

I MUST PROCLAIM THE GOOD NEWS OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Luke 4:31-44

Key Verse: 43, “But he said, ‘I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent.’”

Jesus was baptized and anointed in the fullness of the Holy Spirit. Then Jesus faced and overcame three temptations of the devil. After that, Jesus taught in his hometown of Nazareth. But they were offended and wanted to throw him off a cliff. In today’s Scripture passage, Jesus launches his preaching and healing ministry. Jesus’ message and ministry had power and authority from God. Jesus’ message and ministry proclaimed the kingdom of God. The world still desperately needs the message and ministry of the kingdom of God. Let’s receive this good news for ourselves and pray that God may equip and empower us to share this good news with people suffering in a confused and chaotic world. In this passage, let’s learn of 3 ministries of Jesus: exorcism, healing and preaching.

First, while teaching, Jesus drives out a demon (31-37).

Jesus went from Nazareth down to Capernaum. Capernaum was a port town on the northern end of the Sea of Galilee, about a day’s walk from Nazareth. On the Sabbath day, Jesus went into the synagogue and taught the people. Usually the people who taught were teachers of the law who had training as rabbis. But we know from the previous Bible passage that Jesus was known as the son of Joseph, a carpenter. People expected Jesus to be skilled in woodwork, not in preaching. So the people were amazed to hear Jesus speak, especially since his words had authority. They wondered, “Where did he get such authority? Who taught him the Scriptures? His father is a handyman!”

Where then did Jesus’ authority come from? Of course, we know that his authority came from God. Jesus spoke the truth of God. Jesus did not talk mere politics or philosophy or common sense, like a talk-show host. Jesus spoke with the power and authority of God, proclaiming the truths of God’s kingdom. Jesus spoke with absolute authority as the Prince and Ambassador of Heaven. How blessed we are to have the words and example of Jesus Christ! Before Jesus came, there were prophets of God who came and spoke God’s word to their people every few centuries. But even these prophets could only tell us what God revealed to them. Jesus’ coming was something totally new. Teachers of the law could say, “It is written in the Holy Scriptures...” or perhaps, “Thus says the Lord our God...” Jesus went way beyond that saying, “Truly I say to you...” Jesus spoke the truth about God and man with great authority, power and passion. What a privilege we have in our times to read of the teachings and life of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! And what a great shame it is when people ignore his life and teachings. Jesus’ impact on human history is tremendous, even changing the calendar from B.C. to A.D. with his birth. Jesus said, “The words I have spoken to you—they are full of the Spirit and life” (Jn 6:63). May we take to heart Jesus’ words of life. May we also encourage others to listen to Jesus’ words and have life in his name.

While Jesus was teaching with power and authority, a man was disturbed by Jesus' teaching. He cried out at the top of his voice, "Go away! 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!" This guy really didn't like Jesus and his teaching. Why not? He thought Jesus came to destroy him. Clearly, he felt that Jesus was a threat to his comfort and safety. We know that Jesus did not come to destroy but to save life and to give life to the full. What was wrong with this angry man in the synagogue? Luke tells us why he had a twisted view of Jesus: he was possessed by a demon, an impure spirit. The demon caused the man to think that Jesus was going to harm him or rob him of his joy of life. The devil is at work to dissuade people from listening to Jesus or taking him seriously. Even today, the devil wants people to think that Jesus was crazy or a fictional character, and that Christians are weird, no fun, and they have the most boring lives. Especially, the devil wants people to think that Christians are not free at all, and that ignoring Jesus and doing what you want to do is the way to fulfillment and happiness. But those who take Jesus' words seriously can experience new life, joy, wisdom, peace and truth in Jesus.

Can you imagine someone interrupting a church service like this angry man? What would people do? Perhaps the ushers would take him out of the service? If it sounded really serious, someone might call the police. Maybe some preachers might try to argue with the man. Surely, the other listeners must've felt very awkward.

This week at the Academy Awards, actor Will Smith slapped comedian Chris Rock for insulting his wife in a joke. Later, during Will's acceptance speech for winning an Oscar, he said, "At your highest moment, be careful, that's when the devil comes for you."¹ He was quoting Denzel Washington who came over and prayed for Will Smith after the slap. So we know that Denzel and Will believe in God and in the devil. But a film director didn't like the reference to the devil and said, "The devil, in fact, doesn't exist. This was a fundamentalist speech that we should neither hear nor see."²

So what did Jesus do after this angry outburst?

"Be quiet!" Jesus said sternly. "Come out of him!" Jesus spoke to the angry, disruptive spirit in the man. Jesus did not say to the crowd, "Pay no attention to that crazy man," or, "Let's take a 5-minute break." What happened when Jesus said, "Be quiet! Come out of him!"? The man fell down before them all, and the demon came out of him without injuring him. All the people were so amazed and said, "What amazing, powerful words! Even evil spirits come out by his command!" And news about Jesus spread all over the place rapidly. If people had smartphones they would've been texting crazy and videotaping what happened. The local news would've come with their cameras to interview witnesses at to what happened.

Jesus drove the demon out of a man. We call this exorcism. Demons are real, and they disturb people and cause destructive behavior. There is a spirit world, and Jesus is Lord of all spirits, evil or good, angels or demons. Angels and demons must obey Jesus, for Jesus is the Holy One of God, the Son of God, the Messiah, the Anointed One.

¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YVvgCMZSkyw>, accessed 4/3/22. Video mark at 2:49.

² <https://people.com/movies/pedro-almodovar-says-will-smiths-oscars-speech-was-like-cult-leader/>, accessed 4/3/22.

You got a demon problem or you know someone who might have a demon problem? Good luck with that one, because you can't defeat the devil. You're too weak and stupid. That's why Jesus taught his disciples to pray, "Lead us not into temptation," in other words, I'm foolish, I need your wisdom and guidance, "but deliver us from evil," which can mean, "I'm weak. I need your strong deliverance." You cannot defeat the devil or your sin or death or disease with your own wisdom, strength or determination. Only Jesus can. And Jesus wants us to share in his victory, when we love, and trust and obey him.

Second, Jesus heals many diseases (38-41). There's another foe that Jesus is Lord over: disease. Jesus left the synagogue and went to the home of Simon. This is Simon Peter, the fisherman. Luke has not formally introduced us to Simon or any of Jesus' disciples yet. But clearly, Simon knew of Jesus. Most likely Simon was already introduced to Jesus by his brother Andrew (Jn 1:42). Also, most likely Jesus made his ministry base in Capernaum in Simon Peter's home. Perhaps Jesus and a few disciples went to Simon's home for some lunch or dinner and some rest. There was a problem at home: Simon Peter's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever. At that time, there was no Tylenol or Ibuprofen one could take to reduce a fever. Probably Peter's wife's mother had a virus or stomach flu. They asked Jesus to help her. The Bible says that Jesus bent over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her. That's amazing! Jesus spoke to a disease, a fever, and it obeyed and left her. Even disease must obey Jesus! Matthew and Mark tell us that Jesus touched or took her hand and helped her up. But Luke emphasizes the power of Jesus' word that he rebuked the fever. I believe Jesus did both. In gratitude, the woman got up and began to serve them. It's good to serve Jesus when he heals you.

After this, at sunset, many sick people were brought to Jesus. They must've heard the news that Jesus drives out demons and heals the sick. So people started coming to Jesus and bringing their sick relatives, friends and neighbors. The Bible says that Jesus laid his hands on each one and healed them. We all know that usually you don't touch or go near a sick person, both to give them better rest and for your own health. But Jesus ministered to them one by one, laying his hands on each one, in love and compassion. Jesus did not say wave his hand in the air and say, "You are all healed. Now go home, and let me get some rest." Surely it was exhausting for Jesus to help all the sick people who came to him one by one. But he ministered to them all, as our Good Shepherd.

Jesus' healing ministry was both physical and spiritual. He healed diseases and drove out evil spirits. He restored people physically and spiritually. Many people with demons shouted, "You are the Son of God!" just like the angry man in the synagogue. Demons are really afraid of Jesus, and they don't like to give up their hostages. Jesus rebuked them and would not allow them to speak, since they knew he was the Messiah. Why did Jesus tell them to be quiet, when they were only telling the truth about Jesus? For one thing, Jesus did not want or need the testimony of demons, for they were not in a respectful mind to advertise the goodness of Jesus. They were actually trying to give Jesus a bad rap. Also, it was not time to reveal to the world who Jesus was, for they wouldn't accept it or understand his real mission which would culminate on the cross.

Recently I heard a powerful song on Christian radio. It's actually a powerful prayer. It's called "In Jesus Name (God of Possible)" by Katy Nichole. Listen to some of the words:

I pray for your healing
That circumstances would change
I pray that the fear inside would flee in Jesus name
I pray that a breakthrough would happen today
I pray miracles over your life in Jesus name, in Jesus name

I felt that this song had power and deep meaning. Especially I felt that the singer has powerful faith in Jesus and the power of prayer in his name. So I looked up her story. Katy was diagnosed with scoliosis and underwent surgery to straighten her spine, which led to persistent post-surgery pain that sent her into a bedridden mental and emotional spiral. Three years later, Katy went back in for an operation to essentially remove the metal rods and screws in her back. She says, "...the smoke cloud of depression was gone. I encountered the Lord in that moment...my spine was actually straighter than when the rods had been in it. So when I say that God can do miracles, I mean it, because I've seen it."³

Jesus is our Healer. He can heal our diseases. He can restore our minds, our spirits, our relationships by his power and by his love. So many people are hurting and wounded. Do you care? We all need Jesus' healing. We are all broken, immature, incomplete and we need to be made whole, complete, well in Jesus' name. Amen.

Third, Jesus' decision to move on and keep preaching (42-44).

So Jesus had a long day of preaching, driving out demons and healing many sick people at Simon's house. I would expect Jesus to sleep in the next day, since he worked long and hard for well over 12 hours, from sunrise to well past sunset.

But Jesus did not take a vacation at this time. At daybreak, Jesus went out to a solitary place. Mark's gospel tells us it was even before sunrise and Jesus went out to pray (Mk 1:35). People were looking for Jesus. They wanted him to stay with them. Certainly they had more sick and demon-inflicted people who needed help.

Did Jesus comply with their request? Not this time. Jesus said (verse 43): "I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent." And he kept on preaching in the synagogues of Judea.

These words echo the same words that Jesus spoke in Nazareth when he quoted Isaiah: "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor...to proclaim freedom for the prisoners...to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor" (4:18-19).

Jesus knew that he had to keep going from town to town proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God, for that is why he was sent by God. It's human nature that we want to settle down. It's always difficult to move around and go to new places. I really respect my mother because in the early years of her marriage to my military father, our family had to move a lot. In fact, the first three children were born one year after each other, in three different states—Texas, California and Arkansas. It's difficult for children to move since they can't make long-lasting friendships. Even moving to a new apartment in the same city can be a hassle. Needless

³ <https://www.thechristianbeat.org/katy-nichole-debut-single-in-jesus-name-god-of-possible-goes-viral/>

to say, we like to stay in the same home, with the same job. Meeting new people or strangers can be challenging.

But Jesus didn't settle in one place, even if conditions were going well. Jesus said, "I must go to the other towns also to proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to them as well. That is why I was sent."

I confess that I like to be in a comfortable corner. So I am so impressed and challenged when I think about John and Maria Peace who left everything in the USA to go to Ukraine as missionaries. They had to learn a new language, live in new culture, and meet new people, very different from them. Our Korean missionaries to the USA did the same thing.

Last week I was also moved by Pastor Mark Vucekovich's decision to visit our coworkers in Ukraine. Listen to this beautiful letter he wrote:

"When I was back in Chicago watching the news, I admired the courage of the journalists who are still in Ukraine reporting daily. And I thought, "If they are there, why not a pastor? Don't our people need more than money? And maybe even more than prayer coming from us in total safety? Shouldn't somebody try to go and see them, share just a little what they're going through?" And the words of our Lord came to mind: "For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me" (Mt 25:35-36).

"His words are hauntingly profound. He's telling us how he wants us to be and live in this selfish world. His heart is so close to those suffering and in need. He wants us to learn his heart, and if we have the chance, to be there for them and do what we can, especially for our brothers and sisters in Christ, though we may've never even met them. The world may be indifferent, or think they're insignificant, or even try to take advantage of them. But Jesus is watching. It matters. Eternity in his kingdom is at stake. How we love our fellow sufferers is how we love Jesus.

"I don't know what I could possibly say or do for our coworkers. But I want to be with them, even for a day, for Jesus' sake. May they find comfort and refuge in him. May they know how much our community worldwide loves them, is praying for them, grieving with them, hoping for them, how much they matter to us. Most of all, may the name of our Lord Jesus be praised. Thanks so much for praying for our safety. Please especially pray that I can get [my friend] back home safely to his wife and 3 young children as soon as possible."

Let's remember Jesus' powerful preaching and beautiful healing ministry. We can participate in his healing ministry through our love and prayers and visits and phone calls. We can participate in proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God to people who are depressed or angry or confused or anxious. Let's engage in preaching and bringing healing in Jesus' name.