

Luke 4:14-30

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 15 January 2017

Preacher: Greg Hendrickson

[0 : 00] Gospel of Luke chapter 4.

If you're looking in one of the Pew Bibles, it's page 859. As we prepare to look into God's Word, let's pray.

Lord, as we just sung, we acknowledge you as the fount of every blessing. Lord, we acknowledge that we are prone to wander away.

We pray that through your Word this morning that you would once again seal our hearts, work in us by your Spirit to draw us near to you, to assure us of your grace and mercy, and to call us and equip us for what you've called us to do.

Be with us today in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, this morning we're beginning a new series in the Gospel of Luke entitled, Who is This?

[1 : 16] From now until Easter, we'll be walking through chapters 4 through 8 of the Gospel of Luke. And we've chosen this part of Scripture to focus on, partly because it's just been a few years since we've preached through part of one of the Gospels in the morning service, and partly because the Gospels, perhaps more than any other part of Scripture, focus our attention directly on the person of Jesus.

The heart of Christianity is not just a theological idea, or an ethical directive, or a spiritual experience. At the heart of Christianity is the person of Jesus Christ.

And one of the main questions that the disciples and the crowds ask over and over in this section of Luke is, Who is this one? And Jesus himself will ask that question to his disciples, Who do you say that I am?

And that's the question we want to focus on over the next few months, is looking at the person of Jesus. If you're not a follower of Jesus, if you're exploring Christianity, this is a great series for you, because we're focusing on the person who's right at the heart of the Christian faith.

This is who it's all about. This is the one on whom Christianity stands or falls. This is the person whom you need to know above all else. If you're a new believer in Jesus, this will help you grow.

[2 : 41] As we look at the beginning of Jesus' ministry, when he calls his disciples to him, and begins teaching them who he is and what he's all about. And if you've been following Jesus for a long time, I hope that this time in the Gospel of Luke will refocus our attention once again, on the one who is truly central in our faith.

And sometimes we can get distracted, even disillusioned by life's trials and troubles. Sometimes we can get excited and engaged in many good and worthwhile endeavors.

But along the way, we can lose our focus on Jesus himself. And I hope this series will help us fix our eyes on him in a fresh way. So this morning we're reading Luke chapter 4, verses 14 to 30.

Let's read these verses together. And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee. And a report about him went out through all the surrounding country.

And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all. And he came to Nazareth where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read.

[3 : 53] And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind. To set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. And he began to say to them, Today, this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.

And all spoke well of him, and marveled at the gracious words that were coming from his mouth. Then they said, Is not this Joseph's son? And he said to them, Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, Physician, heal yourself.

What we have heard you did in Capernaum, do here in your hometown as well. And he said, Truly I say to you, no prophet is acceptable in his hometown. But in truth I tell you, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heavens were shut up three years and six months, and a great famine came over all the land, and Elijah was sent to none of them, but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow.

[5 : 23] And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian. When they heard these things, all in the synagogue were filled with wrath, and they rose up and drove him out of the town and brought him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built so that they could throw him down the cliff.

But passing through their midst, he went away. This morning we're looking at the opening of Jesus' public ministry in the Gospel of Luke, his inaugural speech, if you will, that sets the stage for all that is to come.

And this morning we'll see two main things about Jesus and his mission. The first thing that we'll see is that Jesus came to comfort the afflicted. Verse 14 to 22.

The first half of this passage is focused primarily on Jesus' words in verses 18 and 19. If you notice, verse 16 to 20 all sort of surround these words.

Verse 16 begins, he went to the synagogue, he stood up to read, the scroll was given to him, he unrolls the scroll, and then he reads. And then the same things happen in reverse order.

[6 : 39] He rolls up the scroll, he gives it back, he sits down, and then there's another reference to the people in the synagogue. And so this beginning of this passage focuses us on these words that he quotes from the prophet Isaiah, and then what he says in verse 21, today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.

Jesus came to comfort the afflicted. And he did so by teaching from the scriptures. That's the, under the heading of comforting the afflicted, I want to make three sub points, and this is the first one.

He comforted the afflicted from the scriptures. Now this is actually the only recorded sermon of Jesus in a synagogue that we have recorded for us in the gospels.

And obviously it's a summary of what he said, it's not every word he said, but the focus is how Jesus' ministry is to be interpreted by scripture, how he's the fulfillment of scripture.

The first thing Jesus did to begin his public ministry was reading the scriptures. So we see that Jesus' public ministry was not only about healing sicknesses or driving out demons or being present with hurting people, though he would do all of those things, it began with proclaiming and teaching the word of God.

[8 : 03] Verse 15 says, he taught in their synagogues. And that's a word that indicates an ongoing pattern, not just a one-time action. But this was what Jesus was going around doing, teaching.

Now, of course, Jesus' word and Jesus' works go together. Jesus did all the kinds of works that he talks about in his word.

But here we see the importance of the scriptures to Jesus and his ministry. And before we get into the content of those, I want us to see that we can't understand Jesus apart from the scriptures that he quoted.

You know, even think about it. When Jesus stood up, they gave him a scroll of the prophet Isaiah. Now, if you've ever read Isaiah, it's a long book. Right now, in the modern Bibles, there are 66 chapters.

Back then, there were no chapter and verse divisions. It was just a long scroll. So how did Jesus know where to turn in the scroll? Think about it. Most of us would get up there, they give you a big scroll, and you think, hmm, yeah, there's this passage that's in here somewhere.

[9 : 10] Hmm, hmm, is it here? Fumbling around for five minutes. Jesus wasn't fumbling around for five minutes. He opened the scroll. He knew the scriptures because he had studied them.

He had meditated on them. He had reflected on them. He knew the scriptures. And so he could open up the scriptures and speak to the people and speak about what he himself had come to do and to be.

So let me encourage us in this new year to read the scriptures. You know, maybe you have trouble reading. Well, there are many other options. You can listen to the Bible on CD.

You can download it on your phone. Listen to it while you're in the car, on the bus, walking to work. Maybe you have trouble understanding the scriptures. Join a Bible study group.

Or talk to someone who's maybe been a Christian for a little while and say, I'm having trouble understanding. Can we get together and read the Bible together? If you're not sure who to ask, come and talk to one of the pastors or the elders.

[10 : 18] Or to one of the Bible study leaders. If Jesus defined his own ministry with reference to the scriptures, so must we. If Jesus prioritized teaching and learning from the scriptures, so must we.

If Jesus looked, directed his hearers to the scriptures to find comfort and direction, so must we. So brothers and sisters, let us spend time in God's word this year.

Sometimes we can look for comfort when we long for comfort everywhere else except in the word of God. And Jesus says, start in the word of God. That's how he comforts the afflicted through the word of God.

Second sub point, Jesus came to comfort the afflicted as God's servant. Now Jesus quoted from the passage we read earlier in the service, Isaiah 61, the spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me.

Now if you read the book of Isaiah, and especially if you come to chapter 42, you'll notice that Isaiah at several points talks about this figure whom he calls the servant of the Lord.

[11 : 27] So chapter 42 of Isaiah begins, behold my servant whom I uphold, I have put my spirit upon him. So Isaiah is speaking of this person who is a spirit-filled servant of the Lord.

Now in some ways, does Isaiah see himself as that spirit-filled servant of the Lord? Perhaps in some ways. Does he see Israel as a nation, as being called to that? Perhaps in some ways.

But Jesus sees himself as the ultimate, as the fulfillment of Isaiah's figure, of the servant. So let me just sort of explain this figure of the servant a little that Isaiah speaks about.

So Isaiah 42 begins, behold my servant, I've put my spirit upon him. And then we see this servant is gentle and compassionate to comfort. Chapter 42, verses 2 and 3, he will not cry aloud or lift up his voice or make it heard in the street.

A bruised reed he will not break and a faintly burning wick he will not snuff out. He's gentle. He's compassionate to comfort the weak and helpless.

[12 : 36] But he's also powerful and mighty to save. Chapter 42, verse 6 and 7, I will give you as a covenant for the people, a light for the nations to open blind eyes, to bring out prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison, those who sit in darkness.

Isaiah 49 says that the servant will bring salvation not just to Israel but to the ends of the earth. He says, I will make you a light to the nations that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.

And then if you go on, Isaiah 50 and 52 and 53 speak about the suffering and then the victory of this servant. He's one who would be despised and rejected, a man of sorrows, well acquainted with grief, one who would be pierced for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities.

He would suffer in the place of sinners. And then yet he would be victorious. The end of chapter 53 says, he shall see his offspring and prolong his days.

The righteous one, my servant, shall make many to be accounted righteous. And Isaiah 61, even though it doesn't use the phrase, the servant of the Lord, it seems very clearly to be talking about the same person.

[13 : 54] Look at these verses that Jesus quotes from. The spirit of the Lord is upon me. He's a spirit anointed person. And Luke has pointed out several times Jesus is full of the spirit.

Chapter 4, verse 1 and 14. He's gentle and compassionate to comfort, bringing good news to the poor. Isaiah speaks of him binding up the brokenhearted.

But he's also powerful and mighty to save, proclaiming liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind. And as we'll see later in this passage, he came to bring salvation not just for the people of Israel but to all the nations of the earth.

And later on, the Gospel of Luke will show us that the salvation Jesus came to bring would come through his suffering and ultimately through his death on the cross.

That's how he would achieve his victory. So Luke is introducing us and Jesus is saying, I am this servant of the Lord, the one of whom Isaiah prophesied so long ago.

[14 : 56] in him, in Jesus, we will find all the strength and all the comfort and all the salvation that we need. You see, when Jesus preached, he didn't just start by giving us good advice.

He didn't just start by saying, here are the things that you need to change to make your life better. He started by saying, God has sent me. This is what I've come to do.

I've come to do what you could never do on your own. I've come to bring good news that you could never earn and never deserve.

So Jesus came to comfort the afflicted through the Scriptures. He came to comfort the afflicted as God's servant. And he came to comfort the afflicted both physically and spiritually. You know, many people have asked, well, who is Jesus speaking about?

Is he speaking about people who are physically poor, blind, oppressed? Or is he speaking about spiritual poverty, blindness, oppression?

[16 : 01] I think the answer is yes. Both. There's an important sense in which Jesus is speaking about people who are literally poor, captive, blind, and oppressed.

Howard Thurman, who is a close friend of Martin Luther King, Sr., wrote this back in about 1949. He said, I can count on the fingers of one hand the number of times that I have heard a sermon on the meaning of Christianity to the man who stands with his back against the wall.

The masses of men and women live with their backs constantly against the wall. They are the poor, the disinherited, the dispossessed. What does Christianity say to them?

The search for an answer to this question is perhaps the most important religious quest of modern life. And maybe that's exactly how you feel. You feel like your back is against the wall. You feel desperate, trapped, distressed, depressed.

Impossible demands are being made of you. How can you ever meet them? Terrible things have been done to you. Is there any hope of healing? Life seems perpetually overwhelming and there seems no way out.

[17 : 20] And Jesus speaks specifically to you here. You know, he doesn't just say I've come for anybody and everybody, though he will say that at other times.

He says I've come for the poor, for the captives, for the blind, for the oppressed, for the people who would think that anybody and everybody means anybody and everybody else except me.

and Jesus says to you specifically I've come for you. He chose to be born as a Jew in the line of Abraham in a time and place where Jews were an oppressed minority in a family that was not rich because he wants to communicate he can identify with you whatever your affliction may be.

And you know, in the history of the world, whenever Jesus' teachings have been taken seriously, the poor, the captives, the blind, the oppressed have found renewed hope and joy and they've been treated with increased dignity and compassion.

Even many non-Christians have recognized this. In the ancient world, in the fourth century AD, the pagan Roman emperor Julian said this. He said, these impious Galileans, that was his derogatory name for Christians, these impious Galileans not only feed their own poor people, they feed ours.

[18 : 50] Also, they devote themselves to works of charity, see their love feasts, their Christian assemblies, and their tables spread for the destitute. Such practice is common among them and causes contempt for our traditional pagan gods.

Or in the modern world, Gandhi. Gandhi never embraced Christianity. He said he was a Hindu to the end of his life, but he was deeply attracted to something in Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount, and in Jesus' example of self-sacrificial love.

And his non-violent movement was deeply influenced by Jesus' example and teachings. Or consider Jürgen Habermas, the Christian social, he's not a Christian, the German social theorist who wrote this, the ideals of freedom, conscience, human rights, and democracy are the direct legacy of the Judaic ethic of justice, that is the Old Testament ethic of justice, and the Christian ethic of love.

Up to this very day, there is no alternative to it. everything else is idle post-modern talk. Strong words from a scholar who back in the 80s said, religion is just an alienating reality and a tool of control.

And he says, the Jewish and Christian legacy of justice and love that comes from the Bible is the root of our ideals of freedom, conscience, human rights, and democracy.

[20 : 35] Yes, the Bible has been misused to control and manipulate people. Yes, the Bible has been twisted out of context to support slavery and segregation and all kinds of other evils, but Jesus came to bring good news for the poor and the oppressed.

And whenever people have taken his teachings seriously, it has made a difference. Jesus is not just speaking about people who are physically poor, captive, blind, and oppressed.

He's also speaking about a spiritual reality. And this is actually a challenging thing because Jesus is saying, do you realize that you too are spiritually speaking poor, captive, blind, and oppressed.

Jesus says, you're spiritually poor. In other words, as a finite creature, everything that you have is on loan from God. You own nothing.

You didn't create yourself. Even more than that, you are in debt to God because you have not done what you should have done and you have done things that you shouldn't have done. And there's no way that you can pay God back.

[21 : 52] You are spiritually poor. you're spiritually captive. We are by nature captives to our sin whether it's manifest itself as pride or greed or lust or fear of other people.

Jesus says, we cannot simply free ourselves because we're spiritually blind. You know, most of the ways that we hurt other people, we don't even realize.

realize. Maybe the people around us realize. They can see and feel all the ways that we hurt one another. But we're often blind to our greatest weaknesses.

And the Bible also says that we don't even recognize most of the ways that we deeply offend God, our creator. Jesus says we're spiritually oppressed.

Not only by our own patterns of sin but vulnerable to dark spiritual forces that are out to steal and kill and destroy. And ultimately Jesus' message is only good news for us if we identify ourselves spiritually in these ways.

[23 : 06] If we acknowledge that we are not self-sufficient and we need help from outside ourselves. But if we acknowledge that then his word is good news because he's come to comfort the afflicted to proclaim good news for the poor and freedom for the captives and light.

He shows us who we really are. He gives us insight and wisdom into who we are and into the world that he's made and into who God is most of all. And he gives us release.

That word release is the same word that is sometimes translated forgiveness. Release from the burden of our sin. Forgiveness for our guilt and favor from God.

Jesus has come to comfort the afflicted from the scriptures as God's servant both physically and spiritually. That's the first thing we see in this passage. But we also see a second thing in verses 22 to 30 that Jesus has come to challenge the comfortable.

Notice the crowd's initial reaction to Jesus. Verse 14. A report about him went out through all the surrounding country. His fame is growing. Verse 15.

[24 : 28] He's being glorified by all. Verse 17. He's given the honor of reading the scriptures publicly in the synagogue and given the invitation to expound upon them publicly.

Verse 19. The eyes of all are fixed on him in a sense of expectant trust. Verse 22. All spoke well of him and marveled at the words coming from his mouth.

But then notice how the crowd's reaction flips. And it starts in verse 22 when they say, isn't this Joseph's son? Now what does that statement mean?

It seems like there's at least some criticism or skepticism expressed in that statement. Perhaps even mockery or scorn. What is this carpenter's son?

This small town boy that we've all grown up with. What is he doing saying that the scriptures are fulfilled in him? That he is the promised servant of the Lord.

[25 : 33] That seems rather arrogant and self important. How can he be saying that about himself? Isn't he just Joseph's son? And then in verse 28 and 29 it gets worse.

They're filled with wrath. They drive him out of town and they try to throw him off a cliff. They start out praising him, marveling at him, adoring him. They end up furious at him.

Wanting to get rid of him. What did Jesus say here that was so challenging, that was so provocative to them? We'll look down at verse 23 to 27.

Verse 23 and 24, Jesus refers to two well-known proverbs. Physician, heal yourself and then no prophet is acceptable in his hometown.

both were well-known statements that acknowledged people's tendency to reject prophets and teachers, especially those who are closest to them.

[26 : 39] And it's sort of like Jesus is looking at them and saying, yeah, I know how this is going to end and it's not going to be pretty because I won't be able to please you because ultimately I haven't come to please you.

My purpose is to do the will of my father in heaven. And I see that you're not going to understand that. Now this is where Jesus had been brought up.

This is Nazareth. This was his hometown. He knew these people pretty well. And so he didn't get caught up in their initial expressions of enthusiasm and admiration.

He perceived that underneath they were deeply at odds with his mission and his message. And so he spoke some challenging words that exposed their underlying attitudes.

Now verse 25 to 27, Jesus gets even more specific. He doesn't just point to this general pattern that people often reject, prophets and teachers, especially those closest to them.

[27 : 51] But he says this, he says, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah during a great famine, a time of divine judgment, and Elijah was sent to none of them, but only to a woman who was a widow in Zarephath in the land of Sidon.

And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian. And you might say, what exactly is the point that Jesus is making here?

Well, Jesus is speaking about two of the greatest prophets in the Old Testament, Elijah and Elisha. And he's pointing out a pattern that happened in both of their ministries.

In both cases, native Israelites were passed over in favor of foreign outsiders. outsiders. And even more than that, they were passed over in favor of foreign outsiders who were historically hostile to the nation of Israel.

The land of Sidon had often been at war with Israel. Naaman, the Syrian, was a military commander. He had attacked Israel. And Jesus says this was not an accident.

[29 : 04] It was part of God's plan. Do you notice verse 26? It says, Elijah was sent. It's what is sometimes called a divine passive. In other words, it's a passive verb, he was sent, that points to divine action.

Who sent him? God sent him. Elijah was sent by God. Verse 27, none of them was cleansed by God, only Naaman. Now, why would this so infuriate the people of Nazareth?

Well, Jesus was living in a historical time period when many people in Israel were fervently hoping for a restoration of their nation under God.

Many people were fed up with the powerful pagan Roman elites, the cultural progressives of the day, who were gradually, sometimes violently imposing their will on the native Israelites and offending against their religious and cultural traditions.

And so various popular movements had sprung up in response. Some were violent, the zealots. Some were separatist, the Essenes, who lived on top of a cliff.

[30 : 26] Some were focused on maintaining cultural boundaries against foreign influence, the Pharisees. they were all along the lines of, make Israel great again.

And many in Jesus' hometown would have been sympathetic to such movements. And Jesus had the nerve in that context to remind them that two of the greatest prophets of Israel, whom they all recognized, had been sent by God to bless not only Israelites, but also foreign outsiders, even those who were natural enemies of God's people.

And of course, the implication is that Jesus' ministry would not just be about restoring Israel to greatness, but fulfilling God's promise to Abraham, in you all the nations of the earth will be blessed.

You see, Jesus didn't completely buy into the agenda of any of the political parties of his day. And sometimes that made some people really mad.

Jesus didn't side with the pagan Roman elites who promised peace and security under their rule. Jesus warned, don't believe their promises. They always come at a high cost and they won't last.

[31 : 49] It's in me that you'll find true liberation and genuine peace and lasting hope. It's my kingdom that will last forever, not theirs. And yet he didn't scorn the pagan progressive elites.

He healed the son of a Roman centurion. He called tax collectors who were back then corrupt government employees to be his disciples.

But neither did Jesus jump on the popular bandwagons which promised to restore the kingdom to Israel. As we see right here, he challenged their excessively nationalistic focus.

He said God's plans are bigger and sometimes different than yours. But he didn't write them off either. He came to Nazareth even though the majority of people there would reject him.

He spent time with Pharisees. And Jesus called his disciples from the whole range of political parties all the way from Simon the Zealot. The Zealots were the violent revolution group drive out the Romans to Matthew the tax collector, the Roman government employee.

[32 : 58] I mean, just imagine the political conversations among Jesus' twelve disciples. So here's the point. If within the church we're not all on the same page about politics but we're united in our allegiance to Jesus Christ, I think that's actually a good sign.

Because our calling as Jesus' disciples is first and foremost to the lordship of Christ. And secondly to carefully work out the implications of that lordship over all things together in politics and everywhere else.

Jesus was willing to challenge the comfortable in his hometown of Nazareth. And through his word and his spirit he continues to challenge us today. So let me conclude this section with three challenges to us.

Number one, a warning. thing. And this is in the words of James Edwards, commentator on this passage. He said, the greatest danger to the way of God in this world is posed by those who are closest to it.

You see, what should surprise and disturb us in this passage is not just that some people reject Jesus. there's always some people who reject Jesus.

[34 : 18] But look at who it is that rejects him here. It's the people who would have known him best. It's the people who grew up around him. The people in his hometown.

The people who had been around him longer than anyone else. And later on, who would betray Jesus? Not a Roman government official.

but one of his close associates. One of his 12 disciples. The one whom he had entrusted to keep track of their finances. And where was Jesus crucified?

Not in pagan Rome, but in the holy city, Jerusalem. The warning is this. You can be so close to Jesus, but at the same time, so far away.

You can be very involved in church activities. You can spend lots of social time with other Christians. You can be very knowledgeable about Christian theology and church polity. But is your gaze fixed on the person of Jesus himself?

[35 : 25] all the spiritual benefits that Christ promises are found in union with him and nowhere else. Jesus said, abide in me.

Keep your gaze fixed on him. Second challenge. The good news that Jesus came to bring is not just for people like you and people who you like.

It is also for people unlike you and people who don't like you. That's the challenge of verse 25 to 27. Jesus is saying, sometimes God, in his unfathomable kindness, chooses to bless someone else in a way that he has not yet blessed you.

that doesn't mean he's never going to bless you. It doesn't mean he's forever cast you off. But he might choose to bless someone that you don't like.

Or someone who doesn't like you. Or someone who clearly doesn't deserve his blessing in some particular way. Maybe God gives someone else a job.

[36 : 48] Or a house. Or a spouse. child. Or good health. Or close community. Maybe that's something that you desperately long for.

And don't yet have. And Jesus says, you have no right to resent God for that. Because God didn't have to give you any blessings at all in the first place.

He will show mercy on whom he will show mercy. Don't be envious because he's generous. Have you ever looked at someone else and felt on the inside?

No. Not them. No. I don't want them to receive mercy and forgiveness in a second chance. They don't deserve it. They deserve to be punished.

judged. And Jesus says, don't you remember you did too. Those who've been forgiven much will love much.

[37 : 57] Those who've been forgiven little will love little. Third challenge. If Jesus came to proclaim good news to the poor, the captive, the blind, the oppressed, both physically and spiritually, then we as spirit-filled followers of Jesus are to join in that mission.

In chapter nine, Jesus will send out his disciples to heal and to proclaim the kingdom of God. In the book of Acts, we see the disciples carrying out that mission and going into the nations of the world.

Does this mission of Jesus characterize us? Are we actually participating in what Jesus describes in verse 18 and 19?

Or are we staying in our comfortable zones? And living out of fear and making excuses?

it is often costly and uncomfortable and sometimes even dangerous to do what Jesus describes in verses 18 and 19.

[39 : 17] Are we willing to make sacrifices to follow Jesus in those ways, even if other Christians around us don't seem to be making the same sacrifices? In John 21, when Jesus called Peter to follow him in caring for his sheep.

And when Jesus said to Peter, one day, I'm actually going to call you to lay down your life for me. Peter's first response was to turn and look at another disciple and say, Lord, what about him?

And Jesus said, what does that matter to you? You must follow me. Jesus comforts the afflicted and he challenges the comfortable.

And Luke puts this story at the beginning of his account of Jesus' public ministry because it sets the pattern for all that is to come. In the coming weeks we'll see Jesus comforting the afflicted, healing the sick, cleansing lepers, driving out demons, proclaiming the good news, and we'll see Jesus challenging the comfortable warning, and even provoking the proud and complacent.

That's not all. The end of this story gives us a hint of how Luke's gospel and how Jesus' life is going to end. How does this story end?

[40 : 38] Verse 28 to 30. The townspeople are filled with wrath. They drive him out of town. They try to throw him off a cliff. It doesn't work this time. But later on when he finally arrives in Jerusalem, a crowd that had initially praised him and hailed him as the king would rise up against him and drive him out of town and take him to a top of a hill and nail him to a cross.

And on that day, it would seem like all was lost and that Jesus' mission had failed. world. But it wasn't. And it didn't.

Because three days later, he got up out of the tomb and walked out and appeared to his astonished disciples and sent them to be his spirit-filled ambassadors in the world and he's still building his kingdom today.

day. This morning's passage ends in verse 30 with a seemingly effortless display of Jesus' sovereignty. Despite opposition, he walked right through the crowd and went on his way.

And isn't that what he does in the end? He walks right through death and comes out of the grave and goes on his way, bringing good news to the poor and comfort for the broken hearted and freedom for the captives and opening eyes that are blind and forgiving and setting free the oppressed and sending the favor of God upon all who turn to him.

[42 : 23] This is our king. Let us pray. Jesus, we praise you.

Spirit-filled servant of the Lord, we praise you for the message of mercy and healing and deliverance that you come to us with.

faith. We pray that we would heed your words of challenge and warning, that those would be used in our lives, that our hearts would not be hardened, but Lord, that you would break us open to you.

Humble us, show us that we are spiritually poor and blind and captive and oppressed apart from you.

Lord, as your spirit works within us, would you continue to transform us into your image, that we might carry this message to all those who you put in our path.

[43 : 49] we pray these things in your name. Amen.