

The Spirit of the LORD Is on Me

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[0 : 00] If you have your Bible with you, you can open it up to the Gospel of Luke. We're continuing on with that this morning. Last Sunday we heard about how Jesus was tempted by the devil.

And we heard about how he resisted the devil perfectly, again and again, refusing to give in. We're in Luke chapter 4, and Luke now moves on to tell us in summary fashion about Jesus' initial ministry.

So he's just come out of this wilderness where he was for 40 days, and this is what Luke has to say. He says, If we read these words carefully, we notice that this is covering a period of time.

It would have taken time for the news to spread. Of course, in those days, news traveled by foot. But the tense of the verb in the second statement there helps us see that there's a period in view here.

He was teaching in their synagogues, going from town to town. And overall, Luke tells us that the response was quite positive.

[1 : 31] Everyone praised him. Everyone honored him. What's interesting about this sort of summary of Jesus' early ministry is that Luke puts all the emphasis on Jesus' teaching, rather than on the miracles of Jesus.

If we compare this carefully with the other gospel accounts, we'll see that Jesus has been doing miracles in many of these towns at the same time. And yet Luke doesn't even mention them. He will talk about them. He's going to get to it soon enough. But for now, Luke wants to tell the story with an emphasis on the teaching of Jesus, on the message of Jesus.

He wants to tell us about how Jesus' words were received. At first, it was received very well, very positive. But then, things begin to take a turn.

Nazareth, the hometown of Jesus, is the perfect example, which highlights some of the early opposition to Jesus' teaching and message.

[2 : 38] And that's what Luke wants to tell us about first, right out of the gate. So we're going to see this in verses 16 all the way down to 30. We're going to hear about Jesus' visit home to Nazareth, where his teaching is utterly challenged and rejected.

One of the challenging questions when we come to this particular passage is when did this happen? When did it take place? Luke has it right after the temptation of Jesus.

And if we're just quickly going through this, not really digging too deep into it, we might conclude that this is Jesus' first stop, almost. Or at least his first visit to Nazareth after getting back from the wilderness.

But if we look to the other Gospels, Matthew and Mark, we notice that the parallel accounts of this event happen a fair bit later on in Jesus' ministry.

There's already been some things that have happened. And there's basically, just quickly, there's three ideas as to why this difference in order. The first idea is that Jesus made two separate visits to Nazareth, and that this one here in Luke is his first visit, and the ones in Matthew and Mark are a second visit.

[3 : 58] We'll notice that there's similar reactions and dialogue in both, but maybe they just said the same sort of things in a second visit. A second idea is that Luke's actually merging two or more visits to Nazareth into one account here.

We call it conflation, and sometimes we do this. We're giving an account, and just to keep it all together and focus on that place or those people, we tell the whole story of what happened there all at once, even though there was maybe multiple visits.

A third idea, and the one that I really lean towards and find most convincing, is that all of these accounts, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, refer to the same visit of Jesus to Nazareth.

Not the first visit, but a later visit that Luke intentionally decides to tell us about right up at the front in order to illustrate the opposition that Jesus began to face after his earlier teaching in the synagogues.

And I think you'll see how it fits together with the other accounts as we go along here. So let's jump into this. Let's look at it, starting in verse 16. Jesus went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom, he stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him.

[5 : 31] So Luke says this was the custom of Jesus, this is what he did in every synagogue, as he went from town to town. The synagogue was like the local place for prayer and for teaching from the scriptures, where people would gather weekly.

Luke tells us that Jesus stood up to read, and the scroll of Isaiah, the prophet, was handed to him. And Jesus deliberately finds a particular passage in Isaiah.

the scroll of the prophet Isaiah, the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written.

And then Jesus reads this passage from Isaiah out loud to everyone. And Luke has this passage from Isaiah quoted right here in his gospel from verses 18 to 19.

This is the first couple verses of Isaiah chapter 61. It says, The spirit of the Lord is on me because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor.

[6 : 43] 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.

Then, he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him.

He began by saying to them, Today, this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing. What's interesting about this passage spoken by Isaiah 700 years before this, is that it's unclear in that passage just who it's referring to.

The person talking in Isaiah chapter 60 in the verse right before this one in Isaiah is clearly the Lord himself. It's clearly God.

But then as you turn to the next chapter, it says, The spirit of the sovereign Lord is on me. He has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor.

[7 : 59] So who's the me in these words of Isaiah long ago? Well, the natural assumption since Isaiah is the one who spoke this and wrote this is that it's Isaiah himself.

In fact, this was the understanding of many leading up to the time of Jesus. the good news then would be this being set free from captivity for Israel who was conquered by the Babylonians and went into exile.

And it kind of seems to fit because Isaiah had words of good news to the people. Seventy years later, they were able to return in the days of Zerubbabel and Nehemiah.

But now Jesus is here long after all that and he's saying that this passage is being fulfilled today in your hearing people of Nazareth.

In other words, Jesus is saying the spirit of the Lord is on me because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor.

[9 : 08] He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind. He has sent me to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

When Jesus says today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing he's saying God's causing these words of Isaiah to come true today right now through me in your presence in your hearing.

Maybe we jumped to conclusions long ago about the me of Isaiah 61 being Isaiah or maybe there's a double fulfillment maybe the me was Isaiah but there's a sense in which God has caused us to come true in an even greater way in the future through Jesus.

Either way Jesus is basically saying that God was speaking ultimately of him when he spoke those words through Isaiah long ago.

It's as if Jesus is saying I am the one who God has specially chosen and anointed. I am the one upon whom he has put his spirit.

[10 : 33] If we look back to the moment Jesus was baptized this is what we saw right? The spirit of God came down upon Jesus. Notice how Luke started this whole section back up in verse 14.

Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the spirit. whether the people of Nazareth understood it or not Jesus knew exactly who he was and he knew exactly what he had come to do what he had

been sent by God chosen by God to do.

Let's look at these words from Isaiah just a bit. Let's look at the mission that God has given or gave to Jesus. 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.

Notice how many times the word proclaim is used here. a huge part of Jesus purpose and ministry his mission is preaching proclamation.

[12 : 02] Sometimes there's a tendency to focus mainly on the miracles of Jesus those wonderful things that he did but that's not all that Jesus has come to do.

He has come to proclaim a message and what message is it we can see it highlighted in the different spots there on the screen to proclaim a message of good news to the poor a message of freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind a message that the Lord's favor has come the time the year of the Lord's favor is here this is what I've come to proclaim says Jesus the good news of God's favor towards you this is the time of his favor I'm here to tell you how you can be set free from the prison that you are all in and already you can begin to feel how this declaration by

Jesus might rub some people the wrong way like what do you mean set free what do you mean who are these prisoners which blind people are you talking about there's a similar exchange between Jesus and some of the Jews in the gospel of John which we'll look at quickly here John chapter 8 verse 31 this happens later on but Jesus to the Jews who had believed in him said if you hold to my teaching you are really my disciples then you will know the truth and the truth will set you free they answered him we are Abraham's descendants and have never been slaves of anyone how can you say that we shall be set free Jesus replied very truly I tell you everyone who sins is a slave to sin now a slave has no permanent place in the family but a son belongs to it forever so if the son sets you free you will be free indeed so on this other later occasion

Jesus tells people that they need to be set free and the people were confused like what do you mean we are free and Jesus makes it clear that the freedom they need is spiritual freedom freedom from slavery to sin it's a similar kind of statement as we just heard back here in Luke chapter four our bondage!

and our imprisonment is not physical but spiritual our transgressions against God have locked us up and put us on death row a prison of our own making and God is obligated because he is just to give us the punishment that we deserve so we're in big trouble we are prisoners because we have all broken God's law spiritually we're criminals but the good news is that God is merciful he is full of grace full of favor he has sent his son to proclaim this good news of freedom God's going to provide a way for us to be set free from the chains!

[15 : 56] of our sin and guilt in fact this is the same lesson that the Israelites of Isaiah's day I think were meant to take from these words back then it was physical imprisonment and physically being set free but why were they imprisoned in the first place was it not because of their sins God gave them over to the Babylonians to be conquered and led away as prisoners into exile and was it not because of God's mercy and favor that he later made a way for them to be released from that and to return to Jerusalem our relationship with God has always been the central issue our sins against God have always been the thing which entrap us and destine us for God's punishment and the undeserved mercy and favor of God has always been the thing that sets us free and saves us how much of this did the people clue into that day as

Jesus was making this declaration in the synagogue as he declared today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing listen to the response of the people in verse 22 all spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips so at first there was a buzz of excitement this sounds like good news God's favor is coming to us God wants to alleviate our hardship and our suffering but then all of a sudden out of nowhere in the same verse the conversation takes a turn in the complete opposite direction isn't this Joseph's son they asked we might be tempted to take this as an honest sincere question maybe even a question of surprise and delight how is it that such good words could be coming from

Joseph's son that guy that we all know is the carpenter but this question is actually a rhetorical statement it's actually an objection and this is where the parallel accounts of Matthew and Mark are invaluable let's look at this moment in Matthew chapter 13 verse 54 coming to his hometown he began teaching the in their synagogue this is Matthew's account and they were amazed where did

this man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers they asked isn't this the carpenter's son isn't his mother's name Mary and aren't his brothers James Joseph Simon and Judas aren't all his sisters with us where then did this man get all these things and they took offense at him so Matthew makes it clear that the familiarity they had with Jesus being a relative of people that they knew in their town was actually a barrier to them they took offense at him!

like who are you to stand up there in front of us and say these things you're just the son of the carpenter you grew up here we know you who do you think you are a great teacher a prophet how can he be he's the son of Joseph the carpenter notice the question that the people ask!

Jesus in Mark's! account of all this from Mark chapter 6 verse 2 when the Sabbath came Jesus began to teach in the synagogue and many who heard him were amazed where did this man get these things they asked what's this wisdom that's been given him what are these remarkable miracles he's performing isn't this the carpenter isn't this Mary's son and the brother of James Joseph Judas and Simon aren't his sisters here with us and they took offense at him so at first the tone of these questions seems like it could be sincere but by the time we get to the end of them we see the people asked these because they took offense at Jesus it wasn't sincerity it was suspicion we've known you all your life your family still lives here with us and now suddenly you're claiming to know things to be a rabbi to be a teacher where's all this stuff coming from what are these remarkable miracles that we've heard that you're performing so the people here in

[21 : 09] Nazareth they've heard about the miracles that Jesus has been doing in all these places in Galilee they've likely heard about the miraculous catch of fish no doubt about the many healings and even the casting out of demons now when we look back at Luke's account things start to make more sense this question isn't this Joseph's son was an objection and look at how Jesus responds he can see he on the defensive in a sense Jesus said to them surely you will quote this proverb!

to me physician heal yourself and you will tell me do here in your own hometown what we have heard that you did in Capernaum so the people know about the miracles that Jesus has been doing they heard about the miracles he did in Capernaum and Jesus just tackles the doubt and the skepticism head on he says I know what you're thinking you're thinking that if I truly did remarkable things miracles in Capernaum then why not do the same here and now right now you're thinking if you really have the power to do these things prove it heal so and so over there who you know has been suffering from whatever all these years or do your powers only work when you are away from the people who know you best what kind of trickery and deception have you been up to it's at this point that

Jesus makes the famous statement truly I tell you he continued no prophet is accepted in his hometown no prophet is accepted in his hometown Matthew and Mark have probably the more literal version a prophet is not without honor except in his own town among his relatives and in his own home we have a modern day English saying that kind of gets at some of the meaning of this familiarity breeds contempt!

We have a tendency to overlook what is truly great and commendable if it comes from a source that is all too familiar to us we can easily take a person for granted or minimize what's exceptional about them because after all they're just one of us right and that gets that part of the meaning but I think there's a little more here in Jesus statement this saying is specifically about a prophet and how a prophet is without honor in his hometown so a true prophet is someone who speaks on God's behalf someone whom God has chosen to speak through all throughout the history in the Old Testament we see that prophets were honored greatly by the people they were often hated by the people too but even the prophet haters of old occasionally summoned the prophets when they were desperate because they recognized that the prophets words came true and they knew deep down that they really did speak for

God even if it wasn't the words that they wanted to hear Jesus says it was always a stumbling block for the relatives and the neighbors of the prophets in their towns long ago people people whom the prophets grew up with struggled to accept that God had specially chosen them to they looked at those prophets and what they saw was ordinary men like Isaiah or a young boy like Jeremiah and therefore you can't be a prophet you're just the local so and so you must be delusional you must be egotistical you must be arrogant to think that God has specially chosen you to speak to us on his behalf Jesus is saying the way you guys are treating me is par for the course just like the way our ancestors treated the prophets in their days but we also notice that

[26 : 02] Jesus is subtly stating that he is in fact a prophet this saying would not even apply to Jesus unless he was a prophet he's saying I have been chosen by God to speak to you on his behalf and it's here that Luke includes a few extra details from the conversation that the other gospel writers chose to leave out what else did Jesus say to them in that moment no prophet is accepted in his hometown I assure you that there were many widows in Israel in Elijah's time when the sky was shut for three and a half years and there was a severe famine throughout the land yet Elijah was not sent to any of them to a widow in Zarephath in the region of

Sidon and there were many in Israel with leprosy in the time of Elisha the prophet yet not one of them was cleansed only Naaman the Syrian these words of Jesus are loaded in fact there's so much in these words that it's difficult to get at precisely what Jesus means to say here the first thing he does is he points people back to the days of the prophets Elijah and Elisha he seems to put these men forward as examples of prophets who were rejected in their hometowns too in fact if we look back at the Old Testament scriptures it wasn't just their hometowns that rejected them but the whole northern kingdom of Israel rejected them one of the kings who reigned during the ministry of Elijah was the wicked king Ahab he ignored Elijah he led the nation in doing all kinds of terrible things and as punishment upon

Ahab and the people of the land God withheld rain for three and a half years causing a severe famine and Elijah was the one who announced God's decree that there would be no more rain so you can imagine how popular Elijah was in his day rather than seeing it as a punishment from God for their sins or as discipline that was intended to turn them back to him the people blamed!

King Ahab and his evil wife Jezebel wanted to kill Elijah they hunted him they searched for him talk about rejection in one's own place in first king 17 we read about how this lack of rain and the famine that resulted caused a great shortage of food which was felt deeply by a poor widow living in the territory just north of Israel in the region of Sidon she was a foreigner She was outside Israel and she was at the end of her rope so to speak yet God had compassion on her and he sent the prophet Elijah to her you think about it Elijah couldn't hardly go anywhere!

without getting attention on him without feeling like the pressure was on so he goes to this widow in the region of Sidon and God does an amazing miracle for her he causes her flower jar and her oil jar never to run out until the time of the famine is over and sustain both Elijah and the widow and the widow's son later on we hear about Elisha Elijah's successor also a prophet of the Lord and on the whole the nation of Israel was a little bit less hostile towards him than toward Elijah but it still seems as though they were quite content just to ignore Elisha and marginalize him unless they were in trouble Elisha was not very often sought after or they didn't ask for his counsel very often especially by the king of Israel sometimes

[30 : 27] Elisha would send word to warn the king of Israel about things in 2nd Kings chapter 5 we read of one instance where God used Elisha to heal the commander of the Aramean army of his leprosy and this is surprising because the Arameans were the enemies of Israel it seems God did this to remind anyone willing to listen that there was a man of his choosing in Israel and if Israel wasn't willing to listen then he would reveal himself even to the enemies so what's Jesus point in all this it's a little difficult to pin down is Jesus saying you guys are just like the wicked prophet rejecting people of Elijah's day that's one way they could have taken these words and there seems a measure of truth to it since they're unwilling to honor and accept the one

God has sent Jesus or is Jesus saying the Gentiles the foreigners are more worthy of seeing God's miraculous signs than you are because of your stubborn hearts and unbelief it makes sense doesn't it if the local people will not accept God's message from the prophet it makes sense that God would send his prophet to those who will accept him Jesus seems to raise the point that there were many widows and many sick people in Israel in the days of Elijah and Elisha!

people maybe it's a statement that he's not obligated to perform miracles in Nazareth just like he did in Capernaum and that he will not tolerate being tested just to prove himself or to prove his son maybe it's a combination of all of these whatever the case the response of the people is overwhelmingly clear verse 28 all the people in the synagogue were furious when they heard this they got up drove him out of the town and took him to the brow of the hill on which the town was built in order to throw him off the cliff so the people did not take kindly to Jesus words at all they were enraged notice the language here they drove him out of the town and took him to the brow of the hill in order to throw him off the cliff these are pretty forceful words now it doesn't say that they arrested him or whether or not they laid hands on him or dragged him or pushed him or shoved him

but the picture we get is of this angry mob that's just ready to execute Jesus like how dare you speak to us that way who do you think you are we'll show you what happens to wicked and rebellious children like you so they take him to the brow of the hill in order to throw him off the cliff but verse 30 he walked right through the crowd and went on his way so Jesus escapes but we're kind of left to wonder how did he escape what do you mean he walked right through the crowd right through the midst of them and went on his way many Christians conclude that this was a miraculous escape and it's kind of a sensible idea because it really seems like they're intent on killing him how else did he get through them and get away some suggest God paralyzed those who would lay a hand on him in that moment allowing Jesus to simply walk by others suggest that maybe there was angelic intervention here and that the angels were like offensive linebackers making an opening and Jesus just walked right on by others proposed that this was a miracle of invisibility that Jesus suddenly became invisible and then simply walked through like Frodo in Lord of the Rings I'm not joking here this is true others suggest that Jesus shifted into some sort of a spiritual form and just walked right through their bodies maybe something like the flash going out of phase and walking through walls at least one person has suggested that they did try to throw him off the cliff but that Jesus simply stood there in mid air to their amazement and then walked right through them while they were busy picking up their jaws from the ground others suggest that

[36 : 04] Jesus may have wielded his divine authority in this moment and just sort of set his gaze on walking through them and it forced them all to comply and make a path for him others insist that we refrain from going beyond what is stated in the Bible it doesn't say that this was a miracle or how he just walked through the midst of them maybe they had second thoughts at the top of the hill or maybe Jesus said something to them that caused them to hesitate and then just resolutely walk past them we know that on other occasions Jesus managed to diffuse some pretty tense situations with simply a few words the woman caught in adultery in John 8 comes to mind let any of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her and one by one they all left we don't know how but just that Jesus managed to walk through the midst of them and go on his way all of this highlights very early on in

Luke's gospel that Jesus message and even his very identity was met with great opposition the initial response to his teaching at first was wonderful it was great everybody was amazed at his gracious words but then some people spoke up and let them know let people know what they were really thinking things began to get tense and even almost violent what kind of a response does Jesus stir up in you what do you think of his words when he says the spirit of the Lord is on me because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor does that make your heart happy do you see yourself as spiritually poor blind oppressed a prisoner in need of God's liberating power which

Jesus has come to proclaim do you believe that Jesus is the one who to set you free from your guilt and your sin do you believe that Jesus speaks for God that he's not just a prophet but the ultimate prophet or does he make you angry what's your response to Jesus let's pray let's pray father in heaven this is it this is what matters most had we been there what would we have done you know lord and

I pray that you would bring that to the surface in our hearts now I pray that you would lay it on the table before us and help us see have we really accepted and honored your son the one you sent as we ought or have we been pushing him away driving him out even angry do that work in our hearts convict us help us to see the truth may we all accept and honor your son as he deserves in your name amen