

Jesus God's Anointed Prophet

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[0 : 00] So friends, I want you to take a look at the many titles of Jesus in the outline. And tell me, which ones are the ones most familiar to you?

Or maybe which are the ones that most resonate with you? Let's have a look there. Now if you've been with us over December and January, then you've probably heard a lot about, as we looked at Luke, about Jesus as Messiah, that He's God's chosen one.

You've also seen how Luke has shown that Jesus is God's Son. Now more commonly though, we think of Jesus as our Lord and Savior. That's how we often refer to Him when we pray.

As for the title teacher or rabbi, well that's what Jesus' disciples used to call Him. Well the crowds would have thought of Him more as a healer or miracle worker.

But I have to say that for tonight, Jesus as prophet is rather unfamiliar, isn't it? It's not what we often think when we think about Jesus.

[1 : 05] In fact, all through Luke chapter 1, 2 and 3, Jesus is the one being prophesied about. Not the prophet who's actually speaking. But now as He begins His ministry, and this is the first passage where He starts preaching, Jesus presents Himself as a prophet, sent and anointed by the Lord.

Now we shall see of course as we go on that Jesus isn't merely a prophet. He's all those titles that we've just looked at and more. But tonight, we want to just focus on this one aspect, that of Jesus as a prophet.

And because He is, we're going to discover a particular way that we must respond to Him. A way to respond so that we'll be able to benefit fully from what He's saying to us, and to be blessed by it.

So what's this way? Well, let's get into the passage and we'll find out. Now if you recall, Jesus has just returned from the desert, having successfully resisted the devil and his temptations.

And being full of the Spirit, as we see in verses 14 and 15, Jesus returns to Galilee to begin teaching in the synagogues. So successful is He that He gains a reputation from it.

[2 : 18] People praise Him for it. Now upon returning to His hometown of Nazareth, Jesus enters the synagogue on a Sabbath. And He stands up to read from the Old Testament.

And because of His fame, there's actually a bit of expectation as to what He's going to say. We read in verse 20 that the eyes of everyone were fastened on Him.

So it's quite dramatic, really. I'm going to try and see if I can reenact it. So pretend I was sitting down here at the pews. Okay? This is, I'm not Jesus, but pretend, yep.

And I'm being asked to read the Scriptures. And so I get up, and I walk, and all your eyes are fixed on me, right? Yep. And I do this deliberately and slowly. And I come to the scroll, to this big Bible here.

And all your eyes are still fixed on me. And I turn to the prophet of Isaiah. Except I'm not actually going to read from Luke chapter 4. And so with bated breath and expectation, the people hear these words.

[3 : 22] And then just as deliberately as I've come up, Jesus would have walked back, and He would have sat down.

It's almost as if it happens in slow motion. And they hold on to every word that Jesus says, including those in verse 21. When Jesus then begins preaching by saying, today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.

Now Jesus is really saying something amazing here. This is a life-changing announcement to the hearers. Now many of you would know that Jo Vinicum, I think she's on holiday still, but Jo went in December on a medical mission.

And she went aboard a medical mission, a medical ship in PNG, where doctors would perform eye surgery on patients with cataract and give sight back to the blind. And one of the videos that Jo posted on Facebook, some of you might have seen it, showed the joy of a man who recovered his sight after seven years of blindness.

It was a sort of total life-changing experience for him. That smile on his face, just that pure joy when he finally, as they waved their hands in front of his eyes, he could see again.

[5 : 11] Or imagine another situation. If you're old enough, think back to the day the Berlin Wall fell. And families that were separated for decades were reunited again between East and West Berlin, between East and West Germany.

Or go further back even, if you're still, if you were around then, on the day the World, Second World War ended. As news came through on those crackling radios in London, people burst onto the streets.

And London was heavily bombed at that time. It was sort of pocket, you know, pockmarked with bombs and whatnot. People burst onto the streets and they danced and they hugged and they celebrated all night.

I've been told that they even kissed one another even though they were strangers. That's how happy they were. That's how jubilant they were. That's the sort of news that Jesus was announcing here.

It's good news. It's great news to the poor. It's freedom for the prisoners, recovery of sight for the blind. Release for the oppressed. The year of the Lord's favor.

[6 : 22] In fact, that last phrase particularly is a reference to the Old Testament concept of the jubilee. Once every 50 years, God provided for a year of release or jubilee where all the debts that you've ever had were forgiven.

If you were a slave, you were released. If you had to forfeit land to pay for stuff, they were returned back to you. This was the kind of release that Jesus is now proclaiming to the people in Nazareth. And so the people's initial response was actually favorable. In verse 22, it says, all spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips. It's not quite the dancing and kissing as in World War II, but a positive response nevertheless.

But then, but then the mood starts to change. Some began to tweak that this was, hang on, this was Joseph's son.

Isn't this that little boy that was playing behind Joseph's shop those many years ago? That young man who, you know, delivered that front door we ordered for, from his dad?

[7 : 32] Is that, is that, is that the Jesus that we know? And so with that realization, their positive response turns into a skeptical one.

And when that happened, what, what occurred was that the focus of the people then shifted from the good news of the message, this amazing message, to doubts about the authority of the messenger.

they began to suspect Jesus's credibility as a prophet. Now Jesus, of course, knew what was on their minds and so he articulates it for them.

He speaks out what is in their mind, verse 23. He says, surely you will quote this prophet to me, physician, heal yourself and you will tell me, do here in your hometown what we have heard that you did in Capernaum.

Now I don't know about you as parents, some of you are parents, but when I was looking for a piano teacher for my girls, we chose an accomplished pianist to be their teacher.

[8 : 33] That makes sense, right? We wanted someone who could play the piano well to teach them the piano. And I suppose the same goes for things like sport as well. So you see some of these Grand Slam players later on who turn to past champions to coach them.

So Michael Chang, for example, is now the coach of Kai Nishikori and Carlos Moyer, you might not know him, but he actually was a French Open winner. He's now part of Rafa's team alongside Uncle Tony, of course.

Now we get rid of Uncle Tony. But that's what this proverb is getting at. It's saying that before you put yourself under the authority of an expert, like say a would-be patient might with a doctor, you want the doctor to prove himself, heal yourself or prove that you can heal me.

And in Jesus' case, that man doing miracles that he had done in Capernaum. Heal a blind man, you know, drive out an evil spirit or two, then we might believe in your words, is what they were thinking.

Now what may seem like a fair call for most things, like choosing a piano teacher or whatever, becomes actually quite a dangerous thing when it comes to Jesus. Because what they've done is shifted their focus from where it should be.

[9 : 48] They've now become Jesus' judge, which means that they've avoided the full weight of Jesus' words on them. They've not allowed his words of truth to shine in their life like a torchlight in the dark.

By starting to doubt Jesus and his words, they've avoided having to think about their own true spiritual condition. You see, Jesus is not simply a teacher.

the difference between a teacher and a prophet is in the sense that a teacher may be teaching you something that is often independent of you.

So, like a mechanic might be teaching his apprentice how to fix a car so that he can then fix it for himself. Whereas, when a prophet speaks, he brings to bear God's word on the hearers.

The words he speaks are for the hearers, not for someone else. Jesus' words for them were actually meant for them, not some imaginary poor or prisoners.

[10 : 57] They, the people in the synagogue that day, they were the ones to whom the message applied. But that's not how it would have seemed to them. Because, you know, they could see Jesus, so, you know, how could they be blind?

They could go about their daily lives, so how could they be prisoners? But as many of you will know, Jesus is referring to more than physical blindness or poverty.

If you look at Jesus' ministry, you'll see that he didn't actually make any single poor person rich, did he? Not one person was released from a Roman prison.

Yes, a few blind people saw again, but as you'll see in the coming weeks, that's not the focus of his ministry. Instead, when you read those words of Isaiah's prophecy again, you'll see exactly where his focus is.

So look with me at verse 18 again. Do you see what the Spirit's anointing is for? Three times it says, it is to enable Jesus the prophet to proclaim the good news.

[12 : 08] Verse 18, to proclaim freedom. That's the next line. And then verse 19, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. So what's the anointing for?

It's for proclamation. And what about the healing and the release? Well, they're actually subsequent to the proclamation. They're the result of it and not the main thing.

That's why Jesus says in verse 22 that the scripture is fulfilled in their hearing. It's not fulfilled in their healing. No, it's fulfilled in their hearing.

The focus is on the proclamation. And what matters is that they hear and accept Jesus' words. because the release that Jesus is declaring is first and foremost a spiritual one.

There's a quote in the movie Rogue One. This guy, Donnie Yen, plays Chirrut, how do you pronounce it? Chirrut Imwe, I think, is this blind monk.

[13 : 11] Anyway, at one stage in the movie, he says to Cassian Andor, the leader of Rogue One, he says this, there's more, it's right there in the bottom, there's more than one prison, I think you carry yours wherever you go.

There's more than one prison, I think you carry yours wherever you go. And that's true, isn't it?

Prisons are more than just physical, aren't they? Sometimes, we carry ours wherever we go.

Past guilts, regrets that we cannot shake, former or current abuses that continue to haunt us, our fears, our anxieties, that stop us from actually doing what's right, from finding peace and freedom. And the same goes for our blindness as well. They're not just physical blindness. We have our moral blind spots, don't we? Selfish desires that we're oblivious to, that others see so clearly, but we can't tell.

And then look around us and we see that people are searching for truth, aren't they? They're desperately seeking after happiness and fulfillment, trying to find meaning in life and yet unable to find it.

[14 : 22] They try this, they try that, they get onto this article on Facebook and they think that's it. But deep down, there's a hole in their lives because they're blind.

They're blind to what is really good for them, what is really right for them. And that's true even for us as a society. We, as a society in the West, have blind spots, don't we?

I'll just give you two examples. For one, we have this belief, which is actually a lie, that the only measure of well-being is material or economic progress.

It's taken for granted, isn't it? When we see it on TV, we read the papers. If you're doing well materially, then you must be doing well in life.

But that's a lie, isn't it? That's blindness on our part as a society. Or take another example. The one that says that true freedom comes when an individual is able to exercise all his or her human rights. [15:23] That's a big thing now, isn't it? Human rights, we all have to have it. Whatever is my right has to be exercised. That's the way to true freedom. But again, that's a lie.

We're blind to the fact that that's a lie. And that is why this jubilee that Jesus proclaims is such great news.

Because Jesus has come to free us from this sort of blindness. He's come to give us that ability to live what is truly right and truly good.

That's what true freedom really is. Now, of course, all this captivity, all this blindness is a result of our rebellion, rebellion against God.

And so Jesus has come not just as God's prophet, no, he's come as our deliverer as well. He will come and he will die on the cross and pay the ransom of sin after this event in Nazareth.

[16:21] He does that so that all of us, both the people at that time and the people now, can be restored to relationship with God. that's what Jesus has done.

But in order for anyone to find this freedom, Jesus' hearers needed to respond in the right way. They had to search their own hearts and thoughts and admit that they're really in the state that Jesus says they're in, that they're poor, that they're captive, that they're oppressed.

And knowing this, turn to Jesus in humility. Only then will they find favor with the Lord. And so that means they have to receive Jesus as God's prophet.

They had to stop judging him or doubting his credibility. And they had to see that Jesus' words were actually directed at them and not at somebody else, some other imaginary poor.

Well, Jesus knows that they're not there. They don't want to believe him. And so he gives them another chance. He gives them a warning this time. He points to the example of Elijah and Elisha.

[17:31] And so we'll turn to verse 24 now to our third bullet point. And we'll see that when they reject God's prophet, it's not the prophet that suffers but them.

This is a warning for them but we will see whether the people actually receive it. Now the story of Elijah was read by Karen tonight. It was set at a time when Israel was at a low point in its history. Ahab was their king at the time. He was an idol worshiper and he was leading the people to follow after Baal, a foreign god. As a result, God sends his prophet to proclaim a famine on the land. And there were many widows in the land at the time yet Jesus says Elijah was sent to save only one. And it wasn't a widow in Israel. It was in a city called Zarephath which is outside Israel entirely. Now the same was true for the lepers during Elisha's time. That story we didn't read but it was in 2 Kings 5. There were many lepers again in Israel at the time but only one Assyrian commander again not in Israel he was the only one that was cleansed by Elisha.

[18:42] And that was because at the time Israel as a whole rejected God's prophets. They rebelled against God's word and therefore lacked faith in them. By contrast both the widow and we saw that we read that tonight and Naaman they both believed and obeyed the prophet's word.

Remember how the widow actually went and made the bread even though she was going to die? Because she did that she was saved. And so Jesus' point is this that God's word is so powerful that it will accomplish what he intends.

And so if those who hear God's word and those who are in one sense near to God's word people of Israel if they reject it then it will be proclaimed where it wouldn't be rejected.

One way or another God's word will be fulfilled. Nazareth this small despised town it had the honor of raising the son of God and in God's great kindness Jesus had given them first dibs on God's blessing.

God had showed them undeserved favoritism. But if Nazareth rejects that blessing as Jesus says the prophet is always rejected in his hometown Jesus will have other places to proclaim God's word.

[20:02] God will send him elsewhere across Galilee and into Israel where others will believe. Likewise if Israel then later on rejects Jesus' word as they largely do both during Jesus' time and then afterward during the time of the apostles then again God's word of Jubilee will go forth again into the world into the land of the Gentiles.

It's exactly how Isaiah proclaims it or prophesies it in chapter 55 of verse 10 and 11. It says there on the screen as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish so that it yields seed for the soul and bread for the eater so is my word that goes out from my mouth it will not return to me empty but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.

God's word will find its intended hearers even if it has to go to the most unlikely places it will accomplish God's desire and purpose.

And so the warning to the people that there was this don't reject God's prophet don't reject Jesus all the promised jubilee will be taken elsewhere to people that will believe.

Well friends these events were recorded for us some 2000 years ago but it continues to be God's word for us today and tonight Jesus is speaking those same words to us Jesus is saying today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing Jesus is again making this declaration and invitation a challenge even a warning to us to receive his word and not to do as the people of Nazareth did.

[22 : 05] And so the question is how will we respond? Like the people of Nazareth or in humility gladly receiving Jesus' offer of freedom? Jesus' word is great news isn't it?

It's a promise of freedom and favor from the Lord but before this good news can actually benefit us we actually have to face up to some bad news first rather perhaps not bad news but humbling news and it's the news that we're actually not smart enough to solve our own problems that as an individual or as a society we're actually blind to what's good for us and even if we did we don't have the power to change ourselves and we have to face up to the fact that we're not as good as we think we are that actually we're more selfish than we care to admit and that these selfish desires rule our lives how often have you tried to be a better person only to fail and remain where you are it's only when we see how powerless we are that actually we'll find the courage to accept Jesus' words and then see this as good news only when we recognize who we truly are will we see him as our savior will we see that it is only in him that we can find freedom and sight now remember when you were kids I don't know I did this when I was young I only had one brother but we didn't like our siblings teasing us what would we do sometimes we'd just cover our ears and our eyes don't we and then we'll start talking over them I don't want to hear you I don't want to hear I don't care I can't hear you sometimes we're tempted to do the same things with Jesus isn't it because we don't like what we hear we don't like it when we read the Bible and it says true things about us but the thing is unlike our siblings Jesus does it because he loves us we need to hear these things because only then will we reach out to him reach out for God's help and be saved so friends if there's someone here tonight that is in this situation then please do not shut your ears and minds and hearts to

Jesus no please don't do that instead please respond to him in humility in humble faith and ask him to come into your lives to set you free don't be like the people of Nazareth who when they were challenged they hardened their hearts even more and drove Jesus out of town and tried to kill him throw him off the cliff don't be like them because God's word will be taken elsewhere and brothers and sisters can I also say for those of us who are Christians this can also be a danger for us after all did you notice where Jesus was he was in the synagogue he was in church and who is here as well they were regular people who heard God's word all the time and yet they were hearing but not understanding they were hearing and thinking it's for somebody else it's for that person that sinner outside the church or it's for that guy who keeps annoying me it's for everyone else but me but us you see sometimes when we think we know the bible well because we've been a Christian for a while because our Sunday school teachers have done such a good job we start to think oh you know we don't need God's word anymore we know it all that is we don't need to we don't need Jesus to keep speaking as a prophet into our lives especially into those parts that we'd rather not he'd rather not because it makes us uncomfortable you know things that show that we're still full of pride things that remind us of our sharp tongue our bad temper when we resent other people's success still or our own pettiness when people hurt us now we don't want God to tell us about that we've heard it all before many of you I think sent me well wishes after my two weeks off emails and text messages I hope that I had a good time when I was off and thank you I did but I have to say one of the great blessings I had being on leave so to speak was to be able to just sit under God's word and that is to hear God's word instead of always being up here to speak it so to be challenged for example by

[26 : 58] Peter Adam and his talks or at some under the sun by Vaughan Roberts and it's why also I try and attend another service on Sunday where I can because even as your pastor I must never get into the habit of thinking that God's word is only for people I'm teaching it's not for me and I'm sure it's the same for you that many of us when we hear God's word read and when we hear it explained there's not going to be new things for us we've heard it before in one sense but you know what as long as we still have our blind spots then we need to hear God's word again and again we need to allow his word to keep shining into our lives well let me finish tonight because I think that there might be some of you here tonight that need some encouragement because you are feeling oppressed maybe you've cried out to God for a long time but you still haven't been freed physically from your pain perhaps it's some conflict that wouldn't go away perhaps it's your struggle with depression or anxiety whatever it is if that's where you are then please know this know that

God's word is so powerful that it is able to free you even when you remain in your circumstances God's word can set us free even when we're still suffering physically that's the truth God's word brings freedom even though our circumstances and our environment does not change that's how powerful God's word is and so I want to encourage you to continue to keep hearing God's word to trust in it to allow it to keep speaking into your lives even though there may not be change to allow it to speak truth to let us see what the reality of our lives really is to know that God is still with us even though our circumstances has not changed so that it will strengthen us to keep trusting in him to keep persevering even through the most difficult suffering

Christ has already freed us by dying for us on the cross and so if you're in Christ regardless of anything else in this world whatever situation you're in you're already free you've been released from the captivity of sin and death believe that that is God's word to you Jesus is more than a prophet he's the eternal son of God God's chosen Messiah so I don't want you to mishear me tonight I don't want you to leave thinking that Jesus is only a prophet but unless we treat him as God's prophet then we won't actually truly see him as the son of God because God's son is God's preeminent prophet he's the word made flesh he's the very representation of who God is and his words are God's words themselves and so when Jesus speaks he penetrates right into the depths of our hearts he exposes who we really are what's and all it's not always comfortable but unless we accept

Jesus as God's prophet then we will not accept him as God's Messiah either because we wouldn't accept that what he says is good news and if we don't we wouldn't find freedom and release that comes from only trusting in him so Jesus is God's anointed prophet accept his words trust him let's pray father we thank you that you sent your son anointed him so that he might proclaim good news to the poor freedom for the prisoners recovery of sight for the blind father we know that sometimes this means physical healing and freedom but often more than not it is the more important thing that of spiritual freedom knowing we are in right relationship with you and given the sight to live for your son Jesus so help us to treat that as really really good news for our lives and help us to keep accepting the word of your son

Jesus we pray this in his name amen