

Luke 4:31-44 - The Great Conflict

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[0 : 00] You are listening to a message from Southwood Presbyterian Church in Huntsville, Alabama. Our passion is to experience and express grace. Join us.

Amen. That's the story we talk about every week, isn't it? The story that never can get old to us of that Savior that God has sent, of what He's done, of how it impacts us. We're going to talk about it again this morning.

We're back in Luke 4 today. Next week we will take a break briefly from Luke to talk about what God's Word has to say about some significant events coming up soon in the life of our country. So you'll not want to miss that, or maybe you will, one way or the other. But last week in Luke 4 we heard Jesus lay out the blueprint for His kingdom ministry.

It's what Ron was just talking about as he's led us through the service this morning. Jesus coming to bring freedom, to bring release, to proclaim it, and to provide it.

[1 : 15] Word and deed together in His ministry. Last week Jesus was preaching in the synagogue and the focus was on the words that He was proclaiming.

This week we begin to see some of the deeds, some of the reality of that, the demonstration of the kingdom. We can talk and Jesus can say, this is what I'm coming to do and this is why I was sent. And now Jesus starts to show us. We start to see what it looks like and what it feels like when the King shows up. Glimpses and tastes of freedom and release.

What happens when Jesus the King begins to move. I'm going to read beginning in verse 31 of Luke chapter 4. Notice as I do that most of this story happens in one day.

There's a lot that happens. But honestly it's just another normal Sabbath day in many ways. Perhaps like your day today. Jesus goes to church in the morning.

[2 : 13] He has lunch at a friend's house. And then by evening some more people show up and come over to hang out. But a seemingly normal day is anything but normal when Jesus is involved.

Into the mundane normalcy of life here, Jesus brings the power of the kingdom. Follow this story as I read at verse 31 of Luke 4.

God's holy word. This carefully researched account from Luke. And he went down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee. And he was teaching them on the Sabbath.

And they were astonished at his teaching for his word possessed authority. And in the synagogue there was a man who had the spirit of an unclean demon. And he cried out with a loud voice, Ha! 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. But Jesus rebuked him, saying, Be silent and come out of him.

[3 : 16] And when the demon had thrown him down in their midst, he came out of him, having done him no harm. And they were all amazed and said to one another, What is this word?

For with authority and power he commands the unclean spirits and they come out. And reports about him went out into every place in the surrounding region. And he arose and left the synagogue and entered Simon's house.

Now Simon's mother-in-law was ill with a high fever. And they appealed to him on her behalf. And he stood over her and rebuked the fever. And it left her and immediately she rose and began to serve them.

Now when the sun was setting, all those who had any who were sick with various diseases brought them to him. And he laid his hands on every one of them and healed them. And demons also came out of many, crying, You are the Son of God!

But he rebuked them and would not allow them to speak, because they knew that he was the Christ. And when it was day, he departed and went into a desolate place. And the people sought him and came to him and would have kept him from leaving them.

[4 : 23] But he said to them, I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well. For I was sent for this purpose. And he was preaching in the synagogues of Judea. Pray with me. Father, we come to your word and give you thanks for it. It is indeed the only infallible rule of faith and practice.

The authority on which we can rest. The place where we can trust. The truth in which we can have confidence. And so, Father, we come trusting.

We come expectant. That when your word is opened and it intersects with our hearts, that your spirit will do things that we wouldn't have expected could happen.

That you will not merely teach us, but that you will change us. By your word and by your spirit.

Would you do that now as we look to this portion of your word and we ask it in Jesus' name.

[5 : 29] Amen. I grew up on Disney princess movies, among other things. At least, I hope there were other things. But all of those great classic movies.

Great fairy tales where most of which have at the center, like many good stories, this conflict between good and evil, right? Constantly. No matter which one you're watching.

Whether you're watching Belle versus Gaston. Or Ariel versus Ursula. Jasmine versus Jafar. Pick your favorite one. They're all centered around that kind of idea.

And I would find myself, no matter which one I was watching, pulling for the good guys, right?

Naturally, you're pulled in that way. For the good guy to come out on top against the villain.

Some of you may prefer Luke versus Darth. Frodo versus Sauron. Sherlock versus Moriarty. Even Harry versus Voldemort.

[6 : 31] Regardless of which one you prefer. We all know these great stories of good versus evil, right? That conflict, though, is not merely in movies and fairy tales.

One of the reasons that those stories so resonate with us is that they reflect the great conflict of good versus evil that underlies all of history.

It's the battle between a good and holy God and the fallen angel Satan and his evil spirits. In this passage, we see in real space and time, in the unfolding of human history, a crucial battle in the great conflict.

And what we will see in this story is that King Jesus demonstrates his unrivaled power in the great war between good and evil.

Before we look again at Luke chapter 4, we need to set this passage and that conflict that I'm talking about in the context of the greater story that the Bible tells.

[7 : 34] So if you turn all the way back to Genesis, it's at the very beginning of the story that we will see the battle lines drawn. What's at issue in this conflict?

You know the story begins with God creating, right? God makes a good creation with humanity as the crown of his creation, created to live in perfect relationship with him, to reflect his image in his creation, to rule over the rest of his creation.

That's how the story starts. Here's mankind to be in this intimate, close relationship with God. And then enter Satan, the serpent, who we later find out has rebelled against God and his good authority.

And Satan draws humanity, Adam and Eve, into his rebellion, doesn't he? Against God. He tempts them to distrust God, to disobey God's commands, and therefore to disrupt their good relationship with God.

As a result of this rebellion, God comes in and God pronounces a curse, a curse on the serpent, on Adam and Eve, and on all of creation, as a matter of fact.

[8 : 57] God's good creation has been marred by the ones intended to care for it and rule over it. Thorns and thistles, diseases and death enter the perfect creation.

And so the battle lines are drawn, right? There they are. Satan is attacking the world God has made and the people that he made for himself to live in relationship with.

Satan would have all of that for himself. The world and the people. He wants it. And God, in pronouncing the curse, launches a counterattack, so to speak.

Genesis chapter 3, verse 15, when God is cursing the serpent, he says, I'm going to put enmity between you and the woman. Hostility. There will be war between your offspring and her offspring. He shall bruise your head and you shall bruise his heel. See that conflict between good and evil? All the way back at the beginning of the story.

[9 : 59] The enmity between God and the serpent resulting in enmity between the serpent and the woman and her offspring. A battle will unfold.

But God promises, even here, that it's one that he, and in particular, a particular offspring of the woman, will win. So now fast forward to Luke chapter 4.

With the arrival of the Son of God, the Messiah, onto the scene of human history where this battle has been waged, this great conflict has been underway now for centuries, and he shows up and it begins to rage much more intensely.

The heat is turned up. Already we saw a couple weeks ago at the beginning of Luke 4 that Satan tempts Jesus, as he did Adam and Eve, right? To disobey God.

To distrust Him and His good care for them. He doesn't have your best interests at heart. Take another way rather than God's way, Jesus. You can get what you want by this path.

[11 : 08] And Jesus faithfully responds by trusting and following God's Word. The second Adam, Jesus, succeeds where we and the first Adam have failed.

He succeeds three times in painful, physically painful circumstances. Jesus conquers Satan. And Satan leaves him, right?

Defeated, but not yet giving up. Leaves, Luke tells us, until an opportune time. The war continues. Then in the passage we read this morning, Jesus leaves Nazareth, His hometown, and heads to Capernaum.

I love Luke's careful attention to detail and historical foundation, building for us something that we can trust and rooting it in places we know. Just like Nazareth, Capernaum is easy to locate.

The eyewitnesses there could testify easily to the veracity of these accounts. Evil spirits may sound fanciful to you. You think, oh, come on.

[12 : 16] You know, evil spirits, and what is all of this? This is no fairy tale of good versus evil. This is the real deal. Hundreds of people are impacted, perhaps thousands, by what we read.

They have been there, many of them, to tell about it, to confirm, did this indeed happen? You can still see today, in fact, the ruins of the synagogue in Capernaum.

In the top left there in this picture, the white limestone, is ruins of the synagogue that was built in the fourth century. And you'll see down here the black basalt rock.

That's the material that was actually used to build the synagogue on that exact same site that Jesus would have preached in. You can still see portions of it remaining underneath the white limestone synagogue.

Right here in human history, in places you can still go and see and touch, Jesus shows up. And so here we are in the long day that I spoke of earlier.

[13 : 22] It's Sunday, right? And Jesus finds Himself where? Preaching at church. Notice verse 32. Even before any of the miracles start, even before the wonderful things He's going to do, His authority is evident in His words, isn't it?

Just in what He's saying, they're astonished at His teaching for His word possessed authority. He didn't preach like the teachers of the law that the people were used to.

Most of them preached in the style of the day, which went like this. They would open up the scroll and read the passage of Scripture. And then when they sat down to preach, what they would do is they would recite one rabbi after another.

He says this. He says that. This guy says the passage means this. But this guy, on the other hand, takes a different view. That's the way that they preached regularly.

Not so with Jesus. He speaks as one with authority. He speaks for Himself, doesn't He? Last week, today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.

[14 : 29] You want to know what this passage from Isaiah means? Today it's fulfilled in your hearing. Says who? Says me. I declare to you the truth of God straight from me on my own authority.

But then Jesus' authority is challenged in this passage. Satan's minions have entered people in Capernaum. And when they encounter Jesus, they attack, don't they?

Verse 34 and verse 41, we hear them crying out the identity of Jesus. Jesus of Nazareth. The Holy One of God. The Son of God.

These are terms of attack actually. Part of gaining the upper hand in conflict is knowing your opponent. Being able to identify them. The demons say, I know you.

I know who you are. Did you hear that declaration of war? I know who you are so I can control you. I'm against you. What are you coming against us with, Jesus of Nazareth?

[15 : 35] The demons declaring war, the attack that's there, but also doing something else, seeking to discredit Jesus. What's the quickest way to discredit somebody for them?

Hey, if the demons are the first ones to tell you who he is, that's definitely not who he is, right? If I heard it first from the demons, I'm never gonna believe it.

So if the demon yells he's the son of God, he's the holy one of God, that can't be true. And so Jesus does what?

He silences them immediately. Both times that they say this, Jesus rebukes them. Who's in charge? Jesus is in charge. He sends them away and does not even allow them to speak.

So great is his authority over them. Jesus rebukes Satan and his demons and he shows his power in doing so.

[16 : 35] The people notice, don't they? Look at verse 36. What do the people say about Jesus when they see him cast these demons out? Verse 36.

Verse 36, they look at him and they say, what's going on? What is this word? For with authority and power he commands the unclean spirits and they come out.

What is it when he speaks like that? With authority and power he commands the unclean spirits. He speaks with authority and he backs it up demonstrating his authority so that it's undeniable who's in charge.

The kingdom of Jesus comes in power. A king who powerfully brings freedom to those in the bondage of Satan and he does it with a word.

This is not just a king who says things like what Ron read earlier. You can have freedom. You can have release from your bondage but it's just wishful thinking. No.

[17 : 43] The king comes with power and where he shows up there is freedom. When he speaks he acts. The people are amazed.

What likely amazes them is the simplicity and the authority with which he casts out the demons. There were people who attempted exorcisms back in these days and they did it with a lot of elaborate tricks and spells.

You would think of hocus pocus type stuff that happened. Jesus doesn't do anything tricky. No fancy words. He just commands the demons to come out.

Jesus simply and authoritatively speaks and the power of the king is evident in its simplicity and in its freeing power that it actually happens as he says.

Jesus comes to set captives free and in order to do that if he's going to set the captive free as he later explains you first have to bind the strong man holding them captive and then you can set the captives free and so Jesus does that.

[18 : 52] He binds the strong man Satan. The stronger man Jesus comes to demonstrate his great power. He overpowers Satan and then sets the captives free from the demons.

He speaks the word they must obey and many people are released from their bondage and entirely unharmed aren't they? Protected by King Jesus.

The demon comes out of him and he is not harmed. So Jesus is showing himself greater and stronger than Satan and his demons.

But he doesn't stop there. You remember the forces of evil have wreaked havoc on God's good creation right? You know just think about what's happened since the fall of man.

all of the ways that this curse on God's creation has played itself out. They've brought all of creation under a curse and so even when Satan and his minions aren't personally present the evil of the fall their trail of brokenness and destruction and disease persists doesn't it?

[20 : 03] They're limited in where they can be but the effects of what they've caused run rampant throughout the world. So perhaps Jesus is too weak or too late to be able to handle all the destruction that they've caused.

What will he be able to do? Is it possible that they've brought so much devastation that the king won't be able to push it back? No way. No way.

Not this king. He is coming as we sang just a few minutes ago to make his blessing flow where? Far as the curse is found everywhere all over the place throughout creation watch as Jesus rebukes the effects of the fall.

Verse 38 He arose and left the synagogue and entered Simon's house. Simon's mother-in-law was ill with a high fever and so they appealed to Jesus on her behalf and he stood over her and rebuked the fever and it left her and immediately she rose and began to serve them.

I said Jesus rebukes the effects of the fall which may sound a little odd or strange to you. It seems to make them personal that he's speaking to them and rebuking them.

[21 : 24] It's because he uses the exact same word here as he does when he rebukes the demons twice in this passage. He rebukes the fever here and it leaves her.

While it may be a fever an effect of the fall rather than a personal enemy Jesus sees the two as connected in the great conflict doesn't he?

This may not be the personal enemy Satan and his demons but this is part of what they have brought into this creation and again Jesus demonstrates his power.

This is a serious fever perhaps even malaria related that Dr. Luke carefully diagnoses for us and it is no match for King Jesus that dear woman is so freed from her fever that she is immediately up and serving right away fully functional back to her healthy self immediately but Jesus is not finished with one fever verse 40 when the sun was setting all those who had any who were sick with various diseases brought them to him and he laid his hands on every one of them and healed them not just the one fever but now the sun goes down on the Sabbath and the people are able now again to carry people that they weren't allowed to carry on the Sabbath and so they begin to bring them to Jesus over and over person after person they bring the sick to him and with a personal touch Jesus heals them all that was uncommon in this culture you didn't touch the sick in order to heal and Jesus reaches and touches and heals though many people are there they're not mere numbers to Jesus he's not just trying to increase his count and how impressive it is no he cares personally he rules over all these effects of the fall many various diseases to bring freedom and to bring it to particular people that he cares about specifically and personally freeing them from the darkness that they are living under and restoring them to health see this is what happens when the king shows up isn't it this is what the kingdom looks like and feels like good starts to push back evil light begins to drive out darkness blessing starts overcoming the curse wherever it is found when Jesus and his kingdom show up somewhere Satan is run out of town the effects of the fall are reversed people experience freedom listen this is not a fairy tale this is not just a nice story friends this is this is

[24 : 16] Jesus this is the king we know and serve this is our older brother the one who is alive and ruling and working in our lives by his spirit so I say to those of you who are weary in the fight who feel like you're losing the battle like darkness is closing in be of good cheer listen in your life for the soft footsteps and the strong voice of the king and have hope because of him we do indeed have an active personal enemy Satan who is constantly waging spiritual warfare against us we do live in a world where the effects of the fall and the power of darkness are all over our hearts and our world day in and day out we're confronted with it it looks different for each of us you may be suffering under the bondage of pornography you may be suffering under the bondage of bitterness and unforgiveness the bondage of addiction the bondage of oppression many of those that we we confessed our struggle with and our bondage to earlier in our world these kinds of bondage often feel inescapable don't they you've felt that before there'll be no end to this captivity but know this while the struggle may be hard

King Jesus rules over all of these in order to bring freedom the struggle may persist even to help you lean more upon his strength and trust him more deeply trust his love for you but don't lose heart King Jesus fights and wins for you and he will Southwood as we seek to bring the kingdom to bear in Huntsville we should expect King Jesus to bring freedom we come up against all sorts of bondage you may feel like you're beating your head against the wall running into the bondage created by unjust systems the bondage of generational poverty the bondage of power hungry leaders and money hungry payday lenders and you think there's nothing that can help look again to King Jesus who rules over all of these two to bring freedom and go forward with him the bondage you can't seem to break through is pushing you to trust him more because he's the one with the power so don't lose heart

King Jesus fights and wins for you and through you his church where King Jesus is proclaimed and promoted Satan evil and all the effects of the fall are pushed back before King Jesus angels prostrate fall demons shudder Satan himself flees and all of creation rejoices in the power of her king that's what happens when the king shows up that's what happens in your life that's what

happens in your neighborhood in your friend's life in your spouse's life in your kid's life when Jesus shows up that's good news it's been quite a day for Jesus right the kingdom's been power going out from him all over the place it's not surprising perhaps the next morning we find him alone and Mark tells us in his gospel that he's praying look at the end of our passage when it was day he departed and went into a desolate place and the people sought him and came to him and would have kept him from leaving them but he said to them

I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well for I was sent for this purpose and he was preaching in the synagogues in Judea can you blame the people in Capernaum I mean after all the great things that he's doing hey hang around Jesus stay a while I like how this feels you know neat things happening if I ever need a doctor it seems to go pretty quickly this is wonderful stay around they would have had him stay but Jesus is no localized domesticated miracle worker is he you can't tame this king he must go the kingdom is not for any one ethnic group or any one geographical region Jesus must go elsewhere because this is why he was sent his mission is bigger than Capernaum isn't it the good news of his kingdom the freedom the release the forgiveness the fact that it is now jubilee for everyone because the king is here that needs to be shared elsewhere the fight against evil must be carried on more must be brought in to hear and taste and feel the kingdom now

Jesus has certainly lodged some resounding initial victories here in Capernaum on this one day but this reminder I think at the end of the passage is here particularly to help us remember that it's not over the mission for which he was sent is not yet complete Jesus says the conflict with evil not yet over and that points us to where it's all headed you see to this point Jesus has merely been declaring and asserting his authority over Satan and his demons right pronouncing it with a word that he is in charge he declares his power over Satan and the demons that he as they have correctly identified the holy son of God rules over them by divine right and fiat he speaks and they must obey his righteous word but he couldn't just pronounce for us eternal victory over Satan could he he had to procure it he couldn't just say that we win and it be a reality because there's something wrong with us see when I think about watching all of those movies with good versus evil in them [31:06] I said I always end up rooting for the good guys right and part of that is really good and true because who always wins the good guys because that story reflects this story and so you like to root for them we like to root for the winning team but I think along the way I convince myself that it's not just that I'm cheering for the good guys to win but I'm one of them I'm on the good side like I mean after all I'm in church right I mean obviously this is the good side we naturally assume that we're on the side of good but remember the beginning of the story you remember when this conflict was first played out back in Genesis we have rebelled against God we've joined the rebellion having rebelled we are in bondage to sin by birth by nature all of us the Bible says enemies of God not not on his side naturally but his enemies and so

Jesus has to rescue us he doesn't just declare something he has to go do something in order to address our problem to do that to rescue us he doesn't just assert his unrivaled power and authority which he clearly has no he does what he lays down his very life on the cross the strong one the mighty one before whom no one could stand and whom no one could bind becomes seemingly weak willingly is held on the cross in order to rescue us and set us free and remarkably in so doing when Jesus goes to the cross he actually achieves ultimate victory over Satan and evil Colossians chapter 2 how does Paul say it when you are dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh our problem right we were dead

God made you alive with Christ how he forgave us all our sins having cancelled the charge of our legal indebtedness which stood against us and condemned us we were doomed he did it how he took it away nailing it to the cross and having disarmed the powers and authorities Satan and his demons he made a public spectacle of them triumphing over them by the cross triumphing over them when when was it clear when was the decisive blow delivered on the cross at great cost to himself when the almighty king humbled himself to the point of death even death on a cross he achieved for us what he already had for himself victory power power over Satan and all the effects of evil in our world sin death and the grave no longer rule over us in fact death starts working backwards the effects of the fall begin to be reversed in our lives and in our world

I love the way the valley of vision prayer says it Jesus strides forth as the victor conqueror of death hell and all opposing might he bursts the bands of death tramples the powers of darkness down and lives forever he my gracious surety apprehended for payment of my debt comes forth from the

prison house of the grave free and triumphant over sin Satan and death show me herein the proof that his vicarious offering the one in my place the one that if he made it and he came forth free and victorious shows that I will too show me that offering is accepted that the claims of justice are satisfied that the devil's scepter is shivered that his wrongful throne is leveled King Jesus reigns you can't tame this

King he will reign forever and ever and ever and because he does no throne or power or ruler or authority can rival him can stand before him or before us his people because we will reign with him because his power lives within us by his spirit the mighty king reigns with unrivaled power power and the mighty king with unrivaled power takes our place of weakness pays our debts which were great redeems us from our sins which were many so that we might live and reign with him forever completely forgiven from a debt that we could never repay completely free from bonds that we could never break in fact back to the beginning back to a restored creation the way

[36 : 36] God created it to be and most importantly back in a perfect relationship with God the way he made us to be the desire of his heart for us and Jesus brings us back there amen amen let's pray Jesus thank you what what what more could we say for what you our king have done we are those who are weak who are are not able to rescue ourselves we're in bondage even when we're not aware of it we battle against sin and Satan foes that on our own we're powerless to defeat but foes that in Jesus we have already conquered and we are more than conquerors through him who loves us and will never be separated from us with whom we will reign forever and ever

Lord Jesus would the confidence of seeing your power at work give us hope not in ourselves we have no hope there but in you may give us great confidence this week as we battle wherever you have placed us and in whatever difficult place you have us that King Jesus can conquer there and will conquer there may we trust him every moment of every day we give praise to him amen for more information visit us online at southwood.org ■■ to