

# Jesus Came To ... Proclaim Good News

Luke 4:14-21

Preached by Minister Jason Tarn to HCC on 11/27/2011

## Introduction

- ❖ This morning I'm pleased to begin an Advent sermon series, which we're calling "Jesus Came To". Each Sunday of Advent we're going to consider a passage where Jesus explains why he came to earth. The driving question of each message will be, "***Why did Jesus come into this world?***"
  - Now if you think about it, it's pretty amazing that we're even asking this question. If I were to ask you, "*Why did you come into this world?*", you wouldn't have an answer. How many of us decided to be born? How many of us can say with absolute confidence, "*This is the reason why I came into the world?*"
    - None of us. We were just born. We had no choice, no say in the matter. We entered this world without any clue as to why we're here.
- ❖ But consider Jesus. He came as a man, a human being. He is like us. But at the same time, he is not like us. **Unlike us, he consciously decided to enter this world.** Unlike us, he had a purpose for coming. He knew exactly why he came that first Christmas morning, and he tells us exactly why in a number of places in the gospels. This morning's passage in Luke 4 is one of them.

## A Synagogue Sermon on the Sabbath

- ❖ Let me start off with some context. Prior to our passage, Jesus returned to Galilee after spending forty days in the wilderness, where he was tempted by the devil. The text says he returned "*in the power of the Spirit*" and went about teaching in the synagogues. And as a result, he became somewhat of a celebrity. It says a report (news) about him spread throughout the countryside. The word for 'report' is '*pheme*', which is where we get the word 'fame'. So literally, Jesus was getting famous. It says he was being glorified by all.
- ❖ So in v16, the now famous preacher returns to his hometown of Nazareth. "*And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read.*"
  - Notice scripture says it was Jesus' custom to gather with others on a weekly basis to hear the reading and preaching of the Word. If anyone could argue that their private devotions with God are more satisfying than going every week to a worship service – it's Jesus. But Jesus made it a priority to worship with others.
- ❖ Now we know from historical records that synagogue worship would have begun with a recitation of the *Shema*: "*Here, O Israel: the LORD our God, the LORD is one.*" (Dt. 6:4). Then a prayer would be offered, followed by a reading from the books of Moses, and then a reading from the Prophets.
  - Then based on what was read, a qualified male in the audience would be invited to preach on the passage. And it was not uncommon for distinguished visitors to be invited to preach.

- ❖ So look at back at v16, “*And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written*”. So on that day, Jesus was invited to give the reading from the Prophets, which was out of Isaiah. And Luke records for us his recitation of the words found in Isaiah chapter 61:1-2.
  - Now what Luke recorded is probably only a summary of what Jesus actually read that day. If you compare vv18-19 to Isaiah 61, you’ll notice that the line “*to set at liberty those who are oppressed*” is not found. That’s because it comes from Isaiah 58:6. So Jesus probably read a chunk of Isaiah that covered chapters 58 and 61, and Luke is focusing on the most relevant verses.
  
- ❖ After Jesus finished reading, it says in v20, “*And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him.*” Now unlike preaching today, sermons were delivered from a seated position. So after taking this posture, everyone had their eyes fixed on Jesus, anticipating what he would say.
  - So look at v21, “*And he began to say to them*”. Now the fact that it starts off that way suggests that Jesus said far more than what is recorded. But Luke only records one sentence because it was the main point of the sermon: “*Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.*”
  
- ❖ **Friends, you have to realize how audacious it was for Jesus to make this claim.** Remember that Isaiah’s original audience were exiles who were longing to be released from captivity, to be back in God’s good favor, and to be restored to their homeland.
  - **Isaiah also spoke of a prophetic figure called the Suffering Servant, whom God would use to bring back his people from exile.** HE was Israel’s Messiah, which in Hebrew means the Anointed One. In Greek, you’d call him the Christ.
  
- ❖ Well by Jesus’ day, the Israelites has long been released and restored to their land, but they were still under foreign occupation. So they still considered themselves out of God’s good favor. **They still considered themselves to be in exile. They still longed for their Messiah.**
  - So try to put yourself in the shoes of a synagogue worshipper present that day. Jesus shows up that morning and reads from a familiar passage written from the first-person perspective of the Suffering Servant.
  
- ❖ If you were paying attention, you would have heard a promise of good news and liberation to four kinds of people: the poor, the captives, the blind, and the oppressed. And you would have caught his reference in v19 to the ancient practice of a jubilee year.
  - According to the Mosaic Law (Leviticus 25), every 50th year in the Jewish calendar was celebrated as a year of jubilee for all God’s people. It was a year of liberation where all slaves were released from servitude. It was a year of redemption where all debtors were released from their debts. It was a year of restoration where all lost property was returned to its original owners. It was a jubilee year.

- ❖ This is what the Servant is referring to when he says he's here to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor – **a jubilee to end all jubilees**. It would be a new age of salvation marked by full and final liberation, redemption and restoration. And the Messiah will be instrumental in bringing this to fruition.
  - I'm sure Jesus mentioned all of this while explaining Isaiah 61. There was nothing out of the ordinary. I'm sure other preachers before Jesus taught something similar out of this passage.
  
- ❖ **But on this day, the preacher does something no one has ever done before.** He goes on to claim that *today* (this very day) all the prophetic promises that Isaiah spoke of have been fulfilled. **The year of the LORD's favor (the great Jubilee) has actually arrived because Israel's Messiah has come.** He's standing right in front of you!
  - So going back to our question, "*Why did Jesus come into this world?*", one way to answer is to consider how Jesus applied Isaiah 61 to himself and to his mission on earth.

### **A Preacher of Good News**

- ❖ So let's read vv18-19 again. "*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.*"
  
- ❖ **Now I can understand why some people might glance over these verses and assume Jesus' ministry was about reforming social structures.** They read this and think he came to improve the economic status of the poor, to alleviate physical suffering, to give voice to the marginalized. **They see Jesus primarily as a social reformer who came into this world to right societal wrongs.**
  - And since Jesus said that as the Father sent him into the world, so he sends his disciples into the world (Jn. 17:18), their understanding of Jesus' mission in the world frames their understanding of why we're sent into the world as his disciples. So if Jesus was sent, first and foremost, as a reformer to right societal wrongs, then Christians ought to prioritize that within our mission.
  
- ❖ **I see why people draw this conclusion because people in Jesus' day did the same thing.** Some looked to him to bring about a social revolution. Some wanted him to heal all diseases and disabilities. Some hoped that he would overthrow the Roman authorities.
  - But notice a key verb that comes up three times in these two verses. Jesus is claiming to have been anointed by the Spirit "*to proclaim good news*", "*to proclaim liberty*", "*to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor*". That's the Greek word *kerusso* and it is translated elsewhere as "to preach".

- ❖ So the first thing we can say in answer to our question, “Why did Jesus come?” is that **1) He came to preach**. Jesus was a preacher. That was his calling. Yes, he healed the sick, he caused the lame to walk and the blind to see. But as the Gospel of John puts it, these miracles were considered signs – pointers to his deity as the Son of God, evidence that the kingdom of God was breaking-in on our world through his presence and ministry.
  - But here in Luke 4, Jesus is saying that his mission is primarily about proclaiming, heralding, preaching news of salvation, news of God’s favor now available.
  
- ❖ But just like in our day, many in Jesus’ day had little regard for preaching and would have preferred if he focused on ministries that met more practical needs. Look at the end of chapter 4 in v42. Jesus just spent the whole night healing the sick, and the next day the townspeople try to prevent him from leaving. “We’ve got more sick people Jesus! You’re not going to leave them in their sickness are you?”
  - But notice his reply in v43, “*But he said, “I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well, for I was sent for this purpose.”*” Here Jesus says himself that he was sent for a purpose, for a particular reason, and it was to preach good news. Preaching was his priority.
  
- ❖ And that’s what I appreciate about our church. I hear it from the leadership that preaching the Gospel is our priority. I sense it from our congregation. I sense a hunger for a regular diet of the Word of God. I sense a recognition that lost people need to hear the good news about the grace of God found in Christ. That reflects Jesus’ priorities. If he was sent, first and foremost, as a preacher of good news, then preaching ought to be a priority in our mission.
  
- ❖ This is not to say we ignore or downplay the importance of ministries of compassion and justice. You don’t have to be here long to know that we, as a church, place a high value on caring for the poor and sick and oppressed in this city. **But we prioritize preaching, because we believe the Gospel is not just a rally cry calling you to do something great for God’s glory and the good of others.**
  - **No, the Gospel is, first and foremost, good news about what God has done for you through Jesus that you could not do for yourself.** And this news, when applied by the Spirit, has the power to save you and change you, so you can truly live for the glory of God and the good of others. Such good news needs to be preached on a regular basis.

### **A Preacher to the Poor**

- ❖ Well let’s consider more carefully what Jesus was preaching. In v18, he says he’s been anointed to preach **a) good news to the poor**. Now you might be wondering if Jesus was referring to the literal poor – the economically, materially poor. And the answer would be “yes but more so”.

- No doubt Jesus was thinking about the poor in Israel, the common people of the land. Most of the people he ministered to would have fallen under that category. No doubt he had compassion on the materially poor. *Yet what was his good news for them?* Was it a promise to raise their economic status, to improve their standard of living?
- ❖ **No, the good news Jesus proclaimed to the poor offered something better than material riches.** The core of his message was to point to himself and say, “I am the Messiah. I am the fulfillment of all the promises of God, so if you trust in me – whether rich or poor – you’ll receive the kingdom of God (Lk. 6:20) and all the treasures of heaven.”
  - That kind of good news is available to anyone regardless of your economic status because rich and poor are spiritually bankrupt apart from Christ. “*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*” (Mt. 5:3)
- ❖ *Does this mean we should ignore or forgo our mercy ministries to the literal poor in our city?* By no means! We should continue demonstrating the love of Christ and reflecting the compassion of Christ through acts of love and service to the poor. But again, our priority should always be on preaching the good news to them.
  - **Tell the poor about the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, “that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.”** (2 Cor. 8:9). Rich – not in material wealth – but in spiritual blessing. That is the best news you can hold out to them. Our goal should be to alleviate all suffering in the lives of the poor and needy, especially eternal suffering.

### **A Preacher to the Captive and Blind**

- ❖ Let’s keep looking v18 to see what else Jesus was preaching. He says he was sent **b) to preach freedom to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind.** Now again I’d suggest we read these terms more broadly and not just limit them to the literal captive and literal blind.
  - *Why?* **Well first of all, there is no instance in the gospels of Jesus freeing an actual prisoner.** In fact, that’s what confused John the Baptist in Luke chapter 7 as he was languishing in his cell. That’s why he sent two of his disciples to Jesus to ask if he was the One to come or should they be expecting someone else. What John was coming to understand is that the Christ had come to bring, first and foremost, a spiritual liberation to spiritual captives.
- ❖ **Secondly, the metaphor of blindness is used all over the place in Jesus’ teaching of spiritual blindness to the truth of God.** The most familiar instance is when he calls the Pharisees “blind guides” (Mt. 15:14). The blind were leading the blind. Obviously blindness was being used figuratively.

- ❖ There's another example where blindness and captivity are used together in a spiritual sense to describe the same people. In John 8:31, Jesus was talking to crowd and told them that if they knew the truth, the truth would set them free. But they were confused since they saw themselves as free men.
  - They answered Jesus, "*We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say, 'You will become free'?*" Jesus replied, "*Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin.*"
  
- ❖ Notice that Jesus is implying that these Jews were in captivity but not in a literal sense. The shackles weren't around their wrists but around their hearts. They were slaves to sin. **Their hearts were so captive to sin that they could not *but* sin in all they do.** They were in spiritual captivity.
  - Yet notice that his audience was spiritually blinded to the fact. They assumed Jesus was speaking literally, and therefore didn't see themselves in need of liberation. They couldn't see their chains.
  
- ❖ **This is why the proclamations of liberation from captivity and sight for the blind are paired together in Isaiah 61 – because the specific way that sin enslaves you is by blinding you.**
  - Sin blinds you from seeing the glory of Jesus and the supreme worth and joy of living freely in him. And so we're lulled into complacency as willing slaves. Sin doesn't have to threaten us with a whip. We willingly do its bidding. We're content under sin's mastery because we think we're free when really we just can't see its chain around our hearts.
  
- ❖ So the good news that Jesus came to preach is that the spiritually blind can have the eyes of their hearts opened to see "*the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ*" (2 Cor. 4:4). And the spiritually captive can be released from sin's crippling guilt and grip over their hearts.

### **A Jubilee to End All Jubilees**

- ❖ These amazing promises are part and parcel of the "year of the Lord's favor" that Jesus came to proclaim in v19. Jesus the preacher came **c) to announce a jubilee to end all jubilees.** To proclaim a new era of salvation that he'll inaugurate through his life, death, and resurrection.
  - There is now a chance for a new start with God, to have all your debts erased, to be redeemed from sin's slavery, to be liberated from its penalty and power – all of this is available to those who respond with repentance and faith to the good news that Jesus preaches.
  
- ❖ **Many have pointed out that the most amazing thing about Jesus' sermon that day is not what he said – but what he left out.** In v19, he stops with the words, "*to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor*", which comes out of Isaiah 61:2. But there is actually more to that verse that he intentionally leaves out.

- What Jesus stopped short of quoting goes like this, “*to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor and the day of vengeance of our God*”. I think Jesus omitted that line – not because he’s too embarrassed to mention God’s vengeance in public – but because the reason for his first coming was not to exact vengeance on guilty sinners. It was to proclaim good news of forgiveness, of a fresh start, of God’s good favor available.
- ❖ Friends, we are living in the age between the two comings. Right now is the age of God’s favor. We are still living in the Jubilee. **But this age will one day come to a close and that day will certainly be a day of vengeance for our God, but it is not this day.** This is a day of good news, but in the end it is only good news for those who believe it to be true.
  - If you have not received this good news as your own, I invite you to do so today. Do you realize that as you’re listening to His Word being explained, Jesus is preaching this good news to you right now. Jesus came to preach and is still preaching today.

### **Bringing Into Reality the Good News He Preached**

- ❖ But at the same time, Jesus didn’t come to simply preach that these blessings are available. 2) **He came to actually bring into reality the good news that he preached.** You probably noticed I’ve been skipping over that phrase in v18, “*to set at liberty those who are oppressed.*”
  - As I mentioned earlier, this phrase comes from Isaiah 58:6. In that chapter, God was rebuking Israel for not caring for the oppressed. It was their responsibility and privilege as God’s chosen people to look out for the little guy. God had protected them and fought for them so they could protect and fight for others. But they misused God’s blessings to serve themselves.
    - Well by applying this verse to himself, **Jesus is basically saying that he is here to fulfill what Israel failed to do.** He came to bless the weak, to protect the helpless. He came to liberate the oppressed. So how does he do it?
- ❖ **In one sense, he did so by liberating them from their physical, earthly burdens.** Healing the sick was a real means of liberating them from physical oppression. Casting out evil spirits was a form of liberation. The same goes for feeding the hungry and admonishing the rich for their selfishness and lack of compassion.
  - But it’s important that we read all these encounters in Jesus’ life within the overall narrative of each gospel, which in each case leads the reader ultimately to his death and resurrection. That was the highpoint of Jesus’ ministry.
- ❖ The ultimate reason why Jesus came – the overall driving motive and purpose for taking on the flesh of a man – was so that he could die like a man on the cross for the sins of man.
  - **The cross is Jesus’ chief means of liberating those who are oppressed.** Because the worst oppression everyone faces – beyond hunger, beyond poverty, beyond slavery – is our spiritual poverty, our spiritual captivity, our spiritual blindness.
    - Jesus came to liberate us from such things.

## Conclusion

- ❖ Study the life of Jesus for yourself and you'll see that while he accomplished many things on this earth, it's clear that Jesus came for a *particular* reason, and our mission as his disciples ought to reflect that *particular* reason.
  - We should be doing many things in the name of our Lord Jesus, but what is the primary thing? **The primary thing is to proclaim the good news of freedom and favor before God that is available to all who trust in his Christ, the long-awaited Messiah.** And then all the acts of love and service that we perform in the name of Jesus should be aimed at adorning and commending this good news.
  
- ❖ As you participate, this Christmas, in ministries of mercy to those in need, whether it be Angel Tree or Operation Christmas Child or serving at a homeless shelter, you might be serving alongside people of other faiths (or no faith).
  - So remember that, as a follower of Christ, you have the unique privilege and responsibility to give the needy something better than a Christmas gift or a warm meal. You can proclaim to them the good news of the Gospel.