

About 2 months ago a 7.0 earthquake hit just outside of Anchorage, Alaska. Many pictures and videos have since come out to show crumbled roads and collapsed interiors of buildings. Not only was this the most significant earthquake since there since the 1960s - it also caused around 1,000 aftershocks, smaller waves that shook the surrounding area once again, putting people on edge and leaving them to wonder when, if ever, the coast would be clear again. The news of this earth-shaking event came in waves too, it didn't take long to reach national news broadcasts which would go on to keep everyone updated on the aftershocks which persisted for a week. People were scared, unsure, and in awe of this earthquake. That being said, although an earthquake is no small matter, the aftershocks are rarely as powerful as the initial strike. Like ripples from a rock being tossed into still water, they slowly fade away. But the aftershocks that came from this Alaskan earthquake definitely caught everyone's attention and reminded them of what had just happened, the power that was brought forth from the earth's foundation making one of the most substantial earthquakes in recent history.

When we open the Bible we see that God sent his own Son to shake up the foundation that sin had ruined. The impact that his son Jesus would have wouldn't just impact one specific spot but the whole world. As we approach this text in Luke chapter 4, we see Jesus travelling around the land of Israel. He was teaching every he went and his listeners were locked in and took his words to heart. Jesus ends up going to Nazareth, where he had grown up, and there he reads a scroll from the prophet Isaiah, "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

Having just proclaimed the gospel, the good news written about him, Jesus rolls up the scroll, hands it to the nearby attendant and sits down. All of this earthshaking revelation finds its climax in Jesus' next words - "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." There it is! Did you feel that one? If not, just imagine what a shock it would be to hear Jesus say those words right in front of you. The audience who was gathered there in their place of worship experienced just that. How amazing it is to hear that the Word has come to them in a couple of ways. First, part of God's Word, read from a scroll, was playing out in their presence at that very moment. In another way, the Word himself, the Word made flesh, Jesus, was there - they could listen to the Word, they could respond to the Word, they could interact with Jesus himself.

Though I doubt the voice of Jesus actually echoed there in that moment, his words resonated through the room, his words rang in hearer's ears and rippled through the whole crowd that was stunned at his words of grace. They're given that description - gracious words, and it's spot on. Jesus was telling them about his mission to save humanity, to rescue them from the perils of spiritual poverty and imprisonment by God's grace. And he said that these words were written about him so that they would put their trust in him.

We have one recorded response for us here, "Isn't this Joseph's son?" Seems to be a collective response, something that ran across the majority of the people's minds. The inquiry starts perhaps as mere confusion - "How can such a man have this kind of knowledge? How can he, of all people, claim such bold things to be true!" So the inquiry quickly turns into distrust - "There's no way I'm going to put

up with this foolishness!" A parallel account from the Gospels tells us that they took offense at him. Does familiarity breed contempt like the saying goes? Had they been conditioned, knowing about Jesus growing up and where he came from to the point that they had refused to believe his words?

See, they made presumptions. This is Joseph's son. We know his line of work. We know about his family. There's nothing special here. Ah! Got 'em! This group really messed up here! They're missing out on Jesus, the Savior! What presumptions are present in your life? I really didn't get anything out of Bible study the last time I tried it and I can't connect with everybody there, so thanks but no thanks. I know my neighbor doesn't want to talk when greet her outside or ask her about her kids so I've just stopped acknowledging her. Look, I'd love to help out those in need but you really can't trust anyone asking for a handout, they'll only take advantage. How many times have we stopped or cut off something good for our own lives or others' lives because of our presumptions?

Jesus knew the hearts of his listeners so he kept speaking. Nobody there in Nazareth was going to keep Jesus from truly making an impact by proclaiming God's message. Jesus was unafraid. He steps up to the plate and like Babe Ruth, calls his shot. He says, "Surely you will quote this proverb to me: 'Physician, heal yourself!' And you will tell me, 'Do here in your hometown what we have heard that you did in Capernaum.'" Just think how infuriating it was to the opposing pitcher when Babe Ruth pointed to the grandstands as he reached the batter's box, how sure he was that he was going to launch a homerun right there and then. That's kind of like the confidence that Jesus had, that he too was going to follow through and find accomplished exactly what he predicted.

Jesus goes on to tell them "Truly I tell you, no prophet is accepted in his hometown." Although his own words of truth were more than enough in making his point, he backs up his statement with a few Biblical proofs. There were many widows in the land of Israel, yet Elijah was sent to one who was in Zarephath, in the region of Sidon. There were a great number of folks who were inflicted with leprosy during the time of Elisha, yet the one who was cleansed was Naaman, a Syrian. He returns to giving them gracious words. Jesus proclaims them again. The gospel is reaching other parts of the world! God's power has uplifted foreigners, those who are outside of Israel.

"All the people in the synagogue were furious when they heard this." The breaking point has been reached. The barometer is starting to register - here we go! You would hope that these powerful words of Jesus would bring them to their knees to repent of their sin, that his words would cause them to praise the one who was sent to save lowly sinners. But sadly their foundation of humility is what appears to crumble, with only pockets of pride springing forth.

The mob of the masses now completely turned against him rises up, "They got up, drove him out of the town, and took him to the brow of the hill on which the town was built, in order to throw him off the cliff." They were trying to throw him out of town, literally! "But he walked right through the crowd and went on his way." More shock and awe, huh? It just keeps coming. Waves of aftershocks keep coming. I can't help but think about one particular picture from the Alaskan earthquake: there's a totally broken up road, with deep rivets on all sides and angles from the middle piece of road which is sunken in quite deep. And right there, smack dab in the middle, a red SUV sits - still upright and

seemingly untouched. There Jesus was. Surrounded by utter chaos, untouched as he moves through the crowd.

Can you see God's commitment to your salvation right here? Jesus' time had not yet come. God spared his life so that he could continue to be your substitute. The life of Jesus was sustained here so that he would continue to complete the commands of God. So that he would obey his Father's will perfectly for you. God spared Jesus' life so that he could go on to be your substitute on the cross - taking on the disgrace and the death which we deserved! In both cases, God intervened when mankind attempted to get rid of him and his authority. God kept Jesus from being overthrown and tossed off of the edge of a cliff by a hoard of angry people. God sent Jesus to go and take on what we could not - keeping his laws and taking on the insane suffering of sin so that the whole world would be reconciled to God. All for your salvation. He did everything so you would live in peace and harmony with him in heaven. No more sin, no more suffering. He paid our debts. We're free in Jesus!

Following his miraculous escape from the hostile crowd, Jesus was now free to tell more people that he is the fulfillment of the Scriptures just as he did before. He goes on to teach and preach that wonderful news on the Sabbath, the day set aside for rest and taking in the Word of God that gives rest. The people whom Jesus reached out to in that next town also had a strong reaction to his words. "They were amazed at his teaching, because his words had authority." How's that for a positive impact?

How incredible it is for us to see the power of the gospel! The impact that Jesus made is still going today much like the aftershocks in Alaska. But that earthquake hit, aftershocks ran through the ground, the news comes, the news goes. Maybe you had mostly forgotten about the earthquake in Alaska already. But the gospel is different. The gospel is different because as the gospel goes out it's not any weaker than its original point of impact or when it first touched your heart. And nothing that the Word comes in contact with leaves untouched! It will accomplish the purpose for which God sent it. No one hears "Jesus lived, Jesus died, Jesus rose, for you" and goes by unaffected. They have been reached with the gospel, the greatest force that humanity has ever heard or felt. Praise be to God for bringing us to faith in Jesus who is the author and perfecter of our faith. That impact has eternal value. Amen.