



*The unfolding of your words gives light.*

## To Seek and to Save

### *An Exposition of the Gospel of Luke*

<sup>14</sup>And Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit<sup>a</sup>, and news about Him spread through all the surrounding district<sup>b</sup>. <sup>15</sup>And He began teaching in their synagogues and was praised by all<sup>c</sup>.

<sup>16</sup>And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up<sup>d</sup>; and as was His custom, He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, and stood up to read<sup>e</sup>. <sup>17</sup>And the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. And He opened the book and found the place<sup>f</sup> where it was written,

<sup>18</sup>“THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME,  
BECAUSE HE ANOINTED ME TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR.  
HE HAS SENT ME TO PROCLAIM RELEASE TO THE CAPTIVES,  
AND RECOVERY OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND,  
TO SET FREE THOSE WHO ARE OPPRESSED,  
<sup>19</sup>TO PROCLAIM THE FAVORABLE YEAR OF THE LORD<sup>g</sup>.”

<sup>a</sup> 4:14 **Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit.** Galilee—specifically Nazareth—was Jesus’ home. Just as the Spirit had taken Jesus to Judea and the wilderness for His “ceremonial initiation,” He brought Jesus back home for most of His “hands-on” ministry. The Holy Spirit took the Lord Jesus to people in need (poor, captives, blind, oppressed) and anointed Him to meet their need with preaching.

It is worthy to note that these events took place after the Assyrian captivity in what used to be the northern kingdom. The north had been re-populated by Gentiles and Samaritans and was not at this time full of Torah-observant Jews who went on pilgrimage to Jerusalem three times a year.

<sup>b</sup> 4:14 **news about Him spread through all the surrounding district.** He had likely already performed miracles (John 2) as well as taught, as is implied in verse 23.

<sup>c</sup> 4:15 **He began teaching in their synagogues and was praised by all.** People liked to hear Jesus teach. That sentiment would not last long for some of the listeners. Even vile men enjoy an effective communicator. Herod Antipas liked to listen to John the Baptist, but he was too weak to prevent John’s beheading (Mark 16:20).

<sup>d</sup> 4:16 **He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up.** This was the hometown crowd. Here were people with whom Jesus played as a child as well as their parents.

<sup>e</sup> 4:16 **as was His custom, He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, and stood up to read.** The Lord Jesus was recognized as a teacher in the synagogue. He was in the habit of not only attending synagogue services but also leading them.

<sup>f</sup> 4:17 **the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. And He opened the book and found the place.** The word translated “book” is the source of our word “Bible,” and refers to a scroll. Jesus had no chapter divisions in His Bible, but the passage He found was Isaiah 61:1-2.

<sup>g</sup> 4:18-19 **The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed, to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord.** There are several first person personal pronouns here. The word “Me” originally referred to Isaiah but here it is also talking about Jesus.

Isaiah wrote during the strength of the Assyrian empire. The Assyrians had already taken away the northern tribes of Israel and were threatening Judah in the South.

So much of prophetic Scripture was written with more than one fulfillment. For example, In Isaiah 7:14 the virgin who would conceive was not only Isaiah’s wife but the mother of Messiah. Here in chapter 61 Isaiah offered hope for those who were oppressed by Assyria, but Jesus used the same words to point to an even deadlier enemy.

The Gospel of Luke  
Steven Svendsen, Sr.

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<sup>20</sup> And He closed the book, gave it back to the attendant and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on Him<sup>a</sup>. <sup>21</sup> And He began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing<sup>b</sup>."<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup> 4:20 **He closed the book, gave it back to the attendant and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on Him.** Do not picture Jesus taking a seat among the people because that is what we do. When He sat down He sat down in the teacher's chair. This is what Jesus also did when He taught in the temple (Matthew 26:55).

<sup>b</sup> 4:21 **He began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."** It is important to interpret the Bible historically and grammatically, but look how Jesus handled this text. It is not a violation of literal biblical interpretation to see a text with a historic foundation find its fulfillment in Jesus Himself. Jesus said He would be the fulfillment of the law (Matthew 5:17). Isaiah pointed to the hope of return from Babylon, but Jesus says the text also pointed to His earthly ministry. I do not think Isaiah could have understood that his words would find their fulfillment in an obscure village in northern Israel.

The people may have been expecting something very different. They were no doubt well taught in the synagogue about the power of God in repeatedly delivering Israel from her enemies. What many of them missed is that the real enemy is sin. The trouble is not Egypt, Assyria, Rome, Russia or Al Qaeda. It is us. It must have been a moment that left some congregants puzzled, some angry and still others shaken. The work of God was visibly intersecting the human experience. This still happens.

<sup>c</sup> 4:14-21 Imagine a sick friend calling you and asking for help with some household jobs she is unable to do. Then imagine yourself telling her you will not help but you will preach the sermon on compassion you heard in church on Sunday. Of course the problem with that scenario is that you would be using preaching a sermon on compassion as an excuse to avoid showing compassion.

The primary activity of the Lord was to preach; to issue a proclamation. "Preaching" has fallen on hard times because people think preaching is synonymous with long tirades of harshness and judgment. That is not what Jesus did when He preached.

Jesus carries on His work today through the Church. The purpose of the Church to bring glory of God, but what does that look like? Compassion ministries are important in living out the gospel and giving us a platform from which to preach it. The mission itself, though, is to preach the gospel. Here are some reasons why the Church needs to prioritize the preaching of the gospel:

1. Preaching the truth was the primary work of Jesus. That's what Jesus did in the synagogues. He came to die for sinners, but people had to hear preaching in order to understand why He had to die. Preaching took up the bulk of what our Savior did during His earthly ministry.

He said to them, "Let us go somewhere else to the towns nearby, so that I may preach there also; for that is what I came for." Mark 1:38

When Jesus performed a miracle He did it to communicate a point (compare the feeding of the multitudes in John 6:1-14 with the sermon that followed in John 6:26-40). Paul had the same philosophy (1 Corinthians 1:17).

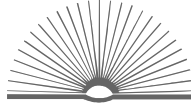
2. Preaching the truth is the only way people experience real change. How do poor people stop being poor? They have to realize what poverty really is. They have to hear about something better than the earthly things they have put their hope in. Too much of what we do looks like we are trying to convince people to buy something. Let's invite people to church, but let's make sure they know we are offering something more than a better marriage or superficial friendships. We are offering life changed they have never had the power to achieve.
3. Preaching the truth is the only way find deliverance from bondage. This release of captives had an immediate fulfillment in Isaiah's prophecy, but it pointed to Christ. You

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- know people who are slaves to fleshly passions, who live for the next thing they can afford to buy, who are so wrapped up in making themselves look good that they are blind to anything outside their selfish world. It is not an extra-biblical ceremony that sets captives free. It is the careful ministry of the word of God.
4. Preaching the truth is the only way unbelievers can see the truth. Jesus quoted Isaiah's prophecy of blind people seeing. He certainly healed the blind, but this day there were no recorded miracles. The preaching of the gospel brings the regeneration that opens eyes (see John 3:3 and John 9:25). The very best techniques of persuasion are no match for the message of the cross. That is why Jesus commissioned Paul to carry a message that would open eyes (Acts 26:18).

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