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What's Your Mission?
Luke 4:14-21

Luke 4:14-21 Then Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding country.

15 He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone.

16 When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read,

17 and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

18 "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free,

19 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

20 And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him.

21 Then he began to say to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

My Dad has always had a **saying**.

Do the right thing, at the right time, for the right reason.

Dad has tried to ***lived by that***—
It's kind of like a **mission** statement.

Do you remember **Rick Warren's** book, *The Purpose-Driven Life*?
His whole book is about how we each have a purpose and a mission for our lives—a way that we join what God is doing—
and it's our duty to find that mission and live it out.

What would you say is ***your mission statement?***
What would ***other people*** say it is?

Do you feel like you have a mission or vision or purpose for ***your life***—
at whatever stage in life you find yourself right ***now?***

Do you feel like *you are joining what God is doing* in the world—
In some way?

This Luke 4 passage is basically Jesus' mission statement.
You would think it would be one of the most *famous verses* on earth—
but it's not.
Maybe it *should be*.

In the Gospel of Luke he puts this statement *front and center*
so we'll get how important it really is.
For these words are *Jesus' vision for ministry*, they are his purpose on earth.
And it's not even something new, the passage is from the prophet *Isaiah*,
but it's never been *embodied* in a person before.
Jesus reads the prophecy
and says *this has been fulfilled in your hearing today*.
This is *who I am*.

Now I want to paint a *picture of this scene*
so we'll understand how amazing this really was.
Luke says that Jesus had been preaching and teaching,
but this is the *first and only* time his teaching is recorded in his hometown of
Nazareth.
In other words, the *congregation is mostly family and friends*.
They know him.
Oh yes, he's Mary and Joseph's boy.
You know, the carpenter.
And now he's become a teacher!

I was reading about a *typical synagogue service* at this time.
It would begin with what we'd consider a call to worship,
but for them it was always the same words.
They would recite *The Shema*—which we would know from Deuteronomy
6:4-9, which says: *Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone.*
5 You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul,
and with all your might.
6 Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart.
7 Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and
when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise.
8 Bind them as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem on your forehead,

9 and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

This is one of the ***oldest known daily prayers*** of Judaism.

The people in the synagogue would recite the Shema,
and ***pray*** facing towards Jerusalem.

Then they would have a ***response***,

much as we have responses in our liturgy, ending with ***Amen***.

Then there would be a ***reading*** from the Torah or prophets

Then a ***sermon***

Then a ***benediction***

E. Yamauchi, "Synagogue" in Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels, ed. Joel B. Green and Scot McKnight (Downers Grove: IL, Intervarsity Press, 1992), 782.

We know that around the time of Jesus,
this would have been typical in a synagogue.

What we don't have lots of is an exact account of such a service.

But that's what we have here in Luke 4.

According to I. Howard Marshall, this passage may be the '***oldest known account of a synagogue service***' (The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978, 181.)

What Jesus says and does, is pretty ***simple***, but ***powerful and meaningful***.

At that time, the readers would take a ***scroll*** of the scripture
and unroll it to read from that particular passage.

The readers could be assigned ahead of time,
but from what I've read,

any male could be asked to read the scripture or preach.

This would have been a ***familiar passage*** to the congregation, from Isaiah 61,
verses 1 and 2a.

It reads: ***The spirit of the Lord God is upon me,***

because the Lord has anointed me;

he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed,

to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives,

and release to the prisoners; and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor...

So ***Jesus offered to read the scripture*** that day,

We don't know if he requested that passage,

But we do know that he would have been using a ***scroll*** of Isaiah,

And most everyone would have heard these words ***before***.

And they would know that the prophets were preaching **about the Messiah**—the Savior they were all awaiting.

And it is in **that context** that Jesus reads the scripture and offers a brief sermon all at once:

And it was a **reading and sermon** all rolled into one.

For after he reads it, Luke tells us

And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down.

The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him.

21 *Then he began to say to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."*

Wow.

Basically Jesus announces—***I am the Messiah.***

I am the Savior you've been expecting.

Here I am—and I've come to bring **good news,**

And **release,**

Sight, and freedom,

And **new beginnings!**

And this ***didn't go over well.***

Remember these are friends and family in this congregation.

They've watched him grow up.

They know him—

and they ***don't know him as*** the long-awaited Messiah!

So of course, he is rejected by those closest to him,

Even though this revelation is the **GOOD** news!

His **first** sermon in Nazareth is his **last** sermon there.

Jesus even **predicts how they will reject** him when you keep reading,

They will say *do here what you've been doing elsewhere*

Doctor, cure yourself,

He tells them that **a prophet is not accepted** in his hometown...

And sure enough if you keep reading the 4th chapter of Luke,

In verse 29 it says: *They got up, **drove him out** of the town, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they might hurl him off the cliff. **30** But he passed through the midst of them and went on his way.*

So this was the setting that day,
 And Jesus gave them not just a sermon—
 He gave them his **purpose**,
 He told them his **mission statement**
 I am the Messiah, and this is what I've come to do.

So, if this is Jesus' mission--
 What is **our mission**?
 And—how does it **compare** to His?

We've all heard the abbreviation **WWJD**—What Would Jesus Do?
 And you know, I think that's a **great question** to ask!

But Luke 4 takes it even further—
How are we involved with what God is doing in our world?
 How are we helping to bring **good news**?
 Or helping people be released from whatever holds them **captive**?
 How do we help people to see the **truth** more clearly,
 How do we help free others from all kinds of **oppression**?
 How do we help others to have a **fresh start** in life?

When Jesus says that he has come to proclaim the **year of the Lord's favor**,
 the people would have known about a practice called **Jubilee**,
 when in the 50th year fields would rested and been replenished for future
 harvests.

In the year of Jubilee, people went home.
 Slaves were freed.

It was like having a **fresh start** in life.

Bridges, Linda McKinnish, *Feasting on the Word*, year C, vol 1, pg 289.

Some teachers even wonder **if it was the year** of the jubilee
 when Jesus spoke these words—
 making them even more powerful to the congregation! *The Gospel of Luke: A
 Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 183.

Jesus' mission was one of **good news and freedom,
 sight, and new beginnings**.

What is **our** mission?
 And what is the mission of **our church**?

How does that *compare to Luke 4:14-21*?

I love a quote I found this week from a preacher named Tom Harvey, a Presbyterian missionary in Singapore.

He says, "***Mission catches you up*** in the *life and vitality of God, for it is God who relentlessly draws men and women to him in love and compassion...when we step away from mission, there is a corresponding depletion of life and vitality in the church.*" Quoted by Robert Brearley in *Feasting on the Word*, Year C, Vol 1, pg. 286.

Isn't that great?

Mission catches us up in the *life and vitality of God*...

You know something else interesting?

Jesus does ***NOT include Isaiah 61:2b***—he only reads the first half of verse 2. In that last line when he says, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor....he ***omits*** the last part, which says, *and the day of vengeance of our God.*

And we can only assume that he knew exactly what he was doing.

In other words,

His mission was one of goodness, freedom, and new life—***not vengeance.***

That's ***interesting***, isn't it?

How do we join this work of ***God*** in our world—today, right where we are?

This work of goodness, freedom, new life?

And how do we find our ***mission***?

What if we come to it the ***same way*** that Jesus did?

Luke 4:14 says,

Then Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee...

and then at the beginning of this reading it says,

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me!

What if the ***Holy Spirit*** is the one who leads us directly to ***our mission***?

After all, the Holy Spirit is ***central*** to Jesus' ministry and message—

and in the Gospel of Luke this is the ***3rd***

time that Luke specifically mentions Jesus being full of the Spirit.

(don't you love it when they use 3rd or 3 when talking about Jesus?)

The **first** time is when the Spirit descends like a dove at his **baptism**, the **2nd** is when Luke says he was full of the Spirit and **was led** by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted for 40 days by Satan. And now once again, for the **3rd time**, Jesus is filled with the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit must be **key** to finding our mission!
Because it was for Jesus!

Unfortunately, the Holy Spirit is often the overlooked member of the Trinity our denomination. We are more **analytical** and intellectual and introverted... We are sometimes afraid of what we **don't understand** very well— And I think we are sometimes afraid of the **emotional and mystery** of the Holy Spirit.

But the Holy Spirit is who Jesus promised his followers after his death and resurrection—to give us His power! The whole book of **Acts** (which is the 2nd half of Luke) is about the power of the Holy Spirit. So it's no accident that Luke mentions Jesus being filled with this power.

What if we would **plug in to this power** in our lives? like a cord gets plugged into a power **outlet**? Jesus **relied** on the Holy Spirit—so we should assume we can't fulfill our mission on our own either, without the Spirit's help. We **need the Holy Spirit**—who filled Jesus—the Spirit he promised and sent to all his followers.

Have you ever **asked God** for the power of the Holy Spirit to work in your life? That power is just a prayer away. The Spirit is available to all believers, the question is, **are we plugged in?**

Is the Holy Spirit our power source,
or just something called the Holy Ghost
that we mention briefly in the Apostles Creed?

I believe that the power source of the Holy Spirit,
Is the person who gives us *something to do* for God,
and *the right time to do it*.

The question is, will we *ask for* this power?
And will we *receive* it?

Isn't it the *Spirit who can show us the way*---
To help the poor, the oppressed, the captives,
Those who are blind, or needing a fresh start?
And sometimes the need is in our own hearts!

So, are we willing to *ask God* for the power of the Spirit?
And then *join* Jesus' work in our world?
Jesus tells us again and again in the Gospels that this is the *path to JOY*.

For me, seeking the help of the Holy Spirit brings *meaning to my life*.
It brings purpose, and joy.

And it's not something we do just once.
I believe it's a *daily decision—to follow Jesus, and receive the Spirit*.
It's also a realization--
All we have is *today*.
The past is past.
The future is not yet—and anything is possible.
All we have is *right now*.

So, right now, friends, hear the *Good News* of the Gospel:
We have the ultimate power source, the *Holy Spirit*,
And we have the chance to *join Jesus* in bringing good news and new life to
our world.
May we seek the Spirit, and follow Jesus in the path to joy!
And to that, all God's people said, Amen.