Living Savior of Eden Prairie. Pastor Luke Bernthal has returned the call to Immanuel of Winter Haven. Berea School of Inver Grove Heights has called Teacher Michaela Winters.

Care Package – The Women of St Paul are collecting items for a care package for Griffen Fettig, who is serving in the military, and funds for a gift card for Suzannah Miller, our only student away from home. The deadline is Sunday, February 6th.

CLC Basketball Tournament – The annual CLC Basketball Tournament is scheduled for March 11-13 in Eau Claire. Prince of Peace of Hecla has a team our members could join if interested. Please contact Pastor Roehl for additional information.

Church Council Meeting – Last week's Church Council meeting has been rescheduled for this morning during the fellowship hour.