

Jesus, Jubilee And Gentiles

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[0 : 00] Please turn with me this morning to Luke chapter 4, Luke chapter 4 verses 14 through 30 as we continue our studies in this magnificent gospel.

Let's begin with prayer. Heavenly Father, we bow in your presence. May your word be our rule. Your spirit, our teacher, and your greater glory, our supreme concern, through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Amen. Of all the places in the world where it's hard to live out a consistent Christian life, home can be the hardest.

When I say home, I don't just mean your own house, but home in the sense of where you were brought up and with whom you were brought up. Those who've known you since you were a small child.

Jesus was brought up in the Galilean village of Nazareth, and it should be a comfort to us to know that he didn't find it any easier at home than many of us do.

[1 : 14] But for all of that, throughout his earthly ministry, Jesus was known as Jesus of Nazareth. Nazareth may not have been proud of the fact that Jesus was one of theirs, but more for them.

Then if you think about it, Nazareth was no different really from any other town and village in the Israel of the day. Because to them all, Jesus was an embarrassment and a fly in the ointment. Ultimately, that's why they crucified Jesus. As the Apostle John would later say about him, He came to his own, but his own did not receive him.

Well, having begun chapter 4, as we saw two weeks ago, with the account of Jesus' victory over Satan's temptations, Luke now completes the chapter by recording first an example of Jesus' teaching ministry in verses 14 through 30, and then an example of Jesus' miraculous works from verses 31 through 41.

Today we're going to consider the first of these. The example of Jesus' teaching. The example of examples, given that it was in his own hometown, it was all happening.

[2 : 35] His own hometown of Nazareth, of which he would later say, no prophet is acceptable in his hometown. Perhaps today we'll begin to understand why the message of Jesus was so difficult for his own people to accept.

And conversely, why it's such good news for you and me. I wanted to say two things from this passage today.

First of all, from verse 16 to 22, we have Jesus and Jubilee. Jesus and Jubilee. And secondly, from verse 23 to 30, Jesus and Gentiles.

First of all then, from verse 16 to 22, Jesus and Jubilee. We often forget that Jesus was Jewish. He was brought up in a Jewish culture with its religion, its traditions. His worldview was shaped by the culture in which he was brought up, as ours are as well. And as such, when he chose to read what he did in the synagogue in Nazareth, he knew exactly what he was doing.

[3 : 48] He didn't just pick a text at random. He carefully chose this passage from Isaiah 61, verses 1 and 2. Again, in verse 14, notice the reference to the Spirit of God being upon him.

We considered this last week, the same Holy Spirit who fills Jesus fills us also, uniting us with him and with each other, giving us power for the proclamation of the word.

And there follows in these verses the content of Jesus' message, the totality of which he has come to teach and to do. His mission statement, as it were. This is what Jesus does.

He proclaims good news to the poor. He proclaims liberty to the captives. He gives the blind their sight.

He sets the oppressed free. He proclaims the year of the Lord's favor. You know, if someone was to ask you to give them a summary of the gospel, you couldn't do much better than to repeat what

Jesus said here in Luke chapter 4.

[5 : 05] The gospel, it's good news for the poor. It's liberty for the captives. It's recovery of sight for the blind. It's freedom for the oppressed. It's the proclamation of the year of the Lord's favor.

But remember, Jesus didn't just pick this text at random. He carefully chose these words from Isaiah 61 because they speak of something deeply embedded in Jewish culture and Jewish tradition.

I'm talking here about the Jubilee. We tend to think of Jubilee in terms of celebrating a significant birthday, a diamond Jubilee, a golden Jubilee.

But the idea of Jubilee comes from the Old Testament. It's described for us in Leviticus 25, that passage we read together.

Every seven years, the Jewish people were to leave their land fallow, to let it rest so that they didn't exhaust its fertility. But then every 49 years, seven times seven, a trumpet was blown on the Day of Atonement to announce a national year of Jubilee.

[6 : 18] During that year, the debts owed by the poor were cancelled. During that year, slaves were set free. It was a year of freedom and liberty.

Those who had been forced to sell their homes and fields could redeem them. Every 49 years, a trumpet sounded a year of Jubilee.

The so-called year of the Lord's favor. And so by quoting from Isaiah 61, it's as if Jesus himself is blowing that trumpet and saying, It's my presence in the synagogue as the Spirit-filled sun which marks the beginning of the Jewish Jubilee.

No wonder then that when Jesus sat down, we read in verse 20 that the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed upon him. And then when he said, Today the scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing, the crowd marveled at his words.

Because they knew only too well, actually, what Jesus was saying. He was proclaiming the Jewish Jubilee. For hundreds of years, the Jewish people had been oppressed and poor.

[7 : 46] Enslaved by the Romans, subject to forced labor. They disliked their rulers, but they despised the Gentile Romans. And now here's Jesus.

And he's proclaiming freedom. Freedom. These people didn't understand what Jesus said in a spiritual sense. As freedom from sin and death.

They understood it in political, military, and national terms. They heard what Jesus said in terms of military victory over the Romans. Of Israel being free once again, as it was in the days of David and Solomon.

So no wonder they heard his message gladly. Jubilee, especially if it should mean national freedom and release from slavery, is a message to be welcomed. Finally, they had a Messiah in whom they could hope.

A leader who was willing to stand up to the centurions and to the Romans. A man behind whom they could rally. They heard Jesus quoting Isaiah 61 with its allusion to the year of Jubilee.

[8 : 52] And their hearts were filled with nationalistic hope. If at this point, Jesus had asked, Who is willing to fight against the Romans with me?

The whole synagogue would have stood up as one. Declared their loyalty to him. And gone home to sharpen their swords. The coming of Jesus is the announcement and proclamation of Jubilee.

It is the trumpet sound of freedom and liberty, of healing, of restitution. It is not as if we should not see these objectives as praiseworthy and things to which we must aspire.

But the Jubilee to which Jesus was referring had nothing to do with Jewish nationalism at all. When we read Leviticus 25 together, you may have noticed that the year of Jubilee began on the Jewish Day of Atonement.

Yom Kippur. That day when sacrifices were offered to take the sins of the people away. From that day on, for a whole year, there was Jubilee.

[10 : 12] Slaves were freed. There was rest for the land and for the whole nation. The meaning is clear. Atonement and forgiveness comes first.

Then the blessings of liberty and rest. Let me say that again from Leviticus 25. Atonement and forgiveness come first.

Then the blessings of liberty and rest. Sacrifice first. It's the day of atonement. Then celebration. At the very beginning of his public ministry, in his hometown, Jesus is raising the standard of Jubilee.

His will be a kingdom of Jubilee. A gospel of freedom. Good news to the poor. Those who have little in this world's eyes.

Liberty to those held captive by their sin and death. The opening of spiritually blind eyes. The liberty of those who are oppressed by fear and self-loathing.

[11:22] It's in the first instance, a spiritual kingdom. Of spiritual Jubilee. Inaugurated, as the Old Testament Jubilee was.

By sacrifice. By atonement. But this time, not the sacrifice of bulls and goats and sheep. But the sacrifice of Jesus himself.

His sacrificial death on the cross will achieve all these things for those who have faith in him.

Sacrifice first.

Then celebration. The cross comes first. Then the crown. Forgiveness first.

Then freedom. Now those who were listening to Jesus that day in the synagogue didn't understand this. That the very same Jesus who was proclaiming Jubilee.

[12:27] Will by the sacrifice of his own body. Free the captives. Redeem the oppressed. And open the eyes of the blind. He, by his death on the cross.

Ushers in this new age of Jubilee. Where God shall forgive sin. Give eternal life. And set us free from the fear of death.

So this, Luke 4, becomes a New Testament Jubilee passage. Interestingly enough, we're told that on the day of Christ's second coming.

It shall also be heralded by the sound of trumpets. The final eternal age of Jubilee. But the point is this. The words of Jesus here were instantly recognizable in one form or another.

To his immediate hearers in the synagogue of Nazareth. It is the language of Jewish Jubilee. It is good news. Debts are cancelled. Slavery has ended.

[13:37] Freedom is announced. Now as we've seen. The Jews of Jesus' day misunderstood the true nature of Jubilee. They saw it in materialistic.

Nationalistic terms. Rather than according to its true meaning. Spiritual. And as we'll see in a moment. Universal. We need to get this into our minds today.

The message of the gospel is Jubilee. Our debts to God have been fully paid by Jesus. Our freedom from sin and condemnation has been decisively won by Jesus.

Our blind eyes have been opened and can never be closed again by Jesus. Our oppressive consciences and despairing hearts have been quietened by Jesus.

And that's why I say here that Jesus reading in Luke 4 is the summary of the gospel. Because the message of the gospel is Jubilee.

[14:48] It's good news. As that gospel is proclaimed. The trumpet is sounded in heaven. Atonement has been made. Now. It's time for freedom.

It's so well put in that hymn. We're going to sing at the end. And can it be. My chains fell off. My heart was free. I rose, went forth.

And followed thee. Would you be free from the debt of sin? You owe to God. Would you be free from the oppression of your conscience?

Would you be free from the blindness of despair? Jesus died to make these hopes a reality.

He died to trumpet the Jubilee. Now trust in him. Commit yourself to him. Because he, the Lord of Jubilee, will never turn you away.

[15:52] Jesus and Jubilee. But then secondly. And a bit more briefly. From verse 23 to verse 30. Jesus and Gentiles.

Jesus and Gentiles. What's not to love about what Jesus is saying here? He's proclaiming the year of the Lord's favor. But just because Nazareth was an out of the way place in far off Galilee.

Didn't mean that those who attended the synagogue and heard what Jesus had to say were backward. They knew what Jesus was referring to. And in particular.

They knew the claim that Jesus was making for himself. Especially when he said. Today. This scripture is fulfilled in your hearing. They knew that he was claiming something preposterous for himself.

They knew that Jesus was claiming to be nothing less than the Jewish Messiah. It's only natural that they said amongst one another. Isn't this Joseph's son?

[16:59] In other words. Jesus. We love what you're saying. Who do you think you are? We know of what people you have come. You're not a priestly or royal stock.

You're just commoner. The same as the rest of us. You're no Messiah. But if you are. If you are. Prove it here. Prove it now. Give us a sign. They weren't willing to take Jesus at his word. Rather. Like the Pharisees later on in this gospel. They want proof. They want signs in the sky. And writing in the clouds. There is an inbuilt skepticism.

About all of us. As human beings. Especially when it comes. To the abilities. Of our fellows. And especially those we've grown up with. Jesus.

Responds. Doubtless you'll quote to me this proverb. Physician heal yourself. What we heard. You did at Capernaum. Do here in your hometown as well. They'd had Jesus among them for 30 years. [18:07] They'd seen his lifestyle. They'd witnessed his piety. The same kind of piety we see in Psalm 101. Jesus himself knew every stone of that synagogue. He knew all its decorations.

He knew all its writings. They'd had him for 30 years. The sinless man. And yet still they demand a sign from him. Here's a people who are more interested in pyrotechnics. Than in piety. In wonders. Than in words. And it's at this stage Jesus says to them. Truly I say to you.

No prophet is acceptable in his own hometown. Remember what John would later say. Of Jesus. He came to his own. But his own did not receive him. Think. They are not just of Nazareth. As his own. But the whole of Israel as his own.

[19:07] Jesus owned people. They did not receive him. They did not believe in him. They did not want a Messiah. Whose jubilee proclamation. Did not include military conquest.

And who pursued a cross. As opposed to a crown. Jesus knows them. He's lived among them for 30 years. They can't pull the wool over his eyes.

And for that matter. Neither can we. Jesus knows. What are attitudes to him. Are. But this is where it gets interesting.

Especially with respect. To the wider meaning. And the theme of the gospel of Luke. And the book of Acts. Jesus as it were. Turns away from his own people.

And he talks of how. In the days of Elijah and Elisha. Israel's greatest prophets. God did a great work. Not among his own people.

[20:11] But among the Gentiles. He provided for the widow of Zarephath. He healed Naaman the Syrian. There were many hungry Israelites in the day of Elijah.

But God fed a Gentile widow. There were many leprous Israelites in the days of Elisha. But God healed a Gentile Syrian. God passed by his own people.

Because of their unbelief. And he performed miraculous signs among the Gentiles. He passed by the deserving. And showed grace to the undeserving.

Perhaps now you can understand. Why the people of Nazareth were so furious. That they tried to throw him off a cliff.

They were delighted to hear about. Jubilee for the Jews. Which included making Israel great again. But the thought. That unclean Gentiles.

[21:12] Could be included in the kingdom of God. That God. Their God would work among unclean Gentiles. The same unclean Gentiles oppressing them. Was blasphemous.

Can you see now. Why. They tried to kill Jesus. It was because of his proclamation. Of God's. Boundless mercy.

And his infinite grace. To the whole world. You see the Jubilee Jesus was announcing. Is not merely for Jew. But for Gentile also.

For every son and daughter of Adam. Every human being. Jew Gentile. Slave free. Male female. Young old.

It is the boundless grace. And mercy of God. The people of Nazareth. Are furious about. God's grace.

[22:10] Angers legalists. It triggers their fury. Because the kind of God. They want to worship. Doesn't do mercy. To the outsider. To the unclean.

To the outcast. To the weakling. You can see. Why then. The people of Nazareth. Were so angry. They tried to kill. One of their own.

Throughout the remainder. Of the gospel of Luke. And throughout the book of Acts. We're going to encounter. More and more resistance. From the Jewish people. To God's proclamation. Of grace. To the nations. Even among Jewish Christians.

There remained. A natural reticence. About accepting. Gentile believers. As fellow Christians. Brothers and sisters. In the Lord Jesus Christ. And that's one of the reasons. That Luke. Wrote both this gospel. And the book of Acts. To remind. Jewish believers. That Jesus came.

[23 : 09] To proclaim. Jubilee. To the whole world. And not just to them. But you see.

This is exactly. What is good news for us. Luke 4. 14 through 30. Is set in a rural town. Village. In Galilee.

Here we are in a synagogue. We're reading the Jewish Old Testament. Listening to a Jewish teacher. Expounding the Jewish scriptures. In a Jewish place. But it is for us.

The Jubilee Jesus proclaims. There. Announces the age of the Lord's favor. Not just for Israel. But for the whole world. A Savior has come.

Through his death on the cross. Atonement has been made. Forgiveness has been won. The trumpet has been sounded. He has thrown open the gates of heaven. To both Jew and Gentile.

[24 : 08] To all. Who by faith. Will accept his invitation. To come and believe in him. He may have first spoken these words.

In a synagogue in Nazareth. But Jesus spoke these words. For us. Here. Today. They're for me. They're for you. They're for the whole of Glasgow. So as we close. Let's listen to them. Again. And let them stick in our minds and hearts.

Because this is the blessed gospel. Of our Lord Jesus Christ. From the right hand. Of the Father on high. Jesus has come. To proclaim. Good news to the poor.

Are you poor? Poverty. Does not have to be measured. Merely in terms of monetary value. Or even health status. Are you spiritually poor?

[25 : 04] Emotionally poor? Socially poor? Poverty of hope? A poverty of forgiveness? A poverty of love? Christ Jesus has good news for you.

He has a gospel. Which makes the poor rich. That is an eternal jubilee. Where every manner of human slavery is ended. And all are invited.

To the heavenly banquet. As we go through Luke's gospel. And the book of Acts. We're going to repeatedly come back. To the message of good news for the poor.

For example. The parable of the rich man and Lazarus. In Luke 16. Lazarus there. So very poor. Covered with sores. Starving hungry.

Could not walk. Nothing in this world's terms. No less than nothing. Experiencing only poverty and pain. Day after day. With no respite.

[26 : 02] From the right hand. Of God the Father almighty. Jesus came to proclaim good news. To Lazarus. The day of jubilee is at hand.

Lazarus. The day of the Lord's favor. Is with you Lazarus. The day that you shall be transported. To the rapturous glory. Of heavenly comfort.

We're all poor in our own ways. Even the wealthy of us here. In what ways are you poor today? In what ways are you poor today? Christ has good news for your poverty.

Whatever that is. The trumpet of God's jubilee. Is sounding. The year of the Lord's favor. Is with us. In light.

Of God's heavenly glories. Your deepest. Poverties can be transformed. Into your highest wealth. In view of Christ's atoning death.

[27 : 03] That are blessings. Unnumbered and untold. Waiting for us. The trumpet sounds as Christ. Dies on the cross.

With the words. It is finished. And as we believe. We become heirs with God. And co-heirs with Christ. Of all the infinite riches.

And glories. Of our heavenly father. Though in this life. We may never have a penny. To go back to the beginning.

Home can sometimes be the hardest place. To be a Christian. Among your family. Among your friends. Among those who know you the best. If home is hard for you. Take comfort. It was for Jesus also.

He knows how you feel. And he sympathizes with you in this. He has strength for you here. He has a gospel for you here.

[28 : 01] The gospel of Jubilee. That though once. We were far off. By his blood. We have been brought near to him. We all look forward today.

Do we not? To a better home. A greater home. Where it won't be hard. To be a Christian. A Jubilee home.

Together with all the innumerable saints of God. From every nation on earth. Whose hearts. Shall have been washed white. In the blood of God's Messiah.

Jesus Christ. God. Thy most. You. God. God. For the. God. You. God. Let me. God.

Now. God. God. God. Now. God. God.