

Getting Ready for the Kingdom
The Year of the Lord Announced
Luke 4:14-30; Isaiah 61:1-2

Intro: Jesus stood up to read from the scroll of Isaiah in the synagogue of his hometown, Nazareth. Jesus was customarily in the synagogue on the Sabbath day.

He read Isaiah 61:1-2, a passage which prophesied the return from exile in Babylon. The prophet alludes to a phrase from Leviticus 25:10: “proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants.” This phrase was used to announce beginning of the Year of Jubilee in ancient Israel. After seven Sabbath years, on the fiftieth year, the slaves were freed, debts were forgiven, and the ancestral lands were returned to their original families.

Isaiah was saying that the return from exile would be like the Year of Jubilee for the Jewish people. The return to their homeland was a great fulfillment of prophecy and a celebrated event in that generation and for generations to come.

Jesus read the prophecy and sat down. Everyone in the synagogue was waiting for his comment. And he said, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing” (Luke 4:21).

The return from exile in Babylon happened 500 years earlier. The prophecy of Isaiah had a second and even more important application. Jesus of Nazareth was initiating a ministry of liberation and healing. The Year of Jubilee was largely about economic freedom and restoration. The ministry of Jesus was about something much deeper and greater—healing from spiritual blindness and liberation from sin.

The liberation and healing of Jubilee is still available for those who hear and believe.

The announcement of the kingdom should come like a beautiful new sunrise to every heart. Jesus is telling us that the mercy and kindness of God are intersecting our lives. God is so close he can hear your thoughts and feel the beating of your heart. Turning to him now involves simply opening your hands, dropping those nets you’re mending, and setting out to follow him.

Everything that makes you hesitate to do this must be relegated to second place. The first priority is responding to this amazing announcement, seizing the opportunity, and coming into the Kingdom of God.

I. Return in the Power of the Spirit: Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit (Luke 4:14). Kingdom work is always carried forward in the power of the Holy Spirit.

- A. PLACES: In order to “return,” you have to go somewhere. Jesus has been two places:
 - 1. RIVER: Return from your baptism in the power of the Spirit: Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the desert (Luke 4:1).
 - a. Baptism is initiation, something that comes at the front end of your walk with Christ.
 - b. Baptism is identification, a public announcement that you are with the Savior.
 - c. Baptism is announcement of your own salvation.
 - d. In each case, the Holy Spirit should be filling your life after your baptism because it is an act of obedience and an assault on the enemy’s turf.
 - 2. WILDERNESS: Return from temptation in the power of the Spirit: led by the Spirit in the desert, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil (Luke 4:1-2).

1. The temptation of the devil is an effort to trip you up, to nullify your witness, and to bring you down. Temptation will bring you low if you succumb. It will make you see yourself as weak, unworthy, and dirty. You will be full of guilt, remorse, and self-condemnation rather than full of the Spirit.
2. Temptation will only strengthen you spiritually if you remain faithful. When you win against the wiles of the devil, that win will lift your spirits. You will proceed from that place in power, knowing that nothing the Enemy has in his arsenal can stop you when you are faithful to Christ.

B. POWER: in the power of the Spirit

1. We know the power of Jesus to heal, to cast out demons, and to teach and preach.
2. Here we learn that Jesus is teaching and fighting temptation in the power of the SPIRIT. Luke is the gospel writer who most often mentions the Spirit. This is also true in the Book of Acts of the Apostles which might be more accurately title the Acts of the Holy Spirit.
3. This same Holy Spirit who energized and enable the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth is also living in you as a believer. This is why Jesus could say, “He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also, and greater things than these shall you do because I go to my Father” (John 14:12).

II. Stand in the Word of God: And he stood up to read (Luke 4:16)

A. Temptations are overcome by the Word of God. Jesus quoted from Deuteronomy over and over again as he faced and conquered temptation. Thy word have I hid in my heart that I might no sin against God (Psalm 119:11).

B. Kingdom announcements are made through the Word of God. We do not have to invent the content of our proclamation. We have been given that content through God’s word.

C. Obedience is required to the Word of God.

1. The worshippers that day came to hear from God, ostensibly, but they were not willing to receive what God spoke to them. In fact, they rebelled against the Scripture and tried to kill God’s chosen messenger.
2. The fact that we are in the house of worship today does not necessarily mean that we are ready to hear and obey.

III. Move Forward with Kingdom Work: The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor (Luke 4:18-19).

A. Get the context: Jesus is speaking to the people of his hometown who know him as “the son of Joseph.” He grew up here. He is making the hometown announcement about his mission.

B. Get the content: Jesus is declaring the purpose of his anointing by the Spirit. He is quoting Isaiah 61:1-2. He said, “As the Father has sent me, so send I you” (John 20:21). We are reading here the content of our own calling as citizens of the Kingdom of God and followers of Jesus.

1. Preaching good news—We have the wonderful charge to speak good news to our generation. This is the word “gospel.”
2. Recovery of sight—We have the great task of giving sight to those who are blind. We should connect this to the earlier prophesy concerning Jesus: The people living in darkness have seen a great light (Matthew 4:16).

3. Releasing the oppressed—We are in the work of release, of bringing freedom. This is a hint about the YEAR OF JUBILEE, the seven Sabbaths of years followed by that 50th year when the loans are forgiven, the prisoners are freed, and the land is returned to the families who received it by allotment after the Conquest. This is the year of rejoicing, the Year of the Lord's Favor (grace).

C. Get the focus: Jesus is starting his ministry by announcing the focus of the Kingdom work he will do. His message and ministry are aimed at certain people who have a physical and spiritual condition that makes them receptive.

1. The poor, the prisoners, the blind, the oppressed. These are the people groups that he mentions in his inaugural sermon in his hometown.

2. These groups are chosen because they are in need. Jesus did not come to the well but to the sick, as he said.

3. These groups authenticate our Christian ministry. The credentials of poverty and blindness are mentioned to the emissaries of John the Baptist when he asks about the authenticity of the ministry of Jesus. Jesus replied, The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor (Matthew 11:5).

CONCLUSION: Mahatma Gandhi was asked by an inquisitive follower, "Who are the Christians?" to which he responded, "Ask the poor, they will tell you." How will the poor answer in New Orleans?