

THE MISSION OF JESUS

{READ LUKE 4:14–30}

If someone showed up at your door this afternoon and said, “I am here to save you” how you respond to them is going to depend on a number of different factors. First, you are going to respond differently to that person if they are a salesman or a politician as opposed to a fireman. Furthermore, you are going to respond differently to that person if you believe that your house is on fire than you would if you believed that your house was fine. In order to respond rightly to a message we need to understand who the person is, what his message is, and what our own circumstances are.

If we are going to respond in faith to Jesus’s message we need to understand and believe who he is, what his message is, and who his message is for. In this passage, we are going to see four truths about Jesus: (1) His Identity, (2) His Message, (3) His Audience, and (4) His Future.

1. His Identity (Who He Is)

1.1 Overview of Luke 1–4

If we were to read from the beginning of Luke’s gospel story, we would have read that

- Chapter 1
 - Jesus is the one who John the Baptist was sent to prepare the people for (Luke 1:17, 67–79)
 - He will be called the Son of the Most High (Luke 1:32)
 - God will give to him the throne of David (Luke 1:32)
 - He will reign over the house of Jacob forever (Luke 1:33)
 - His kingdom will have no end (Luke 1:33)
 - He will be called the holy Son of God (Luke 1:35)

- Chapter 2
 - He is from the lineage of David and he was born in the city of David (Bethlehem) (Luke 2:1–7)
 - A multitude of angels appeared to shepherds telling them that this Jesus, who was born in Bethlehem, is a savior and God's messiah that Israel has been looking forward to. (Luke 2:8–20)
 - Simeon, a righteous and devout man, called Jesus God's salvation, "a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel." (Luke 2:22–32)
 - Anna, a prophetess, testified that Jesus was coming to redeem Jerusalem (Luke 2:38)
 - Jesus's parents lose track of him and then find him in the temple and he says to them, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" (Luke 2:41–52)
- Chapter 3
 - After John baptizes Jesus, the Holy Spirit descended on him like a dove and then God opened the heavens and declared, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased." (Luke 3:22)
 - Then Luke gives us the genealogy of Jesus and shows us that Jesus can trace his family roots all the way back to king David, and Jacob, and Isaac and Abraham, and finally to the first man, Adam. (Luke 3:23–38)
 - Then the Holy Spirit sends Jesus out into the wilderness where the devil tempts him but unlike Adam in the garden of Eden and unlike the Israelites in the wilderness he doesn't disobey God. He doesn't give in. (Luke 4:1–12)

Then, we come to our passage. It says that "Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and a report about him went out through all the surrounding country. And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all." Then he comes to his hometown.

By this point, the evidence for who Jesus is has become unavoidable. But now, we get to hear from Jesus. How did Jesus see himself? Who did he believe he was? When he gets to Nazareth, he does what he has been doing throughout Galilee; he goes to the synagogue on the Sabbath day to preach. And the first thing he does is read God's word. The attendant gives him the scroll of the prophet Isaiah, he unrolls the scroll and finds the place he wants to read from, he reads the text, sits down (as most teachers did when they were about to teach) and tells them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." There are three truths about who Jesus is that we need to see here.

1.1 God Anointed Jesus with the *Spirit of God*

First, look at the beginning of verse 18. God anointed Jesus with the Spirit of God. We see this at his baptism. When he comes up out of the water the Spirit descends on him. And then

after his baptism it is the Spirit that sends him out into the wilderness and then it is by the power of the Spirit that he begins preaching (Luke 4:14).

1.2 God Sent Jesus

Second, God is the one who sent him. Look at verse 18. God anointed him; God sent him. All three persons of the trinity are working here. The father sends the Son in the power of the Holy Spirit.

1.3 Jesus Fulfills *God's Word*

Third, he is fulfilling God's word. Look at verse 21. He is the one that Isaiah writes about. In many different places in the book of Isaiah, Isaiah tells us about someone sent by God to represent God to the people and to bring the help and forgiveness that they need. Jesus is saying, "I am that one. I am not just another teacher telling you what God's word means. I am fulfilling God's word right now."

1.4 Conclusion

So, who is he? *He is the Son of God, sent by God, in the power of the Spirit of God, in order to fulfill the Word of God.* Jesus is the one who puts all of this together and makes sense of everything we know about God from his word. Jesus is the one who shows us who God is. Do you want to know God? Do you want to understand who God is? Jesus is the one (the only one) who can show you. That is why it is a serious offense to reject Jesus. To reject Jesus is to reject God and his word.

2. His Message

Now lets look at his message. Look with me at verses 18 and 19. Most of this quote comes from Isaiah 61:1–2 but a part of it is from Isaiah 58:6. So what is going on here? What is he saying by combining these two texts?

2.1 From Isaiah 58 to Isaiah 61: God Redeems His Sinful People

In Isaiah 58:1–7, God is rebuking his people because although they appear very religious they are failing to care for the weak and oppressed. They are fasting self-righteously. They are going through the religious motions but they are not changing the way they live. They think they are

good people. They think they are very religious but in truth, they are spiritually poor, blind, and oppressed. After God calls them out for their hypocrisy, this is what he says:

“Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the straps of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh? (Isaiah 58:6-7 ESV)

The rest of chapter 58 is a call to repent and turn back to God from their hypocrisy. The beginning of chapter 59 sums up the situation:

“Behold, the Lord’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, or his ear dull, that it cannot hear; but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear.” (Isa 59:1–2)

So what will God do? Well, later on, in Chapter 59, it says that the Lord will repay them according to their deeds and bring wrath on them. But near the end of chapter 59 it also says this, “‘... a Redeemer will come to Zion, to those in Jacob who turn from transgression,’ declares the Lord” Back in chapter 43 God is called the Redeemer. So here, it is saying that in some way God is going to come to them as a redeemer. Chapter 60 explains how God is going to transform Israel. Then we get to chapter 61 where Jesus quotes. And it is here that we see *how* God is going to come to them as a redeemer. We see what that redeemer is going to do when he comes.

Lets bring this all together. Here is what I think Jesus is doing by combining these texts. He is saying, “What you have failed to do, I am now doing. The way you were supposed to treat the poor, weak, and broken, I am fulfilling that. I am the one who can bridge the gap between you and God; between your failure and what God requires of you.”

2.2 Jesus Brings The Jubilee

Now, look at last phrase in this quote in verse 19. God sent Jesus to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor. This was also known as the year of Jubilee. In Leviticus, Moses describes the year of Jubilee as a time that will come every 50th year. At that time, all debts are forgiven and everything is paid back. Everyone was to return to their own property whether they had money to buy it back or not. This was supposed to be a time to celebrate and remember that (1) God owns all that they have, (2) God is the one who gave it them, and (3) God is a gracious and forgiving God. But the problem with the year of Jubilee is that it never happened. Once they entered the Promised Land the people forgot about God, they turned away from God, and eventually God

judged them by sending them into exile. The year of Jubilee was forgotten until Isaiah began to write about a day when God's favor would return and he would visit his poor and broken people again. He would forgive all their debts. And he would be gracious to them once again.

2.3 Now is the Time of God's Favor

There is one final thing that I haven't drawn attention to yet. Notice where Jesus ends the quote. Look at verse 19. It says, "to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." But if you go to Isaiah 61:2, you will notice that this is only the first half of the phrase. The full phrase is "to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance for our God." He leaves out the vengeance! So does this mean that Jesus was a really nice guy and God is a big angry guy? Is Jesus a god of favor and the Old Testament god was a god of wrath? No. God is not divided. Jesus isn't crossing out the second half of Isaiah 61:2. What he is saying is this, "Now is the time of God's favor. Now is the time of forgiveness. God is drawing near in mercy instead of judgment. Judgment is coming but not yet. Forgiveness is here now."

So, if I had to summarize, I would summarize Jesus's message this way: God sent Jesus to fulfill what Israel should have done and to bring the good news of God's forgiveness and favor to the poor, weak, and broken.

3. His Audience (Who His Message Is For)

So who is this message for? Is it for those who are literally poor? Well many times in Luke's gospel, we see that it is the poor, the blind, the demon oppressed, and the sick that Jesus goes to and that believe in Jesus. But he also goes and preaches to tax collectors. For example, a tax collector named Zacchaeus becomes a follower of Jesus and the first thing he does is to give half of his possessions to the poor. Moreover, in chapter 6 Jesus tells his disciples "blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God." Now look with me at verse 21. Jesus says, "Today this scripture *has been* fulfilled in *your* hearing." This is what the people in Nazareth missed and this is what we can miss too. Jesus is saying *you* are poor. You are blind. You are a captive. You need the Lord's favor. This is what the Pharisees and Scribes missed too. When in Chapter 5, the Pharisees and scribes question Jesus about eating with tax collectors and sinners, Jesus answers, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance." He wasn't saying that the Pharisees and Scribes didn't need to repent, but they certainly did not *think* they needed to repent.

Do you know why, so often, it is the poor and the blind and the weak that believe Jesus and embrace him? It's because they know they are poor. They know that he is their only hope. They know that they need him. Jesus didn't come for the people who have it all together; the people who never sin; the people who have life all figured out. He came for sinners. He came for those who are poor, weak, and broken. We sometimes forget this. It's easy to look around and think that everyone else has it all together. And then we begin to think that we need to get everything straightened before we go to God; that we need to get all cleaned up before he will receive us. The truth is that God has already come near in the person of Jesus and the only prerequisite to coming to him is that you are desperate. Is that you this morning? Let me tell you something. There is not a single story about Jesus where someone desperately calls out to him and he ignores them. In Luke 8, there is even a woman who is too afraid to call out to Jesus so she tries to sneak up and just touch the fringe of his clothes. Jesus notices even that. Jesus hears even the weakest cries for help.

But the problem with the people in Nazareth is that they don't think they really need him. Sure, it doesn't look like they reject him right away. But Jesus knows the difference between true and false belief. Look at verse 22. They are speaking well of him. They are amazed at the way he is able to speak. But they are questioning: "isn't this Joseph's son? Don't we know this guy?" Jesus understands exactly what is going on and knows that next they are going to want to test him by asking him to do a sign for them.

Here is what I think is going on. Because they didn't believe that he was who he said he was and because they failed to see that they themselves are poor and broken, because of that they were approaching Jesus as if he were someone they might support and not someone that they need. Perhaps they thought he could be a teacher or a political leader. But they weren't wondering if he was the redeemer that Isaiah talks about. They weren't wondering, "Is he the one who can fulfill God's commands to us that we have failed to do again and again? Is he the one who can bring God's forgiveness and favor to us? Is he the one who can lead us and change us so that we go to the poor, weak, and broken?" They missed his message because they didn't realize it was for them.

That is why Jesus brings up the stories of Elijah and Elisha. If you read the book of Kings you will see that the reason Elijah and Elisha don't do miracles for those in Israel is because Israel had become corrupt. Israel had turned away from God and no longer believed his word.

Jesus is comparing the unbelief of the people in his hometown with the unbelief of Israel in the book of Kings. They knew this. That is why they got so angry.

What about us? Do we merely support Jesus or do we need him? Do we see ourselves as poor, weak, and in need of grace or do we think we are “pretty good”? These people were “pretty good.” They probably went to synagogue every week. They knew their bibles well. They tithed. From the outside they probably looked “pretty good.” They didn’t think they needed a redeemer. They didn’t think that they were poor.

Do we think that way? If we were to look at how we spend our time and where we focus all of our efforts what would it communicate? Would it show that we are desperate to know Jesus and to make him known to others? Or would it show that we support him but our lives are centered around other things? If we were to step back and look at our marriages, would we conclude that highest priority of our marriages is to know Jesus better together? Does the way we spend our time reflect that? Does the way we parent reflect that? Is our experience of Jesus causing us to go to the poor and weak?

4. His Future (How He Is Going To Accomplish His Message)

If we look closely, there are hints here that point forward to what is to come. If you are feeling poor, weak, and broken; in need of grace, then you need to see that Jesus came not only to proclaim good news but also to accomplish it. Look at verses 28 through 30. When he confronts their unbelief, they become very angry. They take him to the top of a hill in order to kill him. But even though there are many of them and they are determined, they are not able to throw him down the cliff. He simply walks right through them and leaves. There is no struggle, no fight. He simply walks away. God sent him to proclaim good news to the poor, weak and broken and nothing is going to stop him from doing that. This helps us to understand when near the end of this story the people are angry again and want to kill him. But this time he doesn’t walk away. He doesn’t even defend himself. And the people lead him up another hill, named Golgotha. This is not because there were too many people or he wasn’t strong enough to escape or defend himself. It is because for those who see themselves as poor and needy Jesus took the second half of Isaiah 61:2. And when he was nailed to the cross he fulfilled another passage in Isaiah. Isaiah 53.

He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth. By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people? And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth. Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors. (Isaiah 53:1-12 ESV)

{PRAY}