

Jesus' Must

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[0 : 00] Let us pray together. Father in heaven, we thank you that your Holy Spirit works so powerfully through your word. And we ask for the gift of your spirit to open your word to us, to release us, to serve you, to help us to glorify you, to know you better, and to have our thoughts and minds conformed to your life-giving truth.

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Please be seated. Well, as we look at this passage from Luke 4, I think it's a gift to us that we are in the midst of Decision 2008.

We've been surrounded by elections this fall, and not only the Canadian election, which is wonderfully succinct compared to our neighbors in the South.

And we've been hearing from candidates, especially in the last few weeks, giving incredible promises, wonderful promises, promises of hope for every constituent that you can imagine.

They are promising a wonderful new reality. In fact, the themes of the campaigns in Canada and in the U.S. is that all of the parties are offering hope in a time of great challenge.

[1 : 29] But the big question that faces us here in Canada today, and that the United States will face shortly after the first Tuesday in November, is were they just words that those candidates were speaking?

Will they be able to carry through what they have been saying? Will they be able to live up to the hope that they have been pointing towards?

And I want to make a very bold prediction here. I think that neither Stephen Harper nor the next president of the United States will come close to fulfilling all their promises. And we're going to find out in the next few years that none of them are actually going to be able to live up to the hope that they promised to give.

And that is the nature of political campaigns, of elections. And here we have in the Gospel of Luke, in our passage, something that follows incredible promises, incredible hope that has been preached.

If you remember right, if you turn to verses 18 through 20 of chapter 4, right at the top right-hand column of page 58, we see Jesus' text. It's an extraordinary sermon that he preaches that no person could ever preach, really.

[2 : 48] It is a text with great promise and hope for Israel. And they're waiting to see it fulfilled. He says this, And then an incredibly powerful moment.

Jesus closed the book, the Bible, and gave it back to the attendant and sat down, and the eyes of all the synagogue are fixed on him.

There is expectation. They are waiting. And in the silence, he speaks, and he began to say to them, Today, this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.

In other words, in me, Jesus says, all of this has come to pass. But, of course, the election question comes to us at that point.

Will he deliver? Is Jesus preaching more than just words, empty words? Well, wonderfully, Luke gives us an immediate answer.

[4 : 13] It's in verses 31 through 34. It's in a remarkable 24 hours. It is a killer day. And I hope none of you have to go through this kind of work day in your life.

But the day begins in Capernaum. He's gone down from Nazareth, which is about 1,800 feet above sea level, down to Capernaum on the Sea of Galilee, about 700 feet below sea level.

And in this town of about 1,800, he teaches in the synagogue. The people are listening that day.

And they are absolutely astonished, we see, right in verse 32, because his word was with authority.

And it's a very strong word to be astonished. And that strong response is because it was clear that there is great power in his preaching, that the Holy Spirit is at work in the words of Jesus.

And by the way, this is how the Holy Spirit works so powerfully in the life of the church and in the world. It is primarily through God's word.

[5 : 20] This is where the Holy Spirit does his most powerful, life-changing work. It is through the word of God. But not only were people hearing God's word when Jesus was speaking, they were actually looking at God's word as well.

The word became flesh, is the way John put it. And in the middle of the astonishing preaching of Jesus, there comes a major disturbance.

It's a second time in two sermons. Jesus doesn't have a good track record for peaceful sermons that take place. That's a very unanglican thing to be happening to him. But it happens.

This guy stands up and shouts in a very loud voice and challenges Jesus. Ah, what have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us?

I know who you are, the Holy One of God. Now, if you believe this passage, you have to believe that there are such a thing as demons, as Satan, who opposes the work of God.

[6 : 26] Jesus believed in Satan. So did Luke, who's writing about this, who is a great scientist, doctor, very learned man. And this is a demon who is speaking.

And far from trying to glorify Jesus, even though he speaks the truth, this demon can't stand in Jesus' presence. Or to experience God's word, to experience God's power in his word.

They actually want to disrupt God's word. And they want to replace God's word by their own kind of showing off their ability to discern who Jesus was.

And immediately, we see that Jesus rebuked him. He said, be silent. Come out of him. And the demon throws the man down.

There is this sense of release. He's not harmed as he's thrown down. And the demon comes out just as Jesus has commanded. And I want you to notice the response of the crowd.

[7 : 30] It's very important for us because it helps us to see who Jesus is and what's going on here. They were all amazed. And they said, what is this word?

It's an odd response. They said, what is this word? And that the word is the same word John uses at the beginning of his gospel, which says, Jesus is the word. For with authority and power, he commands the unclean spirit, and they come out.

Now, you see, with their question, the crowd unknowingly points to us, points out to us who Jesus is, that he is God's word. Not only does he proclaim God's word on releasing captive, he himself releases in a way that goes far beyond simply speaking about release from physical jail.

He himself frees a man who is captive to the greatest power on earth, the power of Satan and all his works. And we don't hear Luke talk about it, but we know that there must have been a joyous scene as this man is restored to his family and to his community, who must have been incredibly disturbed by what was happening to him.

This man is restored to peace and to wellness. And this really begins a pattern that we're going to see throughout Jesus' ministry in the book of Luke, because he himself will free people from moral and spiritual and physical evil of all kinds as he speaks God's word to people.

[9 : 08] He is the good news as well as the preacher of good news. And so when the demons ask Jesus, have you come to destroy us? They're asking if he has come to destroy everything that they represent.

Satan, along with all evil, sin, and death that came into the world. Everything that came into the world when Satan tempted Adam and Eve. The answer to their question is a resounding yes. Jesus has come to release creation from the captivity of Satan. That's what Jesus is about. This is the acceptable year of the Lord.

He has come to bring liberty to those who are oppressed, the world that is oppressed by sin and death. So this very eventful sermon shows how very big Jesus' mission is.

In Jesus, God himself has come into, has actually invaded this fallen world in order to release it. And he does it through the speaking of God's word, through Jesus' speaking.

[10 : 16] Notice how Luke draws our attention to Jesus' word over and over again, even in this little description of this casting out of the demon. Verse 31, he was teaching on the Sabbath.

Verse 32, they're astonished at his teaching. His word possessed authority. Jesus rebuked the devil. You know, he spoke to it strongly. And then they ask that question, what is this word?

And what we are seeing is that through his word, Jesus both saves and he judges. His word releases people from evil, sin, and death.

And that's how Jesus saves. And secondly, his word rebukes and silences and destroys Satan and his works in this world.

That is judgment. Here's the power of God's word. And this is, this is something that is a great challenge for us.

[11 : 15] It teaches us. Because the Christian church, the people of God, have been entrusted with God's word in this world. God is about releasing captives now through the church.

And in the next chapter, we're going to see that it is through the forgiveness of sins. And the only way that this can happen is through Jesus' word. It's amazing that it is a word that we are tempted to be silent about, to be ashamed about, not to have confidence in.

This is something that we Anglicans probably particularly have difficulty with. And it's difficult in our society that often tries to muzzle God's word and the truth of it.

Paul knew this temptation in the Bible as well. In Romans 1.16, he said, For I am not ashamed, assuming that he is tempted by shame, I am not ashamed of the gospel.

It is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith. Paul reminds us here of Luke 4. Jesus' word is all-powerful.

[12 : 25] It is God's power. It saves and it releases people. And without that good news of Jesus, the church and this church of St. John's would be powerless to carry out God's mission.

There's no release. There's no salvation. There's no real ministry without God's pure word being taught. And that's why at St. John's, God's word is central to our life together.

It is not enough just for us to hear sermons on a Sunday morning. We need to be able to study God's word together through the week. We need to be able to pray in response to God's word individually and with other people.

We need to be able to share that word with those who are around us as well. We need to constantly be hearing God's word and receive that release and the life that comes with it.

It is the way that God releases us to serve him. And this understanding of ministry is crucial for the vitality of the church. It was a wonderful thing yesterday that the women's conference not only had 185 women there, but that there were 45 churches represented.

[13 : 43] And what the women were seeing was the ministry of God's word demonstrated and modeled and people experiencing the release of God's gospel, of Jesus' gospel in their lives.

And being able to bring that back to their churches because this is the way that the church is made strong and vital and is put on the right track in which really the mission of the church is what God's mission is.

And so in verse, and I want to just show you that the key to all this is the fact that God releases you and I. Look in verse 38. The scene shifts to a very private scene.

Simon Peter's house, which according to the photographs I saw on the internet are 90 feet away from the synagogue. They have photographs, archaeological photographs. It is a private scene. Peter's mother-in-law is not well. She is very, very sick. She's not in spiritual bondage but a physical one and Jesus is called to her help.

[14 : 50] And so Jesus comes to where she is and stands over her is the way that Luke describes it in verse 38, 39. He stood over her and that is showing his authority over physical evil as well.

And the amazing thing is that if you notice there is that he rebukes the fever. He actually speaks to the sickness itself. And when he rebukes the fever it leaves her.

And Luke for a very good purpose describes what she does next. She rises and serves them. She rises and serves them.

And this is her response to that word, to that releasing word. And it's a response that's very important for us because throughout our passage there are many people who are hearing God's word and they are astonished.

They are amazed by it. But Luke does not record anybody putting their faith in Jesus Christ. There is not to faith, hope, and love for Christ.

[16 : 04] But this woman is the shining exception. In that very private setting Luke points out the right response to God's release through his word.

She rises up, serves Jesus and those who are with him as an expression of her gratitude. It's not a public or a spectacular way of serving but it's extraordinarily effective because Luke uses it to show us God's great purpose for his release of captives.

And that purpose is exactly what was shown in the great story of release in the Old Testament. If you remember that the reason why God freed his people from Egypt was that they might serve him freely.

It's told us over and over again in Exodus. In the Collect for Peace that we say every other Sunday we say that the service to God is perfect freedom.

You see those two are connected. If you have been released from sin and death by God's word you have been freed to serve Jesus Christ. That's what it means to trust his word.

[17 : 12] It's what it means to be free. And it's not just a release that happens when we become Christians when we first place our faith in the one who is God's word.

It is something that is given to us daily. God's word releases us every day because sin still tries to wrap its tentacles around us. It still tries to keep us from serving.

We're living in a world that is incredibly varied in its way of trying to hold us captive. Of putting us in jail. There's a deep and those things might be a deep desire for financial security which I think is a great temptation right now in this day and age.

or it might be a desire for status. It might be anxiety in our lives that we are bound by. It might be chemical addictions or sexual addictions or anger or unforgiveness or even physical pain and sickness.

These things can keep us captive. But we're seeing in this passage that Jesus is Lord over all of it.

[18 : 20] and if we are bound to something it is because we have pushed away God's word in that area of our lives.

Because God's release is stronger than any spiritual jail we might find ourselves in. Jesus' forgiveness of our sins is tremendously freeing.

Yet it is something that we can push away. There's an invitation here for us to be released by God's word and his gospel. At our parish prayer day each month we always hear from a missionary and we support and we pray for them.

And this month there is a wonderful example of just what Jesus is talking about here about the release that his word brings. This month we heard Dan Gao talk about his mission Seeds of Hope in Vancouver.

And two things were very evident as he talked about his ministry. The first is that Dan loves Jesus and his word. He's very enthusiastic about the gospel.

[19 : 26] And secondly is that through God's word he continually sees God releasing people from even the most powerful alcohol, drug, and pornography addictions.

They're extreme forms of people being enslaved. But it's very exciting to see with that release there is a new desire to serve God.

That people who are experiencing the release of God want to serve their spouse, their family, others who are struggling. They want to serve in ministries in their church.

It's very exciting. You see that not only does God release, but he frees in order to serve. And it's very important for us to also receive God's release in this way.

Just as Peter's mother-in-law did, to immediately rise up and serve Jesus. We see the opposite happening as we close this passage and this sermon.

[20 : 28] If you look at the end of the chapter, verse 42, what has happened in verse 40 is the sun sets and all those who had any, that were sick with various diseases were brought to Jesus.

Verse 40, and he laid his hands on every one of them and he healed them and demons also came out of many crying, you are the son of God, but he rebuked them and wouldn't allow them to speak because they knew he was the Christ.

All night, Jesus was doing this and what we see here is that Jesus is demonstrating his authority over every, absolutely every form of evil that can enslave a person.

he releases people from that night and in the morning Jesus went to the wilderness at the same kind of area where the devil tempted him earlier in the chapter and here is a place where his mission is clarified.

In the morning he is resting, he is taking a step back, he is receiving direction from God and people find him and what we see in verse 42 is that people sought him, came to him and would have kept him from leaving them physically and wonderfully, Jesus very, it seems to be gently and strongly says to them, I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other cities also for I was sent for that purpose and you know in a way it is very good for us that those people tried to

dissuade Jesus from his ministry because as a result we have a very clear picture of what Jesus' mission is, of what God's work is through Jesus Christ and his purpose for him and that is not that he would heal absolutely every illness in that area but that he would preach God's release, that he would release people from captivity, that he would be free to go into the surrounding areas to be about

[22 : 36] God's huge saving work and this is a word for us as well for our church because God's purpose for Jesus is his purpose for us as well.

We have the treasure of the gospel entrusted to our care. We are to speak about it because it is God's power for salvation, forgiveness and release.

God hasn't released us to be served by Jesus which is really what these people wanted to have happen. They wanted their agenda. They wanted him to give them every good thing and in fact our own agendas can actually hinder the purpose of God as well.

Instead, we are freed to serve him, to carry on Jesus' own ministry by speaking about God's release and we need to help one another to do this.

You know, one of the things that I have to tell my three-year-old all the time when he wants something is I have to say use your words. Use your words. And I think that's a word for the church too.

[23 : 37] We need to use the word that has been entrusted to us. God has given us his word to use it and we need to ask the Holy Spirit to help us, to help one another as well be faithful to the gospel and with what has been entrusted to us.

I think one of the wonderful ways of doing that is the spiritual conversations lunch that we're having right after this service. It is a wonderful way to help us because it is a way of giving us strategies to get over the reluctance of sharing this life-giving, releasing word into our world.

So we really close this passage with that challenge to us and ask that God will strengthen us to really trust in the power of his gospel, of his word, to release the world that is around us and to release us to serve him.

Amen. Amen. Please kneel for prayer.

Almighty God, all praise and glory for sending your Son to bear witness and proclaim the good news of your kingdom that he is the power and the supreme authority that through his sacrificial death and resurrection all lives can be changed from bondage in a secular world to freedom in your kingdom.

[25 : 34] Lord, for those who don't know you yet, may their ears and eyes be opened to experience this amazing gospel of redemption which is true today and forever.

Lord, in your mercy. Hear our prayer. Lord, in our troubled world, we cry out again for peace in countries devastated by war, particularly Afghanistan and Iraq.

But Father, we ask for your peace which surpasses all understanding. Protect our troops, bring them home safely.

for Christians experiencing persecution and fleeing from India and Iraq, lead them out safely.

Restore stability to economic and financial markets based on integrity, truth, transparency and accountability.

For families having lost everything in the fire in Los Angeles, we thank you that they have escaped harm. comfort them and provide help in their time of need.

[26 : 50] For missionaries everywhere, we ask your protection and pray that the Holy Spirit will keep them safe. We pray especially for those supported by us, for Sharon Thompson in Burkina Faso, Brian McConaghy, the Ratanak Project in Cambodia, Doug and Anna Marie Graham in Asia, Catherine Gannett in Campbell River.

Lord, in your mercy. Bless our nation, Lord, our Queen Elizabeth and our newly elected minority government under Prime Minister Harper.

we pray for party unity with a focus on what is right for our country, our people and neighbours around the world.

Thank you for the beautiful city in which we live. May it be known as a city of righteousness, a testimony to you. Lord, in your mercy.

In the crisis in the worldwide Anglican communion, we pray for our Primate Archbishop Gregory Venables and his wife Sylvia that they may have godly insight and strength, spiritual and physical protection.

[28 : 13] Thank you, Father, for the people of this province who have opened their doors and hearts to us. For network bishops, clergy, spouses and their families, trustees and parish councils, we praise you for their faithful ministry.

Provide them with your grace, spiritual protection and health. And for our trustees, we pray for Christine, Krista, David, Michael Bentley and David Short.

For the network legal team, give them wisdom and insight as they engage in civil court proceedings, defending the right for local parishes to continue worshipping in their buildings.

May your truth and your justice preside over all. Lord, in your mercy. In our community at St. John's, we ask for a special blessing and protection for our clergy, their families and staff.

For members of our congregation who are grieving, experiencing illness, job losses, fatigue, persecution, we pray for your healing touch.

[29 : 32] We pray especially for Paul, Rowena, Fiona, Carolyn, Wynne. and Lord, we lift up to you Mayran for a favorable decision from the immigration panel.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer. In silence, Lord, we lay before you now the needs of those known only to you and those known only to us.

Lord, in your mercy. Heavenly Father, in whom we live and move and have our being, we humbly pray thee so to guide and govern us by thy Holy Spirit that in all cares and occupations of our daily life we may never forget thee, but remember that we are ever walking in thy sight through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Amen.