

Session 2

MISSION REVEALED

Luke 4:16-22

Memory Verse


The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free the oppressed,¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.


– LUKE 4:18-19, CSB



Mission Revealed

THEOLOGICAL THEME: Jesus of Nazareth was no mere man, but the incarnate Son of the living God. His arrival was foretold by the prophets and His mission brought to a climax the redemptive work of God the Father on behalf of humanity.

 How important do you think the Bible is to most people in the world? What about in the church?

 What do you know about how Jesus and others in the Bible viewed the Scriptures? Why should this matter to our view of it today?

Two key impediments prevent people from accessing God's Word today. Many languages don't have a single word of Scripture. It's impossible to access God's Word in your language if it hasn't been translated into it. There are 3,969 languages in the world today that don't have any of the Old or New Testament yet.¹ A second impediment is persecution. Many Christians today live under governments that are hostile to the Christian faith and they follow Christ at great risk to themselves. In these countries, it is often illegal to have a Bible. In China, the government is rewriting Scripture for the churches.²

God's Word is for all Christians, and when Christians don't have access to the Bible or neglect it, their faith withers and their doctrine strays. The Words of Scripture are sufficient to meet every need of the human soul, but these words have to be applied to take effect.

In our passage today, we will discover the importance and centrality of the Word of God in Christianity. Christ's reliance upon the Scriptures and His own proclamation is a reminder to Christians that the Christian life is about paying close attention to the great gift of God's Word that has been preserved for them.

Session Summary

The main point of the text that we are studying today is the identity of Jesus of Nazareth. Specifically, Luke recorded for us the fact that Jesus claimed to be the Messiah and that He claimed that Old Testament prophecies referred to Him directly. In addition to this main idea, this passage in Luke builds a case for the priority and centrality of Scripture.

Both of those points are made even clearer when we pull back and look at the context, especially the events prior to this episode.

- Jesus' baptism confirmed His identity as the Son of God and inaugurated His mission (3:21-22).
- In His temptation, Jesus quoted Scripture (4:1-13).
- Jesus immediately began teaching in the synagogues (4:15).

Christians know and may sometimes take for granted Jesus' identity, but they should remember that the identity and veracity of this historical figure is doubted and disregarded today in the West. Many people concede that He existed and was an important figure in history. Most will even say that it is fine if you want to follow His teaching, but to claim that Jesus' teaching is truth for all people is tantamount to violence. The same is true for the Bible. To have personal faith in the Scriptures is accepted in our culture, but the second a Christian calls others to believe the Bible, they have crossed into intolerance and bigotry. Jesus, however, called people to heed the words of Scripture and His own words. Christians should do the same no matter if the cultural milieu is hostile toward it.

1. The Setting (Luke 4:16)

It is noteworthy that, according to Luke's testimony of the person and work of Jesus Christ, our Lord's first action of public ministry was to go into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, stand up, and read the Scriptures aloud. This alone should cause pastors to carefully evaluate how they view the Scriptures and their philosophy of ministry. Further, it should lead all Christians to consider whether or not they highly esteem the Scriptures as Jesus Christ did.

? What town was Jesus in when he read this portion of the Isaiah scroll? Why do you think He made this startling announcement there?

Jesus opened the Isaiah scroll and announced that it was speaking about Him in Nazareth, His home town. Jesus was born in Bethlehem, spent some time in Egypt, and then settled with His family in Nazareth. We know virtually nothing of His time there except that which is common to anyone else who grew up in one place as a part of one community.

When Jesus told those listening that the words of Isaiah were fulfilled in their hearing, they said, "Isn't this Joseph's son?" We will consider more carefully the response of the people later in our study, but for now it's important to realize that Jesus wasn't some stranger who showed up at a synagogue to teach. He was well known because it was His hometown. Maybe Jesus started there for no other reason than the simple fact that this is where He was. After His baptism and temptation, He immediately began to fulfill His mission, and He started exactly where He was . . . home. We must be careful not to read too deeply into this, but Christians may take His example as a template to follow. The first mission field of Christians isn't some far off land—it's the next room over and across the street.

? When and where did Jesus make His announcement? What significance might that have?

It was the Sabbath and Jesus, no doubt, always went to the synagogue on the Sabbath. In fact, He may have attended this synagogue hundreds of times through the years. Again, this was His hometown. The Sabbath (Saturday) is the Jewish day of worship. This day was established as a day of rest and worship from the Old Testament. The Sabbath was instituted by God and was meant to be a gift to people so that they might rightly order their hearts and affairs each week. The Christian Sabbath is Sunday, the first day of the week. The apostles instituted this because Jesus rose again on this day. The church, since the Book of Acts, has met on Sunday.

Further, Jesus addressed the crowd in the synagogue, which means He was operating within the system of spiritual development and care in the Jewish community. This is in contrast to what his forerunner, John the Baptist, was doing. John preached his message outside the village. The wilderness was his synagogue. Again, we should be careful not to overextend possible applications of Jesus' message delivered on the Sabbath in the synagogue. We can, however, conclude that Jesus valued and esteemed the Sabbath as well as the gathering together of believers.

? Application: How might you overlook the basics of your Christian faith by neglecting the fundamental duties of ministering to those closest to you (your own household and community) or regularly gathering together with the people of God?

2. The Message (Luke 4:17-21)

Now we arrive at the crux of the passage, the content of Jesus' message. This was a relatively short sermon by most standards, but its length has no correspondence to its import. Another relevant detail concerning this message is the fact that it was almost completely made up of Jesus reading the Scriptures (Isaiah) back to the congregation. His sermon, for the most part, had already been preached many times.

? What did Jesus say in His sermon that was new to those listening? Why was this significant?

After reading the portion of the Isaiah scroll, Jesus said, “Today as you listen, this Scripture has been fulfilled” (v. 21). Jesus had chosen a text from Isaiah that foretold of the mission of the Messiah who the Jews had been anticipating for centuries. That part of the sermon was no surprise. His application, however, was nothing short of earth shattering. He told His listeners that He was the one of whom Isaiah was writing. His message couldn’t have produced anything less than extreme reactions (this is why some were enraged).

The significance of this passage is two-fold. First, we can know beyond a shadow of a doubt that Jesus claimed to be much more than a mere man. Jesus claimed to be no less than the Messiah. In other parts of Scripture, He took this even further, claiming to be God. This is important because some people think that Jesus was a good teacher, but He was nothing more than a man and never claimed to be. This is incorrect. It is impossible to believe that Jesus was a good teacher, while also denying that He was the Messiah and the Son of God. Jesus claimed these things of Himself, and if they were not true then He certainly was not a good teacher, He failed to tell the truth.

Second, in His message, Jesus explained what His mission would be. It goes without saying that when the Messiah shared information about His mission, those who have faith in Him ought to listen attentively.




What did Jesus reveal about His mission in these verses?

First of all, we see that Jesus’ mission was one fixed in the Word of God. This is clear to us for two reasons: a) He explained His mission by quoting the Old Testament Scripture; b) His mission would consist of preaching and proclaiming, which is itself ministry of the Word. In other words, Jesus’ mission was both anchored in the Word of God and would consist of speaking God’s Word to the world.


Second, Jesus’ ministry was primarily spiritual in nature. Jesus came to preach good news to the poor in spirit, proclaim release to those captive to Satan and blinded because of sin. He came to free those oppressed by their sinful natures. Jesus’ ultimate mission was to


fulfill the prophecies found in Genesis 3:15 and Isaiah 53. His work was to crush the head of the serpent by bearing the punishment for sinners. The result of His stripes would be the healing of many who were sin-sick and under the wrath of God.

Finally, Jesus' earthly ministry also included meeting physical needs. Jesus did indeed heal the blind, feed the hungry, and raise the dead. The apostles carried on this ministry as well when the early church was established. Christians today should follow in Jesus' steps and seek to meet physical needs whenever possible and appropriate. Christians throughout history have adorned the gospel of Jesus Christ with the good works of caring for medical needs, feeding the hungry, counseling the brokenhearted, and housing the homeless. Christians reflect the gospel of Jesus Christ when they care for foster children, care for widows, and serve the disabled. At the same time, they should be careful to not stop short of sharing the gospel with those that they serve as well. It is always necessary to use words when preaching the gospel.

 **Application:** What has Christ done in your life? In what ways has he healed, released, or freed you? How might He use this to minister to others?

3. The Response (Luke 4:22)

 What was the response of those who heard Jesus' message?

 How do people respond similarly to Jesus today? How do they respond differently?

We see two responses from those who were present in the meeting that day. The two responses weren't split between two groups. Rather, the entire congregation responded in one way to begin with, and then the entire congregation shifted and responded in a very different way when Jesus addressed their concern.

Look at verse 22. At first, "They were speaking well of him and were amazed by the gracious words that came from his mouth; yet they said, 'Isn't this Joseph's son?'" So, they were impressed by His words, but they sought to reconcile His powerful words with His ordinary upbringing. They knew this Man. They had seen Him grow up from childhood. Surely there was nothing special about Him. If we keep reading, we will see that Jesus responded to their thoughts. See verses 23-30 for this further interaction.

The text says, "When they heard this, everyone in the synagogue was enraged" (v. 28). This doesn't seem like the best way to gain a following. However, Jesus' concern wasn't a following; He focused on telling the truth to those who heard Him. He knew that all that the Father had given Him would come to Him (John 6:37).





Application: How have those with whom you have shared the message of the gospel responded?


Conclusion

Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah who was sent into the world to save sinners. His arrival was foretold by the prophets and His mission was, first of all, to proclaim the good news, and, secondly, to meet physical needs. He faithfully carried out those duties until He was hung on the cross, bearing the wrath of God for the sins of mankind. We also see in this passage that Jesus highly esteemed both the written Word of God as well as the regular gathering of believers to worship God.

 Do you highly esteem the Word of God? What do your habits say about your posture toward God's Word?

 Do you highly esteem the regular gathering together of the saints on the Lord's day? How often do you neglect meeting with the church family?

 Do you seek to follow in Jesus' steps by doing spiritual and physical good to others around you? What specific ways do you minister to others?

 How is God calling you to respond today in each of these areas?

CHRIST CONNECTION: The arrival of Jesus meant that the kingdom of God had indeed come near and the invitation to partake of the mercy and grace of Christ would soon sound forth.

MISSIONAL APPLICATION: Christians today carry on the mission of Christ by serving their neighbor by helping to meet physical and emotional needs. Christians can invite everyone they meet to turn to Christ with confidence knowing that Jesus will never turn away a humble



FOR NEXT WEEK

Calling Others to the Mission

Main Passages

- Luke 5:1-11

Session Outline

1. Jesus Fulfilled His Purpose (Luke 4:43–5:3)
2. Jesus Showed His Power (Luke 5:4-7)
3. Jesus Called to Follow (Luke 5:8-11)

Memorize

The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free the oppressed,¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

- Luke 4:18-19, CSB

Daily Readings

- Monday - Luke 4:1-13
- Tuesday - Luke 4: 14-15
- Wednesday - Luke 4:16-22
- Thursday - Luke 4:23-30
- Friday - Luke 4:31-37
- Saturday - Luke 4:38-44

References

¹⁴“Our Impact: Wycliffe Bible Translators.” Our Impact | Wycliffe Bible Translators. Accessed October 30, 2020. <https://www.wycliffe.org.uk/about/our-impact/>.

²Kuo, Lily. “In China, They’re Closing Churches, Jailing Pastors – and Even Rewriting Scripture.” The Guardian. January 13, 2019. Accessed October 30, 2020. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jan/13/china-christians-religious-persecution-translation-bible>.