

To Preach the Good News
Luke 4:14-30
Key Verse: 4:18

"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor."

This is Luke's account of Jesus beginning his Messianic ministry. Jesus does so by preaching the good news in Nazareth, his hometown, and is rejected. This gives us a general picture of Jesus' Messianic ministry, which can bring profound insight into what Jesus is doing in our times, and guide us to fruitful ministry. Luke differs considerably from Matthew and Mark, who place Jesus' hometown rejection later in his ministry (Mt 13:53; Mk 6:1). Perhaps Luke begins here to reveal that Jesus' message of good news must be received by faith. Anyone with humble faith, be they Jew or Gentile, can receive this good news. Let's accept Jesus' good news with humble hearts.

I. Jesus proclaims that he is the promised Messiah (14-21)

Look at verse 14. "Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside." Though Jesus knew he was the Son of God and the Savior of the world, he began his ministry humbly in Galilee. However, Jesus was full of the Holy Spirit and the power of God was working mightily through him. Jesus taught the word of God in the synagogues (15), where God-fearing people gathered to study the Scriptures and to worship. Jesus' powerful Bible teaching moved people's hearts. They felt the life of God come into their souls, and they praised Jesus.

Among the villages of Galilee, Jesus went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. In our context, this is where he went through elementary and high school--no doubt with straight A's--as well as BBF, CBF, HBF, and UBF. He must have participated in games and sports, as well as graduations, weddings, funerals, and so on. He had learned the trade of a carpenter, and he had grown to manhood in Nazareth. The people there knew him, and he knew them. How would he tell them who he was, and why he had come? He used God's method, which was also most appropriate for them. He waited for the Sabbath, and then went into the synagogue. Surrounded by relatives, friends, former classmates and customers, he stood up to read and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he read about the

coming of the Messiah. Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. As the eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him, he said, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." In this way, Jesus proclaimed that he was the Messiah sent by God. Jesus did not rely on his human relationship with people. He shared the word of God through the power of the Holy Spirit. Like Jesus, we should depend on the word of God, even when dealing with people who are familiar to us.

Isaiah's prophecy tells precisely what God sent the Messiah to do and how he would do it. Let's read verses 18-19 together. "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 freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." These verses explain that God poured out the Holy Spirit on the Messiah so that he would preach good news to the poor. We learn several things here.

First, Jesus was anointed "to preach." Some people have a bad connotation of the word "preach." When they hear the word "preach," they think of a mean old gentleman scowling at them, pointing with a bony finger, and reminding them of everything they have ever done wrong. But that is not what Jesus did. The first meaning of the word "preach" is to proclaim. This means to announce as a herald, the message of the King. The king's authority empowers the message to drive out bad news and fill listeners' hearts with good news. Jesus proclaimed, "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!" And Jesus also told parables and stories, and he spoke by his actions as well. Whatever the means, Jesus' primary task in his earthly ministry was to preach the good news.

Jesus passed on this task to his disciples, and to his church. The last command Jesus gave before his ascension was to go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation (Mk 16:15). This must be our primary concern and activity. If we visit the UBF website and read the statement of purpose, the main point is, "to raise disciples of Jesus who preach the gospel of Jesus Christ to college students and young people." This may be done through messages, like this one, or through one-to-one Bible study, or by sharing our personal story of God's grace, or by demonstrating God's love in action, or all of the above. Whatever the method, we must be committed to the task of preaching the good news. If someone asks us, "What are you doing?" The answer should be, "preaching the good news of Jesus."

Second, the Spirit of the Lord enabled Jesus to preach. It is not always easy to preach good news. People who are inundated by bad news are often slow to believe good news. Preaching good news is a spiritual battle. For effective preaching, even Jesus needed the anointing of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the power of God. The Holy Spirit is God who connects our mind and heart to God's own mind and heart. The Holy Spirit speaks to us with authority that plants certainty. He enables us to truly believe the good news from our deep hearts. When I began to study the Bible I really wanted to believe the forgiveness of sins and eternal life in Christ. However, I could not fully, really, 100% believe this. Though I tried hard and also preached to others, in my deep heart I often felt condemned by my past sins. One day, as I shared a gospel message, the Holy Spirit came upon me in power and convinced me without any doubt about God's love and saving grace. The Holy Spirit is the one who truly convinces us in the depths of our beings. In order to believe and share the good news, we need the Holy Spirit. How can we receive the Holy Spirit? Jesus said in Luke 11:13, "If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him." We must ask the Father.

Third, Jesus preached "good news to the poor." This tells us the contents of Jesus' preaching and his audience. Jesus preached the "good news," that means, "the gospel." The contents of the gospel are that Christ died for our sins, and that God raised him from the dead on the third day. Anyone who believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. At the time Jesus began to preach, he had not yet fulfilled the gospel. Later in his earthly ministry, when he tried to explain that he would suffer, die and rise again, his disciples had a hard time accepting or understanding what he said. Jesus did not explain the gospel factually here. Rather, Jesus borrowed Isaiah's scriptural metaphors to help people understand what kind of good news he was bringing. The Apostles, who came later--especially Peter and Paul--would preach Jesus' cross and resurrection based on historical facts.

Jesus' message was directed to "the poor." Here "the poor" refers to the spiritually humble who recognize their need for the gospel. Unless a person recognizes his need, the good news does not seem relevant to him. Once Jesus told some followers that if they held to his teaching they would be set free. They answered him, "How can you say that we shall be set free?" They would not acknowledge their slavery. So the message of freedom seemed irrelevant to them. If a person does not admit that he or she is a sinner, the

message of forgiveness seems irrelevant to them. Those who have money, honor, and power, can easily feel satisfied and ignore the gospel message. There is a young man who seems to have everything. He is handsome, intelligent and popular. He doesn't really think he needs Jesus. Still, he tries to wear Jesus like an accessory. He does not yet realize that he is helpless against the power of sin and death. Jesus told such people in Revelation 3:17: "You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing. But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked.'" When we see ourselves as God sees us, we can realize how poor we really are, and receive the gospel with humble gratitude toward God.

Fourth, Jesus proclaimed freedom, recovery, and release and the Lord's favor. Through Isaiah's prophecy, Jesus shared the good news in ways that his people could understand. Jesus proclaimed "freedom for the prisoners." In context, these words were spoken to Israelites who had been in Babylonian captivity. Spiritually speaking, however, they apply to all human beings who are slaves to sin. In our times, many are slaves of various addictions. These addictions begin as the pursuit of small pleasure. But they become so powerful that they take over a person's life. People are addicted to drugs, alcohol, pornography, overeating, gambling, sports, surfing the Internet, video games, and so on. Often these addictions are symptoms of deeper problems which have to do with their family relationships. Yet at the root, it is the the power of sin which imprisons people. Jesus proclaims freedom for the prisoner. To empower this proclamation, Jesus died for our sins and rose again from the dead. Jesus sets us free from sin and death. When I came to Christ as a former baseball player, I had a bad habit of chewing tobacco. I worried that I would never be a great man, for I could not think of any great man who had a habit of chewing tobacco. I struggled in this way for two years. Then, as my faith in Christ grew, I gained power and finally could quit this bad habit completely. More recently, I have been set free from eating too much sugar and butter, by the help of my wife. Jesus said, "So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed" (Jn 8:36).

Jesus also proclaimed "recovery of sight for the blind." Jesus healed the physically blind, and Jesus also heals the spiritually blind, like St. Paul. In our times, many people are blinded by reductionistic thinking through the influence of godless educators. For example, Freud explained away morality as nothing more than society's attempt to suppress natural human instincts. Nietzsche explained all human endeavor as exertions of the will to power. Some scientists want to explain everything in terms of DNA and genetics.

Though they claim to see, they are spiritually blind. They cannot see the image of God in man or the work of the Holy Spirit in the world. When Jesus opens our spiritual eyes we can see that the whole world is full of God's glory. When we read the Bible, it is not just words on a page, but God's truth speaking personally to us. We can see how God is working to carry out his glorious redemption plan. Life is exciting, wonderful and full of mystery.

Jesus also proclaimed "release of the oppressed." Many people are oppressed by some dark power. They experience fear so thick it is palpable, as well as depression, pessimism, fatalism, anxiety and unrelenting sorrow. They try to live from one distraction to another by means of entertainment and busy activity. But when they lay down to sleep at night, they experience loneliness and dread. They cannot sleep without medication. In fact, they are under the devil's power. Jesus can release the oppressed because he defeated the devil. Hebrews 2:14,15 says, "Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death--that is, the devil--and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death." When Jesus sets us free we can have peace and joy and a real sense of security. We can see great hope and a bright future. We feel that we are running a marathon without tiring or soaring on wings like eagles.

Jesus also proclaimed the year of the Lord's favor. This may be compared to the year of Jubilee in Leviticus 25. It was a time when slaves were set free, debts were cancelled, and property that had to be mortgaged was returned to its original owner. Simply speaking, Jesus brings forgiveness of sins which cancels all of our debts, restores our relationship with God and brings us citizenship into his heavenly kingdom. Jesus' message is truly good news of great joy for all mankind. When we simply receive his word in our hearts, Jesus comes in and dwells and gives us all the good things he has promised. Let's accept this Jesus right now!

II. Jesus delivered his message with a life-giving spirit (22-30)

Initially it seemed that people responded to Jesus' message well. They were amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips. Some may have had a sense of pride that their hometown boy had become somebody. Others may have harbored envy. In any case, they saw Jesus from a human point of view. They did not accept his message as the word of God or accept him as

the Messiah. Jesus could have quietly moved on to another village. Instead, Jesus challenged them.

Look at verse 23. Jesus' hometown people wanted him to do great miracles for them, as he had in Capernaum. So they did not accept the word of God as it unfolded in the Scriptures. Their noisy inner demand deafened their ears to the good news, the best blessing--the Messiah himself. Sometimes we feel hard pressed, perhaps by financial problems or marriage problems. This can deafen our ears to Jesus' good news. We must come to Jesus with humble hearts to listen, so that we may receive his good news.

Look at verse 24. "'I tell you the truth,' he continued, 'no prophet is accepted in his hometown.'" Jesus expressed his disappointment that the people had not accepted the word of God through him. Jesus didn't want their human recognition. Jesus wanted them to believe the word of God and be saved. But they were blinded by their human prejudice. Of course, we can understand. There may have been people in the crowd who were senior to Jesus in school. They felt offended that this young person was claiming to be the Messiah. However, their human prejudice disqualified them from receiving the good news. We must be spiritually discerning, not slaves of human prejudice. Otherwise, we may ignore God's message to us.

In verses 25-27, Jesus told two Bible stories from the book of Kings to help his people have a right attitude toward his message. A Gentile widow in Elijah's time obeyed the word of God by giving her last bit of food to God's servant. Then she was blessed with sufficient food, and later, her precious only son was raised to life by the power of God. General Naaman obeyed the word of God to wash in the Jordan River, curbing his pride that the rivers of Syria were better. As a result, he was cleansed of his leprosy. Both are examples of humble obedience and both were Gentiles. Jesus' good news is for anybody and everybody, but it must be received with a humble heart.

Jesus' words to his hometown people were life-giving. Jesus diagnosed their spiritual problem precisely and gave them clear direction what to do in order to receive God's blessing. They should have recognized their sin of human prejudice, repented, and accepted the good news that the Messiah had come. How did they respond? They were furious. They got up, drove him out of the town, and took him to the brow of the cliff on which the town was built, in order to throw him down the cliff. It was an ugly scene. Many people whom Jesus knew personally turned against him and wanted to kill him.

Jesus could have avoided this sharp and painful rejection if he had just kept quiet. But Jesus could not be quiet. Jesus had to share the truth of God with his hometown people until they accepted him as the Messiah. Jesus would not be satisfied with anything less. Here we learn Jesus' attitude in preaching the good news. Jesus preached the good news as the absolute truth of God and the only way of salvation for all mankind. Jesus risked his life and gave his life to preach the good news. Jesus did this fearlessly. In this way, Jesus tried to give the best blessing to his hometown people. They rejected him harshly. But Jesus walked right through the crowd and went on his way.

In this passage we learn that Jesus is the Messiah who sets us free from the power of sin and death. Whoever believes this good news will experience Jesus' saving grace. Let's believe this good news with humble hearts. Let's also preach this good news to the people of our time by the power of the Holy Spirit, and with the same attitude of our Lord Jesus Christ.