

THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS ON ME TO PROCLAIM GOOD NEWS

Luke 4:14-30

Key Verse: 4:18,19

“The Spirit of the Lord is on me because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

Now the whole world is suffering from the war in Ukraine, during an ongoing COVID pandemic. All are suffering, in a gloomy mood. The distress level of people is said to be 7 times worse than Blue Monday syndrome. To a world that is filled with discouragement, despair, hatred, discontent, and grumbling, what could be the most exciting, good news of great joy for everyone?

Today’s passage gives the answer. It is JESUS, the promised Messiah! He is the most exciting, long-awaited good news of great joy announced to the Jews in Galilee. Actually, Jesus, the Messiah, the Savior of the world is the good news of great joy for all people of the whole world throughout all of history—for the Ukrainians in war, and for all of us in the pandemic too.

Let’s see who Jesus is and how and why Jesus is the good news of great joy for all of us.

Today’s passage can be divided into 3 parts:

- 1) Jesus returns to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, teaching in the synagogue (14-17)
- 2) Jesus claims, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing” (18-22a)
- 3) The people of Nazareth reject Jesus (22b-30)

We learn that Jesus is the promised Messiah. He came to free us from the prison of sin, oppression of death, and slavery to Satan. He came to open our blind eyes to see his everlasting Kingdom. He restores to us paradise, which was lost, as in the year of Jubilee. Today, may this good news be fulfilled in our hearing. May we not reject Jesus but accept him like the poor gentile widow and a humble Syrian leper, even if we may not get what we want or need, in worldly terms.

First, Jesus returns to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, teaching in the synagogue (14-17).

Look at verse 14. “Jesus returned to Galilee, in the power of the Spirit. News about him spread through the whole countryside.” How come? Verse 15 says, “He was teaching (the word of God) in their synagogues, and everyone praised him.” Even in his hometown of Nazareth, Jesus stood up to read the Word of God, as was his custom.

Now we can see why the news about him spread through the whole countryside. Everyone praised him. It was because, the first thing Jesus did, filled with the Spirit, was to teach the scriptures. Jesus was reading

the scriptures to the people. Here the scriptures means the Word of God in the Bible. This secret made Jesus most powerful.

We already learned how Jesus defeated Satan's fierce temptations in a spiritual duel. In each round, Jesus gave the a devil knock-down punch. How? It was by the Word of God, which is sharper than a double-edged sword. It was by Jesus' absolute faith in God's Word and his absolute obedience to the Word of God, saying, even while he was starving, "Man shall not live on bread alone, but on the Word of God." Jesus held on to the Word of God. Why? Isaiah 40:8 says, "The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God endures forever!" Yes, by God's Word all things were created. God said, "Let there be light," and it was so. "Let there be sun, moon, stars, sky, land and sea, fish, trees, birds, animals..." and it was so! Jesus said, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away" (Mt 24:35). He declared his Word as God's word. He is God's Word incarnated in a human body. The Word became flesh (Jn 1:14). Therefore, Jesus' teaching God's word was very powerful! Surely, "All Scripture is breathed out by God" (2Ti 3:16-17). "The Word of God is living and active..." (Heb 4:12-13)

Therefore, through Jesus' teaching the absolute Word of God with the Holy Spirit, news about him spread throughout the whole countryside and everybody praised him.

UBF stands for University BIBLE Fellowship. Bible is our church's middle name. Our late founder Dr. Lee and M. Barry taught us to believe the Bible as God's absolute Word. Through inductive group Bible study, 1:1 Bible study, testimony writing, message training, Daily Bread eating and sharing, and through their own sacrificial, exemplary, obedient lives, they tried to help us to believe and obey God's word absolutely, even one word each time. I remember how much we had to struggle to accept and obey one word such as, "Seek God first!" practically, by coming to the Bible meeting first despite busy final exams. "Don't eat breakfast until you eat spiritual Daily Bread." In giving tithes, we believed, "see how God would open the floodgates of heaven to pour out abundant blessings, based on God's word in Malachi 3:10. To "Love God" more than worldly honor, materials, or family, we shed many tears, kneeling down in prayer many days until we could accept and obey this one word absolutely in our daily life and all the days of our entire life.

UBF sent nearly 1,500 self-supporting missionaries to over 90 countries in less than 50 years. This is the result of believing and obeying even one word of God. We heard, believed and obeyed, like God's word to Abraham: "Go to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation. You will be a blessing" (Gen 12:1-3). Amen! We shouted. "You are a Royal Priesthood!" Amen! In spite of our immaturity; it was by Jesus' grace. So each of us heard and obeyed Jesus' Great Commission, "Go and make disciples of all nations...I will be with you to the very end of the age!" (Mt 28:18-20)

This is why Jesus was paying his full attention to the Word of God from the beginning of his Messianic ministry. This is also what the new General Director elect, Pastor Ron Ward, declared to do— to study the Word of God as of first importance, as he learned for over 40 years. God has blessed us and will bless us even more when we focus on honoring God's word absolutely and obeying even one word of God each time, even at our United Easter Conference. God will surely revive Chicago Headquarters and all of UBF around the world through us too. Amen!

Second, Jesus claims, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing" (18-22a).

Let's read verses 18 and 19. "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." Jesus was reading from Isaiah 61:1-2. Then Jesus declared in verse 21, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." What then was fulfilled about the Messiah in Jesus?

First of all, "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me."

This was a prophecy about the Messiah, in Hebrew *mashiah*, which means "anointed one." It is called Christ in Greek. Through this scripture, Jesus was claiming to be the Promised Messiah, the Christ, the Savior of the world. It was because the Spirit of the Lord was on Him, and God anointed Him. Of course, he was conceived by the Spirit. All the angels blessed his birth. The Spirit of God had always been with him, such as when he visited the Jerusalem temple at age 12. The Rabbis and the scribes were amazed by Jesus' wisdom. Jesus told his mother Mary, "Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?" (Lk 2:49) But when Jesus became 30 and was baptized by John, the forerunner of the Messiah, the Spirit descended on Jesus. He then went about in the power of the Spirit as God's anointed Messiah, according to the scriptures.

Secondly, "to proclaim good news to the poor...to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

Originally this good news was proclaimed for the Jews in Babylonian captivity. When their mind became poor before God, the good news was given. They would be freed from prison and slavery. As the year of the Lord's favor, all debts were canceled. The lost land was restored. Surely it was good news for the Jews in Babylon.

But it was pointing to the day of the Messiah. Here good news means gospel. In Luke 2:11, the angels announced good news of great joy for all people. It is Jesus. How is Jesus good news? His incarnation, loving, sacrificial life as the servant of all is the very life we should follow. His death rescues us from sin and Satan, his resurrection gives us eternal life, and his coming again takes us to his eternal kingdom to reign with him. This good news was given to the poor. The poor means poor in spirit, like the tax collector, who beat his chest recognizing what a wretched sinner he was. Only a person who is poor in spirit, humble, and lowly can receive Jesus. That was why Jesus returned to Galilee to start his ministry. Isaiah 9:1,2 says, "O Galilee of the Gentiles— the people living in darkness, have seen a great light; in the land of the shadow of death, a light has dawned." At that time Galileans were despised and humiliated as impure Jews who had mixed bloodlines with Gentiles. Their mind and soul were broken. They were poor in spirit. They were ready to receive the Messiah as their Savior.

Recently Odessa coworkers encouraged us all. While so many people were angry with hatred, despair, and an unforgiving, violent spirit regarding the war and invaders, our 26 scattered members began to meet for worship service, Bible study, and prayer. When they studied the Word of God, they found their hearts were not right with God. They all repented and cried out for God's forgiveness for hatred, anger, and unforgiving, violent hearts. They also realized Ukraine was corrupt, ungodly, violent, and immoral and

asked God's mercy for Ukraine. Then Jesus' good news came to their poor hearts. They were filled with the Spirit and prayed for Russia and Ukraine to be a Kingdom of Priests who proclaim Jesus, the good news of salvation.

Here the word 'Free' and 'freedom' is repeated. To proclaim freedom for the prisoners, to set the oppressed free. American young people love the word "freedom." As Patrick Henry shouted, "Give me liberty (freedom) or give me death." We know a very promising young man since his freshman year. He studied the Bible, and sang as a quartet member in our worship service. He was happy. Then he wanted freedom to do what he wanted not denying anything as many young people used to do: internet pornography, alcohol, drugs, gambling, sexual immorality, etc. He thought he should feel utterly free and happy. But it was the opposite. His conscience began to condemn him. But he could not stop it. He found he was trapped. No one understood how terribly lonely, fearful, and helpless he became. He found himself several times in the Emergency room or in Carcel. One day, he felt he was dying, and at last, he came back to his senses. He called his shepherd saying, "Help!" Since then Jesus began to free him from the prison of sin, the devil, and from all condemnation. Soon he married and became a missionary. No one and nothing but Jesus and his death could free him. Now he and his wife are busy with proclaiming freedom in Jesus to many students they meet and pray to go anywhere, anytime to proclaim freedom from sins in Jesus.

We see the word proclaim also repeated here. "To proclaim good news...to proclaim freedom for the prisoners...to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." Proclaim means to announce officially or publicly. A Roman herald used to proclaim what the emperors had declared on behalf of the Emperor. It had to be done as it was proclaimed. Here we learn what we should do is to proclaim what God has done through Jesus. We are heralds of the King of kings, and Lord of lords. As God's heralds, with beautiful feet, we should proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior to the end of the earth.

We all human beings have sinned against God. Whoever sins becomes a slave of sin (Jn 8:34). The wages of sin is death, then judgment (Heb 9:27). As Adam's descendants, we became prisoners of Satan and slaves of sin with the fear of death. But God has done great things. He sacrificed Jesus, shedding his blood to cleanse all our sins. Now, God, the Sovereign King of kings declares, freedom for the prisoners, setting slaves of sin free.

Thirdly, "The recovery of the sight for the blind."

Isaiah 35:5 says, "Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped." Jesus once opened the eyes of a man born blind (Jn 9). But Jesus has opened so many more spiritually blind eyes. The Pharisees were blind spiritually. Saul of Tarsus was one of them. But Saul met Jesus (Ac 9). Since then, his life was turned around 180 degrees. It was because Jesus opened his spiritual eyes to see Jesus as the most precious treasure. Saul, who became Paul, could then see that all he had treasured on earth was nothing but garbage. Peter was a smelly fisherman. Catching and selling fish was his life. But his eyes were opened to be a fisher of men. Still, his eyes were blind. For he was afraid of death. So he denied Jesus 3 times, in order not to die. But after seeing the risen Jesus, Peter's spiritual eyes were opened wide. Oh, Death is not everything! In Jesus there is resurrection! Then his life turned around 180 degrees. Before

the Sanhedrin who threatened his life, he boldly declared, "You killed Jesus. But God raised him" (Ac 2:36; 4:10). Peter said this at the cost of his life. Why? It's because his spiritual eyes were wide open. In Jesus, there is no death. There is glorious resurrection! Jesus opened his eyes to be a spiritual general, more than a conqueror, even over death.

There is also Levi the tax collector and many more examples. Let me introduce the Bolivians as another example. When M. Esteban Cho went to Bolivia 30 years ago, he saw no hope. But now many Bolivians share testimonies saying, "Lord, send me to proclaim Jesus' good news to all nations. You freed Bolivia from sin and poverty to be a missionary-sending country as he did with Korea!"

Fourthly, "To proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

The 50th year was called the Year of Jubilee, a year when all debts were canceled, and slaves were freed. Lost lands were returned to the original owner. This is good news in Jesus. It really means in Jesus our lost Paradise is restored free of charge because of Jesus. What good news of great joy is Jesus for all! However, how did the people of Nazareth respond?

Third, the people of Nazareth reject Jesus (22b-30).

Verse 22 shows that they were both astonished and offended. All spoke well of him and were amazed but began to discredit him based on his human background, saying, "Wait a minute! Isn't this Joseph's son?" We have this experience too, to be despised by the closest people, and also to despise little Jesuses among us.

Jesus was not upset. He quoted a proverb, and then said, "No prophet is accepted in his hometown." Jesus explained that God's grace is always given to the poor in spirit and humble in heart, such as to the woman in Zarephath and Naaman the Syrian in the times of the prophets Elijah and Elisha. Jesus loved the people and confronted them, challenging them according to God's will. Since the Jews despised and rejected Jesus as their Savior, salvation would be given to the Gentiles. They should have repented of their hardened hearts. Yet they became furious and tried to kill him. But no one could harm Jesus before his time to die on the cross. Jesus walked right through the crowd and went on his way. Whoever doesn't appreciate the salvation of the Messiah, will only miss God's blessing.

Today we learned that Jesus is the promised Messiah, the Savior of the World. He is the good news of great joy for all people. We must repent because only the poor in spirit can enjoy this blessing. Thank Jesus for freeing us from the bondage of sin, death and the devil. Let us welcome Jesus as our Messiah. May the Lord fill us with His Spirit to proclaim this good news to all who are in the bondage of sin and Satan and death. Jesus is the good news who sets us free. Let's pray.

Written by Dr. Jose Ahn (March 27, 2022)