

Jesus' Mission as the Son of God

Luke 4:14-30

What is the best sermon you have ever heard? I can think of a handful that have had a special impact on my life and none of them are my sermons. I have often thought back to them and considered how they impacted me at key times in my life. I remember the sermon I heard when I came to faith in Christ. I remember the sermon the Lord used when I was in college to bring me out of a period of rebellion. I remember later that year hearing the sermon that God used to call me into the ministry. I will never forget those sermons and a few others as well.

Yet, I must say, I have never heard a sermon like the one Jesus preached in the text we are going to study. Of all the sermons I have heard preached, I have never heard a preacher use himself as the application of the sermon. Yet, this is exactly what Jesus did in this text. The truth is that Jesus is the ultimate application to every sermon.

Last Sunday we learned that Jesus' mission as the faithful Son of God as our High Priest was to endure horrific temptations from the devil yet He never gave in to sin. **Hebrews 4:15-16** says, "*For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.* ¹⁶ *Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*"

This morning we will see Jesus' mission as the Son of God was to be the Prophet God sent to proclaim the good news to those bound by sin and set them free. **Main point:** *Jesus' mission as God's faithful Son was to proclaim the good news of salvation with sinners so that we would believe it and then begin to share Him with others.* What we are going to do this morning is work through the passage and make application at the end. Let's work through **vv. 14-30**.

I. Work through vv. 14-30 in the three main blocks of text

A. Verses 14-15:

- Luke is introducing the reader (us) to Jesus' ministry. Jesus had already been preaching and ministering in the region. He had gained quite a reputation as a good preacher and He had healed many people. His fame went before Him and now He comes to His hometown of Nazareth and He does what every Jewish man does that day—He goes to church. This was His custom. His spiritual habit.

B. Verses 16-21:

A. Verses 22-30:

The people and Jesus' family were offended by Him: The parallel to this story is also found in Matthew 13:54-58, "*And coming to his hometown he taught them in their synagogue, so that they were astonished, and said, 'Where did this man get this wisdom and these mighty works?' ⁵⁵ Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? And are not his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? ⁵⁶ And are not all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all these things?' ⁵⁷ And they took offense at him. But Jesus said to them, 'A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and in his own household.' ⁵⁸ And he did not do many mighty works there, because of their unbelief.*" A shorter version is also recorded in Mark 6:1-4

II. Implications and Application of our Text:

As we make application to our text we need to hold two things together: the message of the sovereignty of God in salvation given by the Son of God and the response of the people to His sermon.

The people rejected both the message and the messenger of God in the passage. The message and the messenger cannot be separated. Jesus is the messenger and the point of the message so rejection of the message means rejecting the Savior. Sadly, it is not just the first century Jews who still reject the messenger and the message. Even today sinners still stumble over the cross of Christ and believe it is foolishness.

Even though the people rejected Jesus and His message that did not keep Him from accomplishing His mission. Likewise, even today rejection of the gospel by others does not excuse us from believing it or excuse us from sharing it. In light of this, want to consider three points of application.

1. The mission of the Son of God was to preach the good news that He is salvation so that we will believe in Him.

- a. **We have a priority to preach the gospel.** Jesus came preaching. The Son of God was a preacher and He came proclaiming the good news of salvation. Jesus is the Servant spoken about in **Isaiah 61:1-2** and He came preaching that message of salvation with Himself as the application.

The application of Himself is that He saved us by living a perfect, sinless life to fulfill the Law and covenants and earn our righteousness. You see not only was His death our substitute but the life He lived was our substitute. As our substitute on the cross, the wrath of God was poured out on Him for our sins. By His death on the cross our debt was paid and an eternity of righteousness was earned. Finally, He was buried in a tomb and rose from the dead on the third day breaking the power of sin and death over us. This is the gospel and it is the message we most need. Yet herein lies the problem. We do not realize our condition and need. Jesus came to tell us of our need. The gospel He preached addresses our need of Him.

b. How did the gospel Jesus preached in this text address our desperate condition?

- i. **The gospel addresses our condition of spiritual poverty: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me . . . to proclaim good news to the poor."**

When the people of Jesus' day heard Him say His message was *good news to the poor* they most certainly thought of their material poverty. Yet, Jesus was aiming at something deeper than the problem of material poverty. He was aiming at our spiritual poverty, which is much deadlier than material poverty.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said something very similar to this text when He said, *blessed are the poor in spirit*. He wants us to realize that we are spiritually bankrupt. We are the poor in spirit and we have nothing that makes us acceptable to God in and of our own spiritual strength or ability.

Yet, our spiritual poverty does not mean our account is low and even at zero. In reality, we are way overdrawn and so deep in debt because of our sin that we will never be able to even zero out our account with God.

But, why does Scripture illustrate spiritual poverty with material poverty? Poverty usually translates in to sensitivity and humility. Those who are materially poor tend to sense their need in the greatest way. The poor realize their need and that they are dependent on help from someone. Therefore, Scripture illustrates spiritual poverty with material poverty to help us understand our

desperate condition. Also, as a result, people who are materially poor are more responsive to the gospel because they understand what real need is better than people who are wealthy. The poor understand and desire to be delivered from their poverty.

Material wealth tends to mask the condition of spiritual poverty. The ache in a person's heart and soul is often deadened by anesthetic of prosperity. With all of our material needs met and governmental social services that fill in the gap where the church used to step in people do not realize their great need for a Savior. Jesus said it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a wealthy man to go to heaven. Why? The wealthy are not humble and do not realize their condition.

When the bank account is fat, the fridge is full the prospects of living a good life are real. Wealthy people do not sense their need for a Savior because they can provide for themselves. Wealthy people have a harder time grasping spiritual bankruptcy when they never need help. Wealthy people have a harder time grasping their debt of sin when they are living the good life.

Friends the debt of sin kills not just now but for all eternity. We must come to terms with our GREAT need for a Savior and that our best efforts and righteousness are like smelly, filthy, rags before the Almighty, Holy, Righteous God.

ii. **The gospel Jesus preached addresses our condition of bondage: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me . . . to proclaim liberty to the captives."**

The Greek word for captives in v. 18 literally means *prisoner of war*. The truth is that we are held captive by all kinds of evil passions, evil desires, foolish pleasures, sinful lusts and selfish ambitions. We are literally like spiritual prisoners of war.

Jesus is the Hero who came to proclaim liberty to the captives and He died to set us free. By His death on the cross, our sins are totally and completely forgiven; **by His resurrection**, the power of sin is broken and **through the gift** of His Holy Spirit we have been given the power to pursue holiness. As Charles Wesley's hymn says:

*He breaks the power of cancelled sin
He sets the prisoner free;
His blood can make the foulest clean;
His blood availed for me.¹*

This is why we need to preach the gospel to our hearts every day. We need to be reminded that we are free at last.

iii. **The gospel Jesus preached addressed the condition of our blindness: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me . . . to proclaim . . . recovery of the sight of the blind."**

This is a mighty spiritual promise Jesus preached. In fact, Jesus explained Paul's ministry to him by saying, *"I am sending you to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me"* (**Acts 26:17b-18**).

¹ Charles Wesley, 1739.

Jesus certainly healed those who were physically blind but His aim was to not simply alleviate their suffering. After all, Jesus did not heal every blind person in Israel. He healed blind people to show people that He was the promised the Servant of **Isaiah 61:1-2**. Jesus' mission was to preach the good news so that the spiritually blind would have their eyes opened to their sin and they would turn to Him in faith.

Friends, sin is the leading cause of blindness in the world. Sin blinds us to the word of God, the beauty of God, and our need of salvation in Jesus Christ. We will not see the truth and beauty of Jesus until He cures us of our spiritual blindness. His Spirit must open the eyes of our hearts so that we see our condition and we call out to Jesus for salvation.

Until Jesus opens our eyes we will hold to all manner of sin thinking it is beautiful. I always remember John Piper's illustration of spiritual blindness. He said it is like being in a room that is pitch black and holding onto our sin like it is something lovely. We will stroke it like it is a beautiful, soft cuddly kitten but when our eyes are opened it is like the light is turned on and we realize what we were holding was a nasty cockroach.

In our spiritual blindness, we will hold to death thinking it is life. In our blindness, we think we are holding onto a life preserver not realizing it is really an anchor that is dragging us to the bottom of the sea.

iv. **The gospel Jesus preached addresses our condition of brokenness: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me . . . set at liberty those who are oppressed."**

The root idea of the word *oppressed* is "broken pieces" or "shattered" or "crushed." This verse is not in **Isaiah 61:1-2a** but is found in **Isaiah 58:6**. So, to complete the application of His sermon, Jesus quoted **v. 6** from **Is. 58**, which summarizes our spiritual condition as "*oppressed*." Jesus is still preaching to those who are crushed by life's circumstances, who can see no way out, who find living life to simply be oppressive.

Jesus is the Hero who sets us free from the oppression of sin's spiritually bankrupt. He is still freeing the spiritual prisoners of war and opening the eyes of the spiritually blind. He rescues us by helping us see our desperate spiritual condition so that we will turn to Him for salvation.

v. **Jesus' mission was to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor and transform our spiritual condition.**

The application to Jesus' sermon is still the same: do we believe it? What about you? Are you glad that Jesus came to preach the good news to you or does it offend you that you are confronted with your sin? How you respond will tell you what you understand about your spiritual condition. It will tell you what you need to do in response to Jesus' sermon.

Friend, if you have not trusted Christ then you might be hostile toward the message Jesus preached. The people who heard Jesus preach this message got very angry or you may just be indifferent, which is still rebellion none the less. Whether you are angry or indifferent the fact is you are rejecting Jesus. You need to pray and ask God to work in your heart and mind. Pray that He draws you to Himself for life and freedom. Jesus gives life to the spiritually dead.

Brother and sister in Christ, if you love Jesus then you have been set free. Worship Jesus in gladness and rejoice at His mercy toward you for you had no spiritual ability to set yourself free.

Worship Him in spirit and in truth for His great mercy has been poured out on you not because of anything you did or deserve but because of His great mercy, kindness and grace.

2. The mission of the Son of God is now our mission—to preach the good news to sinners.

Church we need to realize that the same Spirit that anointed Jesus to preach the gospel has been poured out on us to do the same. We are beggars telling other beggars where to find bread. We must continually remember that we were blind, broken and captive sinners who have been set free from the penalty and power of sin by Jesus and now He has commissioned us to go to those who are still in the chains of sin.

I am referring to preaching in two ways: First the mission of the church is to correctly and faithfully preach the gospel in our Sunday gatherings. Christ has commissioned the church to be His mission outpost to correctly and faithfully proclaim the gospel week in and week out.

As a church, we must understand the centrality of preaching. There is so much preaching today that is called gospel preaching but in reality, it is not gospel preaching. There are gifted preachers who proclaim an uplifting message and that perhaps it is filled with lots of advice and practical advice but the gospel is never mentioned. The cross of Christ is not held high. We must understand that the person and work of Jesus must always be the central message of the sermon and the ground of the application of the sermon.

Secondly, I am referring to preaching in the sense that we are all called to share the gospel with others. With this kind of preaching what I mean is that the Spirit of the Lord has been poured out on His people and all of God's people proclaim the gospel. God has put God's people in places where they can be lights in hard place because there will be people who will reject the gospel.

Some of us will never leave Iowa our whole lives but our mission is still to preach the gospel in our conversations, in our prayers, and in whatever context of life God places us.

- College students on your hall in your dorm or apartment you are called to share the gospel there. Perhaps a student is struggling and you begin a conversation with him or her and they begin to share their struggles. Perhaps all you do is offer to pray for them but over time it allows for more conversation. Perhaps you are a Navigator and you are leading a Bible study on your hall and you keep inviting the person who is resistant but finally they come and hear the gospel and trust Christ.
- In our neighborhoods, we can faithfully present the hope of the gospel in Christ by having gospel conversations. We do not have to hold a revival but over time, sometimes even years, our neighbors will hear and see evidence of the person and work of Christ in us.

Some of us will be called to other parts of the country through our jobs or by some other means and in those places, we are called carry out the mission of the Son of God in those places.

- When we move to those places it is important to find a gospel preaching church as soon as possible and join it and begin to share the gospel in that context of life with that church body.

Finally, some of us will be called to other parts of the world to take the gospel where Jesus has yet to be named. Some of you will be called overseas to take the gospel to all manner of people groups.

In all of the places where we will preach the gospel, there will be people who will receive the message with joy and those who will reject it. We must remember what Jesus said that it is not us they are rejecting but Him. It may feel like it is us and we may receive the brunt of the rejection but this is hostility toward the good news of salvation through Christ. It is rebellion against God.

Brothers and sisters, we are not looking to go to places where it is easy. God called Jesus to go to His home town, to His family, to His friends and also to Jerusalem and He was rejected and eventually killed. Just because the calling is to a hard place does not mean we should not go. Just as Jesus' mission was to go to hard places to proclaim the good news we must follow in His steps.

The question for our church is: are we proclaiming the gospel? Are we faithfully scattering gospel seeds through our preaching on Sunday mornings, in our Bible studies, and through our ministries? Are we scattering gospel seeds in our neighborhoods, work, and whatever context of life we live? Let's be a church that is faithfully proclaiming the year of the Lord's favor to a lost and dying world no matter their ethnicity.

3. The mission of the gospel calls us to spiritual and social transformation.

Here is what I mean. I am not referring to a social gospel and nor am I talking about the raging debate over social justice. I am talking about this text. Jesus quoted from **Isaiah 58:6** in the last line of **Luke 4:18**: "*to set at liberty those who are oppressed.*" The application of Jesus' sermon was a rebuke of the Jews for not caring for those who were literally poor, in prison, blind and oppressed.

Listen to the context that surround it. 58:6 (Isaiah 58:3-7): "*Why have we fasted, and you see it not? Why have we humbled ourselves, and you take no knowledge of it? Behold, in the day of your fast you seek your own pleasure, and oppress all your workers. ⁴ Behold, you fast only to quarrel and to fight and to hit with a wicked fist. Fasting like yours this day will not make your voice to be heard on high. ⁵ Is such the fast that I choose, a day for a person to humble himself? Is it to bow down his head like a reed, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? Will you call this a fast, and a day acceptable to the Lord? ⁶ "Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the straps of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? ⁷ Is it not to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh?"*

The biblical illustrations that Jesus used from the Old Testament were illustrations where God's good news for the spiritual need was illustrated in the social reality. Jesus offended the Jews by telling them that God was sovereign over salvation and that He would save whoever He wanted. Jesus told them that their rejection of Him was grounded in pride, arrogance and racism. He told them that God sovereignly saves whomever He chooses to save and the people Jesus illustrated His sermon with to point to their sin and the sovereign grace of God was how God saved two Gentiles and also met their physical need.

The story of Elijah and the widow from 1 Kings 17 pictured a woman who was so poor she could not feed herself much less her son. Elijah met her gathering sticks and he asked us to bake a meal for him. Her response was that if she fed him she and her son would die. Elijah told her in **vv. 13-16**, "*Do not fear . . . But first make me a little cake . . . and bring it to me, and afterward make something for yourself and your son. ¹⁴ For thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, 'The jar of flour shall not be spent, and the jug of oil shall not be empty, until the day that the Lord sends rain upon the earth.'* " ¹⁵ And she went and did as Elijah said. And she and he and her household ate for many days. ¹⁶ The jar of flour was not spent, neither did the jug of oil become empty, according to the word of the Lord that he spoke by Elijah."

Later the widow's son died and Elijah raised him from the dead. This woman realized her absolute poverty and fatal lack of resources. Yet, she believed God's message through Elijah and God met her spiritual and physical need through Elijah.

If the people were insulted by the widow's story, the story of Naaman must have really set them off.

This time it was the prophet **Elisha and in 2 Kings 5**. Naaman was the proud commander of the Syrian armies and he desired healing from his leprosy. Naaman went to the King of Israel thinking he would be sent to the prophet for healing but he was not. Instead, Elisha sent a message to Naaman to go and wash seven times in the Jordan River and he would be cleansed. Naaman was angry because he didn't see Elisha and he thought the Jordan was just a muddy creek. *But Naaman changed his mind because his servant convinced him to do what the prophet told him to do. Naaman let go of his pride and washed in the Jordan and was cleansed of the leprosy.*

Friends the gospel meets spiritual and physical needs. Without a doubt the person and work of Christ meets the spiritual needs of people but because it transforms lives it creates in us the desires to meet the needs of the crushed and oppressed.

What people need most of all is the gospel of Jesus Christ but we must also must do what we can to meet the needs of the poor, the oppressed, the homeless, the unborn, those who are aging and have needs, the widow and the orphan. We cannot do it all but we must identify what we can do and as a church do it and if it is possible join with other churches to help others.

Friends, I am not talking about a social gospel **because** the social gospel really is no gospel at all. I am not talking about the current debate over social justice.

I am talking about a Christ-centered ministry where the gospel according to Jesus is preached and it saves and liberates. If we want to see people's lives transformed then we need to give people the gospel of Jesus Christ. The renewal of the church and the transformation of society comes from the priority of preaching the cross of Christ and His empty tomb.

Conclusion

Brothers and sisters, Jesus' mission is our mission. The Son of God has commissioned us to go in His name to bind up the broken hearted, set free those in spiritual prisons and bear up under the burdened of the oppressed in His name with His gospel and for His glory. May the Lord give us His strength to faithfully do what He has called us to do here in our church.

If you are not a member of a church I hope you will join with us to carry out this mission and if you are not a Christian, I pray you will seek out another Christian to talk with about your relationship with Christ.