

That Is Why I Was Sent

Luke 4:31-44

Key Verse: 4:43

"But he said, 'I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent.'"

In this passage Jesus continues to proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God. Jesus' proclamation is accompanied by a demonstration of the Holy Spirit's power. Jesus drives out evil spirits and heals sicknesses, showing us what the kingdom of God is like. Finally, Jesus determines to keep on preaching the good news of the kingdom of God, and to spread the message to other towns. We can learn from Jesus what is the main task in gospel ministry, and how to stay focused on it. As we do, the kingdom of God will advance powerfully among us, and throughout the world.

I. Jesus' authority in teaching and driving out demons (31-37)

As we studied last time, Jesus' hometown people in Nazareth rejected his message of good news. To any human being, this kind of rejection is very painful. Everyone wants to receive honor and glory in their hometown, like one who gives the valedictory speech at graduation. No one wants to be despised and rejected. For Jesus, who was fully human, it must have been discouraging. But Jesus was undaunted. Look at verse 31. "Then he went down to Capernaum, a town in Galilee, and on the Sabbath began to teach the people." Jesus kept right on teaching the word of God to people. Capernaum was located on the northwestern shore of the Sea of Galilee. It became the base for Jesus' ministry in Galilee.

On the Sabbath Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach the people that God had sent him as the promised Messiah to give freedom to the prisoners, and recovery of sight to the blind, and to release the oppressed (18-19). Jesus taught from the same Scriptures that all other rabbis used. But there was something different about Jesus' teaching. Verse 32 says that the people were amazed at Jesus' teaching, because his message had authority. As we have seen, Jesus taught the word of God, just as it is written, and in context, with spiritual meaning. Jesus taught by the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus did not speculate, but taught with conviction, simplicity and precision. Jesus believed the awesome power of God's word. Then, when Jesus proclaimed freedom for the prisoner, people felt in their souls that they were

set free. They were not only hearing words, but they were being changed through the power of Jesus' message. Frustrations and agonies gave way to peace and joy and new hope. They realized that God loved them and had a marvelous purpose for them. They sensed that they were entering a spiritual world through Jesus' teaching. They forgot all about the trivial problems and enjoyed rapture, mystery and awe through the living word of God. This is why they said that Jesus' message had authority. It was not only people who recognized Jesus' authority, so did demons.

Look at verse 33a. "In the synagogue there was a man possessed by a demon, an evil spirit." It may seem surprising that a demon was present in the synagogue. We expect demons to be in bars and prisons and gang hangouts and hell, but not in synagogues or churches, where the worship of God is going on. But demons can come into God's house through the people who go there. In America, there have been several murders committed in churches recently, while worship service was going on. So I considered wearing a bullet proof vest under my suit jacket from time to time. But Jesus did not do that. He did something more powerful, as we will see.

Notice that Luke calls this man "a man possessed by a demon, an evil spirit." This indicates that the man was under the dominion of the demon. He was not free; he was a slave to a dark power that controlled him. God made man to be free. But when man uses his freedom to sin, he becomes vulnerable to the power of demons (Eph 2:2). Do demons or evil spirits really exist? Ancient people believed their existence very strongly. They had a spiritual explanation for almost everything. More recently, scientific people have found other explanations for many things and sometimes discount the spiritual world completely. The Bible clearly says that demons or evil spirits exist, and that they can possess people. This is repeated frequently in the gospels, and it is echoed throughout the other books of the New Testament as well (1 Cor 10:20-21; 1 Tim 4:1; Jam 2:19).

Luke uses the names "demon" or "evil spirit" interchangeably. "Evil spirit" is more descriptive. They are "evil" through and through. Everything they think and say and do is evil, only evil all the time. They are also called "unclean" spirits. Perhaps this explains why some people never clean their rooms. As "spirit," these beings are invisible. However they exercise real power. Once they creep into a person's inner being, they manipulate that person and use him for evil purposes. People who are being used may have no idea what is really happening to them. Several years ago a man named

Brian Nichols killed several people as he escaped an Atlanta courthouse, where he was on trial. He ended up hiding in the apartment of a young woman, Ashley Smith. As Nichols sat in her apartment watching himself on the television news, he could not believe it was him. In fact, it was an evil spirit who drove him at that moment. Ashley told him how God was working in her own life to set her free from drug addiction. She prayerfully encouraged him to take responsibility for his actions and turn himself in. Then he did so, without any further violence.

Crafty demons are very skillful at disguising themselves. As Genesis tells us, when the evil spirit, Satan, tempted the woman in the garden of Eden, he did not come as an ugly monster, but as a silky serpent--gorgeous, intelligent, and skillful in speech. Demons are able to disguise themselves as angels of light (2 Cor 11:14) and can even work miracles (Rev 16:14). Though demons may be too clever for human detection and too strong for human treatment, Jesus' Bible teaching unmasked the sneaky demon. The demon trembled before Jesus' spiritual authority. It caused the man to burst out, "Ha! 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!" Now detected, the demon revealed what he was doing. It used the word "us" as though it were the man's friend. It tried to plant fear that Jesus would harm them, knowing that Jesus will throw all demons into hell (Rev 20:10).

How did Jesus deal with the demon? Look at verse 35. "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." Jesus did not negotiate. Jesus did not plead. Jesus simply commanded the demon, "Be quiet! Come out of him!" and it did. Though the demon tried to leave in a rage and in a demonstration of power, it could not injure the man at all. The man was just fine after the demon left him. Jesus has power to drive out demons and to set prisoners free. Amen! People who were there knew precisely what had happened. As the news about Jesus spread throughout the surrounding area, the kingdom of God was advancing in power; people were finding real hope for change through Jesus, and demons were trembling.

In this part, we must acknowledge that preaching the gospel is a spiritual battle against a real and evil enemy. When Jesus sends out his servants, he gives us authority to drive out evil spirits in his name (Mt 28:18; Mk 16:17). St. Paul said, "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and

against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms" (Eph 6:12). Preaching the gospel is not a hobby. It is spiritual warfare. Therefore, we must equip ourselves with the word of God and pray. We must depend on Jesus' power absolutely. Jesus will give us victory over evil spirits.

II. Jesus heals many sick people (38-41)

After winning a great spiritual victory in the synagogue and giving glory to God, Jesus must have been tired and hungry. He went to the home of Simon. Feeling honored, they wanted to serve Jesus well. But Simon's mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever. They asked Jesus to help her. In contrast to Jesus' hometown people, they trusted Jesus and believed Jesus could help them. In this kind of atmosphere, Jesus freely blessed them according to their need. Though Jesus was a guest, he became a servant for the older woman. Jesus bent over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her (39). Luke, a medical doctor, must have been greatly moved by this event. He could not cure a fever without great effort and his patients took time to recover. But Jesus simply rebuked the fever and it left the woman and she got up. The awful heat and dizziness and pain subsided and she felt like a young woman again. Out of thanks, she began to wait on them, and the whole house was filled with grace. There are many women among us who know the grace of Jesus and serve him like this, such as Missionary Pauline Moon. We must pray for women who are sick. When Jesus heals them by his word, they can be marvelous instruments of his grace.

As news about Jesus spread, many people wanted to come to him for help. They did not want to violate the Sabbath, so they waited until sunset to visit him. Then, suddenly, people with all kinds of sicknesses came to Jesus, all at once. Some had fevers, headaches, the flu, common colds, allergies, jaundice, anemia, hepatitis (A,B and C), anorexia, ADHD, high blood pressure, diabetes, acute acne, palsy, measles, warts, psoriasis, and so on. What did Jesus do? Verse 40b says, "...and laying his hands on each one, he healed them." Jesus did not treat them as a group, just waving his hands and saying, "Be healed." Jesus treated them one by one. Jesus' instrument for healing was his hand. Jesus did not use a latex glove, but touched each person, skin to skin. Jesus was not afraid of contracting disease. Rather, at the touch of Jesus, the sickness was cured. No matter what kind of disease it was, Jesus healed it with a touch. Wellness overflowed in the community.

Amidst Jesus' great healing ministry, many demons were also being driven out. When they saw Jesus, they immediately surrendered, giving up their hostage and shouting, "You are the Son of God!" Sooner or later, every knee will bow before Jesus and every tongue confess Jesus as Lord. Jesus rebuked the demons and would not allow them to speak. Jesus did not want their advertisement. They spread misunderstanding and stirred up people's desire for a political and military deliverer. Jesus came as a spiritual king.

Where Jesus is, there is the kingdom of God. God made man to be very good with perfect health and true freedom in paradise. But when man disobeyed God and fell into sin, he lost paradise. Then sicknesses entered the world, and demons began to roam freely. Jesus came to this world to restore the kingdom of God to mankind. Jesus drives out demons and heals every sickness. People are set free from darkness and restored to wholeness in Christ. They serve Jesus with great joy and thanks. Let's welcome Jesus into our hearts right now, so that we may enjoy the kingdom of God, even as we live in this world.

III. "I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God" (42-43)

In this part we can learn how Jesus maintained his focus and what he determined to do as of first importance during his earthly ministry.

First, Jesus' quiet time with God (42a). Jesus' healing ministry lasted late into the night. There had been many dramatic and exciting events that happened all at once. However, it was draining for Jesus. Jesus must have been exhausted. At the same time, many opportunities seemed to open before Jesus; he could do many things. What did he do first?

Look at verse 42a. "At daybreak Jesus went out to a solitary place." In the early hours of the morning, Jesus went to a solitary place. In this way he could be alone for quiet time with his Father God. Many people do this when they are in deep trouble. But Jesus did it after making a great success. It was necessary for him to get away from the noisy demons and the amazed crowds, and to listen to the voice of God very personally. In this way, Jesus found new strength and wisdom from his Father. Jesus also found what his Father wanted him to do. So Jesus could maintain a clear focus on the main task without deviation. We need this kind of quiet time with God. It is the secret to maintain spiritual strength and focus in serving God.

Second, Jesus' clear spiritual direction (42b-43). While Jesus was spending quiet time with God, people were looking for him, and at last they found him. They wanted to keep him in Capernaum. They realized that Jesus' presence was the greatest blessing upon them. They had experienced a taste of the kingdom of God through Jesus, and they wanted more. Surely, Jesus, who had laid his hand on each one, wanted to spend more time with them. But he did not say, "Okay." He said, "I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent." Here we learn three very important things about Jesus.

In the first place, Jesus did what God wanted him to do, even though his beloved sheep demanded something else. When God's children experience his love tangibly, they want to hold on to their human shepherd permanently. It can be a temptation for both of them to lose God as the center of their relationship. Sheep are sheep, and they can be expected to do this. Jesus did not rebuke them. However, Jesus clearly told them that he must go somewhere else, saying, "That is why I was sent." Jesus stayed focused on God's purpose for sending him, instead of pleasing people according to their demand. Gospel workers must learn this from Jesus.

In the second place, Jesus decided to keep on preaching the good news of the kingdom of God. Jesus' ministries of exorcism and healing were a great success. Jesus could have launched a new church focused on deliverance and started a hospital. But Jesus decided to keep on preaching the good news of the kingdom of God. The good news is that, in Christ, God has broken into human history. Christ's power and love restores God's reign in the lives of people. In content, the good news is that Christ died for our sins and that God raised him from the dead on the third day. Whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life. Christ is coming again in power and great glory to reign forever, bringing the final destruction of his enemies and eternal glory to his people. This is the good news that must be preached. Jesus preached this good news regardless of the result. Whether he was rejected in Nazareth, or loved in Capernaum, Jesus preached the good news of the kingdom of God. We, too, must decide to preach the good news of the kingdom of God. All spiritual blessings, such as healing and driving out demons, will follow. Preaching the good news of the kingdom of God is our purpose and meaning of life, in whatever way God may use us to do so. We must be able to say, "That is why I was sent." However, there are many who have stopped preaching the good news of the kingdom of God. Some famous church leaders do not clearly preach the gospel, but talk in psychological

terms. The spiritual forces of evil do not tremble before psychology. But they tremble before Christ who died for sinners and rose again on the third day. We must preach the good news of the Kingdom of God as Jesus teaches us. This sets prisoners free.

In the third place, Jesus went to the other towns also. Look at verse 44. "And he kept on preaching in the synagogues of Judea." Jesus went from Galilee to Judea. Jesus did not settle down comfortably in one place, but kept on going to other places. Jesus wanted to bring the good news of the kingdom of God everywhere, to the whole world. We, too, must be burning to reach the whole world with the gospel. But let's remember that we cannot win this battle in our own strength. We must follow Jesus in prayer. Let's keep on preaching the good news of the kingdom of God!