



**Sunday School Lesson for August 7, 2005.
Released on August 3, 2005.**

"Jesus Began His Ministry of Caring"

Printed Text: Luke 4:16-24, 28-30

Devotional Reading: Matthew 13:53-58

Background Scripture: Luke 4:14-30

Time: A.D. 27

Place: Nazareth

Luke 4:16-24, 28-30

16 And he came to Naz'a-reth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read.

17 And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet E-sa'ias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written,

18 The Spir'it of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,

19 To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.

20 And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him.

21 And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.

22 And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. And they said, Is not this Jo'seph's son?

23 And he said unto them, Ye will surely say unto me this proverb, Physician, heal thyself: whatsoever we have heard done in Ca-per'na-um, do also here in thy country.

24 And he said, Verily I say unto you, No prophet is accepted in his own country.

28 And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath,

29 And rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong.

30 But he passing through the midst of them went his way.

Today's Aim

Facts: to show how Jesus received confirmation of His calling to care.

Principle: to teach that Christlike ministry is a humble, caring ministry to the hurting.

Application: to show that we must carry out our mission by caring for others as Jesus did.

Introduction

Luke, like Mark, and in contrast to Matthew, appears to target a Gentile readership. He quoted the Old Testament more sparingly than Matthew, and when citing OT passages, he nearly always employed the Hebrew Scriptures. Furthermore, most of Luke's OT citations are allusions rather than direct quotations, and many of them appear in Jesus' words rather than Luke's narration.

Luke, more than any of the other gospel writers, highlighted the universal scope of the gospel invitation. He portrayed Jesus as the Son of Man, rejected by Israel, and then offered to the world. He repeatedly related accounts of Gentiles, Samaritans, and other outcasts who found grace in Jesus' eyes.

Lesson Background

Today's lesson puts us in Jesus' first year of public ministry--His so-called "year of inauguration." We will see Jesus returning to His home-town of Nazareth, the city in Galilee where Joseph and Mary lived before they were married (Luke 1:26-28). Jesus, of course, was born in Bethlehem.

Except for the record of Luke 2:41-52, Jesus lived the first thirty years of His life in relative obscurity. Joseph was a carpenter, and Jesus Himself was also known for the same occupation (Mark 6:3). A Jewish rabbi of the second century A.D. said, "Anyone who does not teach his or her child a trade it is as though the child has been taught to be a thief." As Jesus began His ministry, the hometown folks naturally still thought of Him by His occupation to that point.

Not only was Jesus known primarily by His occupation at this somewhat early point in His ministry, He also carried a stigma of His home-town. Nazareth did not have an especially good reputation. Just like certain cities today can have a reputation--for example, San Francisco with its vocal homosexual population--Nazareth was not known to be a particularly pious town. One of Jesus' early disciples, Nathanael, asked the question, "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" (John 1:46).

Yet there Jesus will speak, and His audience will listen intently. They will initially speak well of this man they had watched grow up, but they will quickly turn into a mob intent on his murder. They will have missed the lesson that Jesus sought to teach them that day. The text will show how God has a concern for everyone. The Lord is abundantly able to meet the needs of all people. We will also see that each person has a responsibility to respond in faith to the offer that Jesus makes.

Scripture Fulfilled

1. Where had Jesus been ministering and where do we find Him in Luke 4:16?

After John the Baptist had been put in prison, Jesus departed to Galilee where he began His ministry. Galilee lay on the route through which all Gentiles (outcasts) passed in and out of Israel. It was a city said to be in darkness. Jesus, while walking along the Sea of Galilee, called His first disciples (Matthew 4:18-22); and went throughout all of Galilee, teaching in the synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people (Matthew 4:23).

News of Jesus' ministry went out through all the surrounding region of Galilee and He had become very popular and was glorified by all.

After ministering in Galilee, Jesus came back to His hometown, Nazareth, where he had grown up (Luke 4 v16) and was attending worship service for it was the Sabbath Day. As pointed out in Luke 4:16, visiting the synagogue was a part of Jesus' life from His childhood and continued through His adult years. Worship became a natural part of Jesus' life and must become a natural part of our lives as well. We must willingly involve ourselves in Sunday School, Bible study, prayer meetings, worship services, etc...We must also bring along our children so their lives will be conditioned to worship.

2. What passage of scripture did Jesus choose to read and what did the text deal with? (V. 17)

As Jesus stood in the synagogue, He read Isaiah 61 (vs. 1-2a). This passage deals with the "Good News of Salvation". The Servant of the Lord (Isaiah 42:1) will be the ultimate Preacher and the Redeemer of Israel who rescues them. Jesus speaks of the initial fulfillment of this promise, referring it to His ministry of providing salvation's comfort to the spiritually oppressed. (Luke 4:18, 19)

Jesus started out this passage (Isaiah 61 v1) by quoting, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me..." This points out the 3 persons of the Holy Trinity functioning together.

3. Why would the poor be more receptive to the Messiah? (V. 18)

When thinking of the word "poor", what comes to mind is poverty-stricken, destitute, distress, difficulties, beggar, penniless, gone to ruins, down and out, bankrupt, looking for handouts, lacking necessities, finally, just simply standing in the need.

For man to be in this condition simply means he is not self-sufficient. He has come to the realization that he is not in a position to do anything for himself which can cause the "spirit" of man to be at its lowest point but in Matthew 5:3, Christ says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. To be poor in spirit speaks of the deep humility of recognizing one's spiritual bankruptcy apart from God. It describes those who are acutely conscious of their own lostness and hopelessness apart from divine grace. Jesus was teaching that the kingdom is a gracious gift to those who sense their own spiritual poverty. The good news to those who were impoverished was that all were sinners and no one had the ability to earn their way to God by keeping the law or by their own good works; so they were all poor. To these who had no ability to save themselves, Christ came with the message of a free gift. Salvation could be theirs without cost and they stood in the need (of Christ's spiritual blessings).

4. What astonishing claim did Jesus make regarding the passage He just read? (V. 21)

After Jesus finished reading, He gave the book to the minister and sat down. By this time, all eyes were fixed on Him. Jesus began to tell the people that the scripture had been fulfilled. He is the Messiah that is spoken of in the book of Isaiah (Isaiah 61:). He is the one who is endowed with the Spirit of God; Holy and set apart to preach the Gospel (the good news) to those in need. Jesus would bring salvation to all those in need: poor, blind, and broken-hearted. His presence means release from bondage, particularly bondage rooted in the activity of Satan.

Truth Rejected

5. What was the initial response of the people to Jesus' teaching? (V. 22)

Jesus taught with such wisdom and grace which amazed the people of Nazareth. They were fascinated with the way He spoke to them. They acknowledged His words as being "gracious", which means Jesus spoke with compassion and mercy. He did not speak in an overbearing tone with harshness or condemning words. Little did they know, Jesus was able to speak with such compassion because He was Grace & Mercy. Jesus was genuinely concerned about the souls of His people just as He is today. It is His desire that all are saved and none are lost.

6. What thought became a stumbling block to their acceptance of Him as Messiah? (V. 22)

Remember, Jesus was amongst His own people, the Jews. As they began to ponder over the words Jesus had spoken, their hearts began to fill with unbelief because they were looking at Jesus on a human level and asked the question, isn't this Joseph's son? They pondered over Jesus' heritage and upbringing remembering He was the son of a carpenter. How dare He say He is the Messiah! They didn't see

anything special about Jesus. As far as they were concerned, He was just like them, just an ordinary man, one of whom they had watched grow up. But Jesus was not an ordinary man. He was God's son, conceived through the Holy Ghost (Matthew 1:18).

Although, they understood the meaning of the words Jesus had spoken, they could not accept such lofty claims from One whom they knew so well as the carpenter's son.

7. How did Jesus respond to their thoughts, and what did they specifically want Him to do? (V. 23)

Jesus never addressed the question of Him being Joseph's son but he did gently rebuke them. He exercised His omniscient power. For He sees all and knows all and saw right through to their heart. Jesus knew they had heard of His miraculous works in Capernaum, Cana, and Galilee and He told them exactly what they were thinking - they wanted to ask Him to do miracles for them as they had heard -He'd done in Capernaum. This no doubt would a show of their unbelief.

8. Why did Jesus say that no prophet is accepted in his own country? (V. 24)

This proverb which is also found in Matt. 13:57; Mark 6:4, contrasts the believing response of the Samaritans (John 4:39) with the characteristic unbelief of Jesus' own people in Galilee (and Judea) whose reticent faith depended so much on Jesus' performance of miracles (John 4 v.48). While in Samaria, Jesus had enjoyed his first unqualified and unopposed success. His own people's hearts were not open to Him, but exhibited reluctance and hardness. They disregarded the person of Christ and centered in the need for a constant display of miraculous signs. This attitude represented the deepest state of unbelief.

9. What did the people do when their anger reached its peak? (V. 28)

After Jesus contrasted the widow of Zarephath and Naaman the Syrian (both who were Gentiles vs 25-27) He suggested that divine grace might be withheld from them (the people of Nazareth) and extended to the Gentiles, those who were considered outcasts. This did not sit well with them for they considered themselves to be of a higher regard than the Gentiles. They resented being compared to unbelieving Israelites of former days, and they determined to get rid of the person making the comparison. This had to be some scene - for the entire congregation to align themselves with the same degree of anger and to get up out of their seats to throw Jesus not just out of the synagogue but out of the city. Clearly revealing that they don't want any part of Him in their presence. They even went as far as to try and kill Him but it was not His time. God's sovereign timetable and plan for Jesus would not allow it.

We today must realize that social status, race, gender, position, etc... (those things that man looks upon), mean nothing to God. God shows no respect of person. He sent His son to die for the sins of the world for we all are sinners and fall into one of the two categories: we are either sinners or sinners saved by Grace.

10. How did Jesus escape from the people of Nazareth? (V. 30)

Miraculously, Jesus walked away from the angry crowd - which was the first of several similar incidents in which He escaped a premature death at the hands of a mob. (cf. John 7:30; 8:59; 10:39)

Jesus did not try to retaliate. He continued in His mission to do the Will of His Father. The lesson in this for us is that once we decide to follow Jesus, we can expect opposition and persecution as well but we must, as Jesus did, exhibit self-control. We must refrain from the passions and appetites of the flesh and walk in the Spirit as Christ walked. We must be produces of good fruit, producing attitudes and behavior that is pleasing to God.

Conclusion

Jesus began His public ministry of caring with a public proclamation of His mission from God, His heavenly Father. He faced opposition from His own people as He began to pursue that calling.

When we accept our calling to follow Jesus, we will face opposition as well but we must remember that we are on a mission for Christ. We must not let opposition cripple us in our walk for Christ and neither should we show respect of person.

We as Christians must develop a heart of compassion as Christ did and have a genuine concern for those who are saved and unsaved, black or white, rich or poor, male or female, etc... As we become partakers of the fruit, we must share be willing to share the harvest with others. God's promise of eternal life is extended to all people who respond by faith by believing in His son Jesus Christ.

Prayer

Father, it's easy for us to criticize the people of Nazareth until we pause to think how much we have been like them at times. Jesus is in our midst today, but how often we treat Him casually or with contempt by our thoughts and actions. Deliver us ever more closely into the arms of Christ this day! In Jesus' name, amen.

Thought to Remember

"He that believeth not the Son shall not see life" (John 3:36)

Lesson Summarized By

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