

Luke 4:14-21, 31-44 // When Jesus came to town

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[0 : 00] Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the land. He was teaching in their synagogues, and everyone praised him.

He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him.

Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written, 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 favour.

Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. He began by saying to them, Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing. And then continuing at verse 31.

[1 : 33] Then he went down to Capernaum, a town in Galilee, and on the Sabbath he taught the people.

They were amazed at his teaching, because his words had authority. In the synagogue there was a man possessed by a demon, an impure spirit.

He cried out at the top of his voice, Go away! What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us?

I know who you are, the Holy One of God. Be quiet, Jesus said sternly. Come out of him. Then the demon threw the man down before them all, and came out without injuring him.

All the people were amazed and said to each other, What words these are! With authority and power he gives orders to impure spirits, and they come out.

[2 : 37] And the news about him spread throughout the surrounding area. Jesus left the synagogue and went to the home of Simon.

Now Simon's mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever, and they asked Jesus to help her. So he bent over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her.

She got up at once and began to wait on them. At sunset the people brought to Jesus all who had various kinds of illness, and laying his hands on each one, he healed them.

Moreover, demons came out of many people, shouting, You are the Son of God. But he rebuked them and would not allow them to speak, because they knew he was the Messiah.

At daybreak, Jesus went out to a solitary place. The people were looking for him, and when they came to where he was, they tried to keep him from leaving them.

[3 : 48] But he said, I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent.

And he kept on preaching in the synagogues of Judea. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Well, good morning, St. Silas.

And if we've not met, I'm Martin Ayres, the lead pastor here. It's my privilege to take us through those verses that Michael just read for us. And you can find an outline inside the notice sheet that you find helpful as we look at these together.

And it would be a great help to me to keep your Bible open. So if it's fallen closed, or you've not grabbed it yet, it's Luke 4, page 1031 in the church Bibles. And let's ask for God's help as we turn to his word.

Let's pray together. Gracious God and loving Heavenly Father, we thank you so much that you have made yourself known to us in the Lord Jesus.

[5 : 00] And we ask this morning, you'll give us eyes to see him. You'll give us minds that can understand your word to us. You'll give us hearts willing to respond rightly to him.

For we ask in Jesus' name. Amen. We'll be coming this morning to this crucial moment in Jesus' life. As Luke tells us how he launched his public ministry.

And opening words from anyone, set an agenda. They tell you a bit about what this guy's about. My three main priorities for government are education, education, education.

That was Tony Blair when he became Prime Minister. Plan for change. I wish to show the British people that this country can still do great things.

That was Sir Keir Starmer when he became Prime Minister. Setting an agenda with opening words. From this day forward, it's going to be America first.

[6 : 05] That was Donald Trump's opening words. Opening words tell us what this guy's about. Now you might be thinking, I already know Jesus' agenda. I know what he came to do.

What's this got for me? But what I think is really striking about the scenes we're looking at today in Luke 4 is how wrong everyone else seems to get it. It seems like everyone who addresses or encounters Jesus in our scenes this morning doesn't get his agenda.

We hear an evil spirit who is totally perplexed by what Jesus is doing there. His followers try and change his agenda for him. And the people of the synagogue in his hometown are so outraged by his agenda, they try and kill him.

What would make Jesus' own words about his mission so provocative that people could respond in such a way? They could be that hostile to him.

Last week we saw Jesus' credentials. As he was baptized in the Jordan River. Now he goes up north to Nazareth, his hometown. And Luke puts our next scene out of chronological order in verse 16.

[7 : 19] Why would he do that? Why would he put next something that didn't happen next? He wants us to view the whole of Jesus' ministry through the lens of this manifesto that Jesus sets out in the synagogue in Nazareth.

And our first question is, what does Jesus say he's come to do? The big idea for us today is, he has come to proclaim good news to the needy.

So let's pick things up in verse 16. He went to Nazareth where he had been brought up. He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read.

So this is the moment where, in our church, we might say, if you could take up your Bibles from the seat in front of you, our reading is this. And in the synagogue at that time, you may have seen this in synagogues if you've visited, they have all the scrolls of the Old Testament books.

And an attendant goes up and takes the scroll down to give it to the preacher. And it's handed to Jesus. This day, it's the Isaiah scroll that's handed. And he unrolls it to chapter 61 of Isaiah.

[8 : 27] And he reads verse 1 of chapter 61, which we have here in verse 18 there of Luke 4. Now, this promise from the prophet Isaiah is at the heart of a section, a prophecy in the book of Isaiah about a wonderful future for our world and for the people who will trust God's promises.

And really, in these chapters, he promises everything that our hearts yearn for and long for. He promises peace, prosperity, communion with the living God who made us, security.

At one point, he says this, your heart will throb and swell with joy. And then at the heart of the promise, the Lord says through Isaiah these words that the servant will speak.

Now, he is the main character in Isaiah. You keep meeting him through the prophet Isaiah. It's a promised coming one who is God's servant and he is going to come and suffer for God's people. And Isaiah 61 is that servant speaking, the spirit of the Lord is on me and he's anointed me for this mission that God wants me to do for him. So for generations, seven centuries, whenever this promise was read out in the synagogue, people would have gone home for lunch together saying, we must stay hopeful.

[10 : 14] Someone is coming. He will make all things well. And so as Jesus reads it out, Luke slows it down. Did you notice that as it was ready?

He wants us to really picture it as though we were there that day. As he tells us, Jesus rolled up the scroll and he hands it back to the attendant and he sits down, which is what preachers would do to start as they were about to start their sermon.

And the eyes of everyone are fastened on him. And then he says this astonishing sermon, one sentence sermon, verse 21, today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.

In other words, the one this prophecy speaks of is now here. And from the prophecy, we learn what the task is that this promised one will do.

What has he come to do? He's a man with a message to proclaim. Did you notice that? Verse 18, it comes twice. Proclaim good news to the poor. Proclaim freedom for the prisoners.

[11:20] And then look at verse 19, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. So Jesus is not principally a healer. He's not principally an exorcist to drive out demons.

We might think, more of the miracles, please Jesus, they transform lives. There's people coming with all kinds of life-inhibiting issues. Jesus can change that.

He is changing that. Do more of it, Jesus. But he tells us, first and foremost, he is a herald of good news. So what is that good news?

And why does it matter that much? Well, we can see that from the Isaiah prophecy. And so it's worth us going back there. We're going to do that. If we just turn back in our Bibles, we're going to do a bit of work in Isaiah.

Page 747. If you just turn back there to Isaiah 59, which sets up these promises.

[12:20] So in Isaiah chapter 59, what we're seeing is the original hearers of the Isaiah promises are God's people in affliction. They've been put into exile from outside the promised land because they've been unfaithful.

And they need God to come rescue them from the terrible time they're enduring. And verse 1 of chapter 59 is so that they are not to think God cannot save us.

And they're not to think God can't hear us. Verse 1. Do you see that? Surely the arm of the Lord is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear.

That's not the issue. What is the issue? Verse 2. But your iniquities have separated you from your God. Your sins have hidden his face from you so that he will not hear.

You see that? The problem for the people that means they are afflicted is their sin. It's their rebellion against God. And that comes all through chapter 20 and then if you sorry chapter 59 and if you just flick over the page to verse 20 we get this wonderful promise.

[13:37] The Redeemer will come to Zion. Zion there just meaning the people of God. To those in Jacob who repent of their sins. Rescue is coming for people who need their sins to be forgiven.

And now Jesus is promising that. Now right in line with that he also, Jesus, is promising the dawn of a new age. So you can now just cast your eyes across in Isaiah 61 to the bit that Jesus read out that day in the synagogue verses 1 and 2 of Isaiah 61.

And just notice this is so it's so critical. Verse 2. Jesus stopped the reading mid-sentence. You see that? So look at verse 1 of Isaiah 61.

You can see the things we just had read. He is the Spirit-anointed one proclaiming good news.

Proclaiming freedom. Verse 2. He's proclaiming the year of the Lord's favor.

But he's, Isaiah 61 said he would proclaim the day of vengeance of our God. And Jesus stopped mid-sentence and he rolled up the scroll and he handed it back. Why does he do that?

[14:42] It would be natural as a reader of Isaiah 61 to think when the servant comes empowered by the Spirit he's going to do both of those things at the same time.

He's going to bring this time of favor for the people who've been waiting in faith. He's going to deliver God's people and he will judge his enemies and condemn them. And Jesus wants to pull apart those events for us to understand that in his first coming a new era has dawned which is this era we could call the year of the Lord's favor.

And we are waiting. There is a delay before the day of judgment when Christ appears in glory to judge the living and the dead and establish God's righteousness on earth and destroy his enemies.

Why is there a delay? So that the good news can be proclaimed to the needy. That's the mission.

That's the task. And we see this priority drive Jesus forward. So let's go back to Luke 4 now and we'll stay there don't worry. And in Luke 4 if we just go over the page to page 1032 on verse 43 the people in Capernaum at the end of our reading they want him to stay with them.

[16:07] He's changing their lives. And he says I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also because that is why I was sent and he kept on preaching in Judea.

Did Jesus have compassion for the physical needs of the people who were being brought to him? Of course he did. Of course he did. How important then must it be that this word this good news gets proclaimed that he would leave those needs behind and move on.

Evidently we really need this news that in Jesus God's promised spirit-filled servant king has arrived to rescue people from their sins. So who is that good news for?

Well when you look at what is promised we can see that there in verses 18 and 19 of Luke 4 he tells us he describes the people for whom he has good news.

Do you see that? The poor the prisoners the blind and the oppressed. What's really important for us to see is that in Isaiah these words are being used to describe the people of God in their spiritual need in exile.

[17 : 29] These were very fitting descriptions for the people of God as they suffered. the exile. They were poor in spirit because they lost everything in their sin.

They are described in Isaiah 59 as blind because they're spiritually darkened. They've got no way back to God that they can see. Then as captive they were physically captive in Babylon but also they're spiritually captive.

They are enslaved to sin so that when God is promising I'm going to bring you back I'm going to bring you back to the promised land they would know if they were discerning that's not actually going to solve the problem.

We're going to mess up again. We can't stop sinning and we can't stop coming under the judgment of God. And Jesus says he's come for people like that. People who are spiritually bankrupt.

It's good to understand that because I think it is reasonably easy to misunderstand Jesus' promise that he brings good news for the poor. In that there is nothing particularly virtuous about being poor in itself and there's nothing especially sinful about having money in itself.

[18 : 43] We're going to see in Luke's gospel that there are all kinds of spiritual dangers with having money but it's not in itself a sin to have money and in Luke's gospel all kinds of people get rescued by Jesus rich people and poor people.

In the next chapter that we'll look at next week Simon Peter owns a fishing business but he's rescued by Jesus because he is willing to admit he is spiritually poor.

He says I'm a sinful man. In Luke chapter 19 he meets Zacchaeus maybe he's the richest man in Jericho he's the chief tax collector he's wealthy but he knows he needs Jesus he climbs up a tree to see him Jesus rescues him.

He admits his spiritual poverty. The essential requirement there it is do you know that you are in spiritual need? And this helps us answer our second question today why do his hometown take it so badly?

If you just look down we didn't have this bit read but it starts so well verse 22 they speak well of him but when they say in verse 22 isn't this Joseph's son it's the voice of skepticism they're not on board with Jesus he then says to them that they want a sign that's what they're thinking verse 23 do here what you've done in Capernaum but that betrays this kind of sense of entitlement that they've got before Jesus and so Jesus gives them this very sobering warning from Israel's history he mentions in verse 25 that there were many widows in Israel in Elijah's time Elijah was a prophet in the Old Testament Israel was going through a terrible time they rejected God they were worshipping an idol Baal and they were in a famine under God's judgment and God sent his saving prophet

[20 : 45] Elijah to the region of Sidon far away from the people of God and Elijah met a widow there and she was about to die and her son was about to die they had one meal left and Elijah makes a promise to them from God that he will rescue them and it's a hard promise to believe and she takes God at his word and she gets rescued this foreign woman a pagan woman who puts her faith in the living God and then Jesus raises the example of Naaman in verse 27 there were many in Israel with leprosy in the time of Elisha the prophet yet not one of them was cleansed only Naaman the Syrian so Naaman was a foreign he was an enemy of God's people he was a foreign commander but he had a slave girl who was an Israelite and he had leprosy and she told him there was a man of God in Israel he could go to and he traveled there and he was given a message that was very humbling from Elisha go and wash in the river seven times but he took God at his word and he humbled himself and he washed and he was cleansed he was rescued but here's the lesson here's the pattern for the people who were skeptical in Nazareth that day who have their

Bibles beware that God's mercy doesn't overlook you and go out to the foreigners who are willing to admit their spiritual need and you for all of your religious privilege bar yourself because of your sense of entitlement from being rescued well the people in Nazareth don't like it one bit and that's what leads to verse 28 imagine this over coffee time after church here if I did a sermon that clearly said Jesus mission and this was the response verse 28 the people in the synagogue were furious

verse 29 they got up drove him out of the town took him to the brow of the hill on which the town was built in order to throw him off the cliff but he walked right through the crowd and went on his way so Jesus has come for the spiritually impoverished and ironically religious privilege can become a barrier to receiving him if it makes someone think

I don't need the rescue everyone else needs I've earned my way with God so they're deeply offended and religious obedience religious affiliation can be dangerous today if we're someone who over time starts to drift into thinking because of the ways I've served Jesus in my life I've got something to offer to God I deserve something back rather than remembering the pattern every day is I'm a spiritual beggar but I came to Jesus and he gave me the bread I need he is my rescuer the news that Jesus has come to rescue us is momentous good news but it takes humility to accept it that on our own we're bankrupt before God we're captive to sin we're in darkness and the most dangerous thing we could think today when we hear Jesus came to rescue the needy is no thanks I'm fine there are other things not just religion that could be a barrier of course to being willing to admit our spiritual poverty and one of those things is money I think that's one of the ideas in Luke is that material riches can become a barrier for people thinking I'm in need here I need Jesus and I see that all around us today in Glasgow people who have money and so they're not in the habit of thinking they need anything from anyone and it's difficult for them to receive a message that says they need a rescue when it comes to God in the same way if you're morally respectable if you are successful it can be hard to humble yourself before Jesus message that it's good news for the poor and your poor spiritually I think sometimes in church life we see this the wrong way around so we might meet someone at church who has a background where by society's standards they hit rock bottom in their life by the way society would view it that maybe they were homeless they were caught in addiction they'd been to prison and we see them worshipping

Jesus and celebrating Jesus and we look at that and we'll say what a miracle isn't that an absolute miracle the transformation in their life and it is a miracle anyone who follows Jesus has their life transformed that is a miracle but in a sense we should be thinking how astonishing it is the miracle when the person we meet at church is someone who society would look on as a success story the person who has always been everything that people told them they should be everything people expected of them they've delivered and it was such a challenge for them to have the humility to say spiritually I came to realise I'm a total mess I am bankrupt I'm blind I'm enslaved to sin and then I came to realise Jesus came to rescue people like me it's a miracle it takes great humility and so we ourselves are not to think for my success in life that I can transfer that category to how I stand before

[26 : 42] God and yet so encouragingly we can think if I've hit rock bottom in life Jesus is for me great message for our S6 graduates we just said thank you to and prayed for earlier on in our service that wherever you go if you think spiritually you've messed it up Jesus is for you if you think you hit rock bottom Jesus is for you this scene also points us forward right through to the destiny for Jesus that as soon as he announces his public ministry people want him dead but his mission actually will culminate in that because he's heading to Jerusalem where by being put to death he can die for the sins of his people so that through his spiritual poverty on the cross we can become rich from him but his hometown are hostile so then let's move on to our third question this morning what does it look like when Jesus gets to work in verse 31 he goes down to

Capernaum literally down it's 2000 feet from the cliff that they've just tried to throw him off down to by the sea of Galilee to Capernaum and on the Sabbath we see that all is really not well among the people of God look what's happening right at the heart of their worship gathering in verse 33 in the synagogue there was a man possessed by a demon an impure spirit we've already seen around Jesus that something so cosmically significant was happening angels were there at his birth and we also see this concentration of demonic activity going on around Jesus and this episode shows us what a terrible enemy evil is that even as believers gather in the synagogue a demon has someone in captivity but the demon is terrified by Jesus he cries out what do you want with us have you come to destroy us and what we see here is the extraordinary authority of Jesus words he just has to speak look at verse 35 be quiet

Jesus said sternly come out of him and the demon has to yield he leaves the man strikingly unharmed because Jesus is putting that man right he's restoring him from the power of evil now it might seem strange to some of us in Glasgow in 2025 to be talking here about demons and spiritual activity in our scientific age but you and I know that all around us evil is a real and terrible force in

our world and when we encounter the depths of it in people who are so terribly harmed by violence people who live in fear people trapped by addiction people ruined by abuse enslaved by human trafficking people maimed in reckless war the bible helps us here make sense of it by explaining for us what when these things seem so inexplicable to us how awful people can be the bible tells us that what we can't see the hidden problem here is that under the surface there are powerful spiritual forces at work in our world luke wants us to see and to know the demonic is real but he also wants us to be reassured that jesus is so powerful he can deal with it just by a word and so we can be reassured that this man really can keep god's promise that one day he'll crush evil forever and establish a place where nobody will ever need to be afraid again now in the next scene we move on from evil to suffering it's the same day jesus goes to simon's home and simon's mother-in-law has this high fever which in those days would mean potentially imminent death but again it's jesus words that are so powerful verse 39 he just rebukes the fever and it leaves her and she gets up completely restored and word starts to spread about the town now it's a sabbath day you can't do any work you can't carry a mat you can't move sick people around you've got to wait for sunset just picture this whole community with people who have life-changing sickness and suffering like any community and the news is being passed from house to house that the man in the synagogue that morning jesus has the power to heal people and they're all waiting in their homes looking out at the sky waiting restlessly for dusk for the moment they can safely carry their sick relatives to him and we read verse 40 at sunset the people brought to jesus all who had various kinds of illness and laying his hands on each one he healed them notice friends how promiscuous he is with his healing power when jesus comes to town the junior doctors can go on strike and none of us would even notice it would make no difference the hospitals are empty and take the two scenes together he goes from the synagogue and spiritual warfare to gently healing in the home so that we know we can trust jesus for the great cosmic battle against evil and also for our personal pain whatever that might be everywhere he goes he does it well and wonderfully these scenes here this day in the life of jesus is like a movie trailer for the future i don't know what you think of movie trailers i looked up this week the best movie trailers of

all time above citizen cain and harry potter number two was brave heart second best movie trailer of all time and top rated was the batman movie the dark knight as the best movie trailer ever now some of us don't love movie trailers because they often give away too much of the story but at their best what a good movie trailer does is it doesn't spoil the story and it gives you a sense of the atmosphere of the movie the vibe so that you watch the trailer and you go oh that looks good i'm seeing that i can't wait to see that well luke shows us here a day in the life of jesus to be a trailer for the future if you stick with him there'll be no more sickness there'll be no more suffering there'll be no more death there'll be no more evil there'll be no more sin and we're to see the vibe that day in capernaum and think i can't wait to be there it shows us doesn't it as well that we're not to think something we might be tempted to think which is i'm hearing that jesus has come on this mission to save me from a spiritual problem my sin so i'll trust him for that but there's this whole load of other stuff going wrong in the world that he seems irrelevant for what about all the suffering what about all the evil what about the poverty do i need something else to put my hope in to deal with those things well when we see jesus at work that day we see his salvation is a mega salvation it's a great salvation it's an everything salvation a whole world put right salvation he's got the power and the plan to deal with everything that's gone wrong in our world and so it leaves us in the same place as the people of verse 36 if you just have a look at how they respond to him there all the people were amazed and said to each other what words these are with authority and power he gives orders to impure spirits and they come out and the news about him spread throughout the surrounding area the good news is spreading because here is an awesome savior and when you've been amazed by what you've seen of him how could you not just speak how could that not flow out from you as to how amazing he is so as jesus moves on the next day in verse 43 we've already seen at the end that he continues that mission that he told us he's here to do he must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God that is why he has been sent and that was his agenda then and he's got the same agenda for us as his people today we move into acts the story of the early church and the spirit comes on all believers because we are sent out to make known to the nations the good news of

Jesus and so amazed by Jesus we are to speak of him and make him known that should direct the mission of us as a church we see in his posture towards those who are sick and suffering a compassion that we're to have as a church towards the needs of people around us whatever they

may be that would only be fitting with the compassion of Jesus but we also see that the mission that we should really line up the direction of our church behind is we're here to proclaim the good news for lost sinners that Jesus has come to forgive us that's his rescue mission let's make that the agenda of our church and let's make it our agenda as well I was talking to one of our small group leaders earlier this year we were talking about different areas of church life and I was encouraged when he said to me I'd like to be more involved in the mission evangelism side of things not because I know I'm good at it I know I'm kind of not very good at it but I see how important it is [37:13] I can see how important that is so we want to shape our church like that we want to shape our lives like that making Jesus agenda our agenda this project of proclaiming the good news about him let's pray together heavenly father we thank you so much that you've sent Jesus your spirit anointed servant and that he came with this wonderful message for us who are spiritually poor the good news of forgiveness of sins restoration a glorious future thank you that the year of your favor has dawned and so father by your spirit may you equip us encourage us empower us to be ambassadors for him that amazed by him ourselves we would share him boldly confidently and we pray heavenly father that you would draw more people to see to the to have the conviction that spiritually we are blind and oppressed but

Jesus can give us sight and set us free we ask these things in Jesus name amen