



Luke 4:14-30
Jesus 101: An Introduction to the Depth of Jesus
Highs and Lows of Ministry

Rev. Brian North
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We began a series of messages a couple weeks ago called “Jesus 101: An Introduction to the Depth of Jesus.” In this series, we are looking at the life of Jesus – who he was and is, some of the significant events of his life, what it means to be his Disciple. And although I’ve titled this as a “101 level” “introductory” series, the fact is, there’s nothing shallow or basic about Jesus. **To be introduced to Jesus is to dive deep into who he is.** You can’t have just a surface introduction of Jesus. You either dive into the deep end or you don’t get in the pool with Him at all. And so this series is an introduction to the *depth* of Jesus. And we will get the full depth of who Jesus was and is as we move forward over the next few months.

There are several things in today’s passage I want to highlight for us, with particular emphasis on the last couple. The first thing I want to highlight is a continuation of what we saw last week that people were amazed at Jesus’ understanding, and that Jesus grew in wisdom, stature, and in favor with God and people. We see similar kinds of responses to Jesus noted here, as he builds up a ministry of preaching and teaching in various synagogues, and throughout the “countryside” his reputation begins to grow.

So, starting in verse 14 we see these phrases: **News of him spread (14); people “praised him” (15); When he stood up to read in his hometown, all eyes were “fastened” on him (20); all the people “spoke well of him” and were “amazed at what he said” (22).** What started at age 12 in the temple back in chapter 2 continues. So there’s a lot of positive momentum in Jesus’ ministry. And you may recall Jesus’ baptism (Luke 3:21-22), we see that his heavenly father shows his pleasure - or to use Luke’s word, his “favor” - with Jesus, when a voice calls out from heaven to Jesus, “You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well-pleased.” So there’s a lot of growth, a lot of positive momentum.

Secondly: **Luke says that Jesus returned to Galilee “in the power of the Spirit” (Luke 4:14).** In other words, Jesus is walking in tune with the Holy Spirit, living a life of righteousness. And we see that profoundly in the verses

immediately prior to this passage, where Jesus is in the wilderness, tempted by the devil. But He resists all the temptations, leaning on Scripture and the Spirit to push back against the devil. And it's in those moments when we overcome temptation or loss or other obstacles in life and have some kind of great victory over the enemy that we realize that we are in tune with the Spirit. **This should come as no surprise – that we would have a sense of being full of the Spirit when we've stayed true to the Spirit's leading.** Imagine that! When we've made it through these kinds of situations because we've turned to God's word, because we were faithful to God's call upon our lives, and because we were sensitive to the Spirit's leading and persevered along the straight and narrow path, we are going to recognize that we are filled with, and living by, the power of the Spirit.

And that's where Jesus is. Through the Spirit's leading, He is in step with His Father, he's growing in a variety of ways, and his ministry is going well. But he's not too busy to "go to church" regularly. So here's the third thing to note from this passage: **Luke says it was Jesus' "custom" to go to the synagogue – what you and I would say is "going to church."** Jesus shows the importance of making church attendance and participation a priority. Going to church on the golf course or at the restaurant, or in the comfort of our own bed as we sleep in after staying up too late the night before, does not cut it. (Even watching a service online – something that may be happening here soon – is not the same thing.) As much as I love skiing and could make a valid theological and Biblical argument that it is a spiritual experience because every time I crash I'm reminded of Psalm 51 and Isaiah 1 that though my sins are like Scarlet and they are ever before me: God washes me white as snow...**Even though a good morning on the ski hill reminds me of that much-needed spiritual truth, it is not the same as being in church.**

Even if the music isn't quite the way we'd like it, or the sermon is occasionally boring, or the pastor is too short, or it's a little inconvenient for some other reason...Going to church is important; participating in the life of the church beyond Sunday morning is important. It matters – for our own growth, for the growth of others, and to support and participate in the mission and vision of the church. So three things we see in the first part of this passage: Jesus models for us the importance of being in church, of being in

tune with and filled with the power of the Spirit, and the importance of growing in wisdom, stature, and favor. And: **All three of these things help us see that Jesus’ ministry of preaching and teaching was going well; there was positive momentum, support and encouragement from others, and He was impacting people’s lives.**

And on one particular Saturday – Saturday is the day that Jewish people take as the Sabbath – Jesus finds himself back in the town where he grew up, Nazareth, and he has been invited to read the Scripture passage for the day, and give the sermon. We might call him the guest preacher; Big shoes to fill for whoever comes the next Saturday, right?

So, Jesus stands up and reads the Scripture reading for the service that day: Isaiah 61:1-2, which at that point was about a 700-year-old prophecy of a coming leader who will do great things for God and usher in a new era. So Jesus read these words:

**“The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me,
because the Lord has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim freedom for the captives
and release from darkness for the prisoners,
to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor” (Isaiah 61:1-2).**

Then Jesus sits down to preach. This is odd to us, but that’s their custom. So if you ever catch me “sitting down on the job” I’m just following Jesus’ example, ok? ☺ And He preaches these words, **“Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing” (Luke 4:21)**. That’s all Luke gives us. And if you’re jealously thinking, “Why aren’t *our* sermons that short?” I’ll just remind you that Luke says Jesus *began* with these words. This is not the entire sermon. But his beginning is the part that got everyone’s attention. We’ve all been in situations where someone dropped some really big news on us, and then they continued to talk, but we’re not really listening to anything beyond the original statement. That’s probably what happened here. In the research he did to write this biography for his friend Theophilus (Luke 1:1-4), Luke could have asked all these people, “Hey, what else did Jesus say that

day?” And they’d be like, “I have *no* idea. It was a 30 minute sermon and all I remember is that one sentence: ‘Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing!’”

And the result is that: **People start to question his credentials and the legitimacy of his teaching and they wonder, “Isn’t this Joseph’s son?”** And it doesn’t take much to imagine that they start murmuring some, looking at each other, looking at him, and thinking in their hearts: Who do you think you are? On what authority do you say this and make this claim? They’re questioning his credentials.

All of a sudden, Jesus’ ministry, his reputation, his momentum...all of it is called into question as his own hometown people don’t like the message he delivered. It’s too much to handle; it doesn’t fit in their theological boxes; it doesn’t line up with their expectations. For one thing, the “expert” always comes from somewhere else, right? This is Jesus, son of Joseph...how can he know what he’s talking about? And second, he’s saying that *He* is the person who is anointed by God in the passage, and that the benefits in the passage that are for the community are available *right now*. This is more than they can handle.

So Jesus hears the murmurs, he knows what they’re thinking. And in response to it, he makes this famous statement that “no prophet is accepted in his own hometown.” And then He summarizes a couple passages – one about Elijah, and one about Elisha – where their message wasn’t received by the Israelite Jewish community, but instead by others. God sent Elijah and Elisha to *outsiders*, because the insiders weren’t open to their messages. And the people there in the synagogue aren’t dumb: they see that Jesus is making a parallel comparison to the present day as he stands there before them.

They didn’t *have* to then drive him out. **Prophetic words, as we’ve talked about several times before, are not always given so as to be fulfilled.** In fact, *most* Biblical prophecy is just the opposite: it’s given in the hopes that it *doesn’t* come true, and instead serves as a warning so people would come back to the Lord. Certainly, Jesus shares these two stories with that in mind – that they would see the error of the ways of the people who lived centuries

earlier, and rather than having a similar outcome, that they would instead be open to Jesus...be open to God's messenger. But that's not the result. Instead, they get angry and drive him out.

There are two final things that come out of this passage, then. **First, salvation begins here and now.** Today. Jesus says that the Isaiah passage he read is fulfilled today in their hearing. Jesus offers healing, hope, compassion, and freedom, here and now. Today. In the Christian faith, we oftentimes emphasize the eternal nature of salvation. And that's certainly not wrong. And let's remember: eternity is timeless. It's not never-ending time. It has no time. It's hard for us to grasp, when we live by the clock and the calendar. I bet that nearly every single one of us has a clock on our wrist, in our pocket, or in our purse. Our lives run by the clock, we mark each day, week, month, year, decade, and century. And you can't do anything to get any more or recover the time that's gone by. As "Days of Our Lives" says at the start of the show and has for 55 years: "Like sands through the hour glass, so are the days of our lives." Except, in life, we don't get to turn the hourglass back over when all the sand runs through. We get one shot.

And while the salvation Jesus offers extends into eternity: **The opportunity to experience it begins here and now even as the world turns and the clocks keep track of time.** Jesus says it's available now, and He's the reason why. This week I found out that there used to be a little restaurant in South Florida that had a sign up that said, "Free Beer Tomorrow." Guess what? The sign never changed: Free beer was always and only tomorrow! Free beer never came *today*.

Jesus says that we can experience this Isaiah passage *today*. It's here and now...not always and only tomorrow; it's today and always today, and into eternity. So why would we not live into this salvation he offers beginning today? Who wouldn't want to be a part of this Good News Jesus says is available today? God is the God of the living, and He Himself is alive. We can be in relationship with Him starting right now. So that's the first of the two final points.

The second point is that Jesus' ministry – his mission and vision and all

that He stands for – has a way of making some people uneasy. Not everyone: Jesus was well-received by a lot of people...But some rejected him. And that happened right here, in his hometown. All that momentum he had did not carry over to Nazareth. Not everyone is comfortable or supportive of Jesus doing something amazing “today.” Sometimes the status quo is actually comforting, even if it’s not right, because, well, we’re comfortable with it. We know our role and what to do and what to say, and all that. For instance, when someone who is an alcoholic gets sober and stops drinking, the other people in that person’s life, who should be happy for him or her and celebrating, often will struggle and there will be tensions and relational challenges. Not always of course...but it happens frequently. Marriages will struggle or other relationships will become tense. Why? Because those people don’t have to care for the alcoholic in the same way anymore (no co-dependence, for example); their role has changed, and they were comfortable with their role (even though they know it’s not good for the alcoholic to be an alcoholic).

And when we see that Jesus elevates the poor, the brokenhearted, and the captive: this is a threat to the comfort of those who are not described by those words, and it makes them uneasy, even angry, as we see here. **But what they failed to see, and perhaps we fail to see it sometimes as well, is that we *all* are poor, broken, and captive when we don’t know Jesus.** My goodness: even when we *do* know Jesus, we often are described by these words. We’re spiritually poor, we’re broken by sin as well as pain and grief, and we’re held captive by our own sin and the sins of others as well. There’s a lot of healing that is needed in our lives. But sometimes that makes us uneasy. Even if the future with Jesus is brighter, it’s awfully tempting to live in the comfort of the past and the present. And that’s what happened here.

So, after all the momentum Jesus had, this is a change. It’s definitely a low point for him in ministry, after the high points he’d experienced in other town. A lot of these people were not ready for the transformation that Isaiah prophesied. They weren’t ready for it to happen “today” - here and now; and they weren’t ready for Jesus to be the one through whom it was going to happen. **But we see that Jesus perseveres, and He carried out His mission to its completion – which, by the way, still led through the cross.** So while

this was a setback, He didn't let this experience, in one congregation, get him down or derail the vision and mission for his life. Jesus was faithful to that mission of salvation that starts "today."

And that offer still stands. You can experience the good news of transformation and freedom – today. We can experience it individually and collectively as a church – today. Every day we wake up, it's another "today" to live into Jesus' invitation to be His disciple, experiencing and sharing the transformative power of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We do that in our homes, our places of work, our schools, out in the community...wherever we find ourselves. We do it as a church, not letting challenges get in the way of living into the mission and vision we have before us, of being a generationally balanced church that makes disciples of Jesus Christ as we are built up in reliance on the Word of God and the Holy Spirit. So don't let difficulties or negative responses deter you from following Jesus...today, tomorrow, and right into eternity. Let's pray...Amen.