

Sermon: A visit to his hometown. Jan 26, 2025 - Luke 4:14-21.

Prayer: Let the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable to you our Redeemer. Amen

Introduction to the text: Photos: Synagogue in Capernaum. This is where Jesus began his public ministry. Many miracles happened and the good news spread throughout the region.

God has called us to do some really hard things in this ministry. Jesus led the way for us to follow. God knows that we cannot do this ministry alone. We learn that Jesus is led, filled and empowered for a prophetic ministry. The Spirit led Jesus and so we pray today for God's Spirit to strengthen and lead us too. We pray for understanding and clarity of vision to fulfill God's purpose. Jesus is filled with the Spirit after his baptism traveled around Galilee and returned to his hometown. Often we hear a prophet is not counted in one's hometown.

Jesus was a hometown boy with a pleasant voice and began teaching in the synagogue. It was in the temple that conflict arose when Jesus began to expound the text from the prophet Isaiah. It was the place where he was brought up and it was his custom to go to the temple for worship. It was where he was provided with food and nourishment that allows for growth and flourishing.

As a member of his community he participated in the religious life through the reading of scripture in worship. He is a teacher of the scripture. Jesus' hometown congregation included the rich and poor people, those seeing and ones that are blind, the oppressed and the oppressor, the marginalized, the prisoner, the leaders of the temple and the good folks too.

At the synagogue Jesus offers "Good News" with all people especially the vulnerable. Luke is very concerned for the poor and marginalized and made it absolutely clear that they are not favours but only Good News for the whole world. The people who are economically disadvantage, marginalized, and oppressed.

"Today is the day and every day is the day." This is who I am and what I'm about in ministry. These are the values of the Kingdom of God, grace, love, forgiveness, dignity, hospitality and all that is life-giving. The Spirit empowers, energizes and sync or brings us into alignment and drives life so that ministry becomes life-giving. It is never about being successful. The life and work of Jesus is about faithfulness and saving lives. Jesus declares his identity to the world. Jesus is the Holy One sent by God to save the world.

The people of Nazareth became angry and fell into the error of thinking to destroy Jesus but that would also destroy the word of truth. They failed to understand that truth is indestructible! Jesus defined a mission that was contrary to the expectation of the people. **It was something new!** It was about grace, love, mercy, caring, healing, redemption, compassion and acceptance. Good News!

“Spirit of the Lord has anointed me to preach Good News to the world!” God shows no partiality. God will call, empower and heal whoever God chooses. God’s blessings will rest upon all peoples of different cultures and religious beliefs and Communities of Faith.

How is this Good News for us today? How is scripture fulfilled today? Why are churches declining? We are called and empowered with the Spirit to align with God’s purpose. But here is something we should always remember. Our ministry is a working progress. It is constantly evolving for the needs of every context/location.

Remember the good times of overflowing energy; the good times when others want the same responsibilities you have difficulty finding someone to do today. It was a time when you had many teachers, stewards, elders etc. Flourishing!

Then remember the time when most things seem out of sync, you just could not figure out what is the right solution to this situation. You felt burnout, tired and stagnated. Everything in worship is happening right yet our soul felt dry and parched. You lost taste for the things to you look forward to doing. We allow minor things to become a stumbling block for healthy relationships. We ponder Why God? Why is it so difficult to do this work?

With such a state of mind we arrived at the place with our backs up the wall and doubts, fears, insecurity cloud the mind. The negative messages, small gossip and vibes permeate our joy in Christ. Let’s be honest this happens on our personal journey in life and as a community of faith. The people were waiting with expectation for the Messiah. Jesus shares a totally radical message of salvation. It is a message of freedom and liberation from political oppression, it is a message of equality for those living with economic disadvantage, or insecurities, it is a message of healing and transformation from spiritual dryness. It is a message to speak to the moral decline in society.

The mission is defined for today and every day; preach good news to the poor and hopeless. Seek justice for those whose lives are held captives with poverty, insecurity, imprisoned, mental health, refugees and people with addictions. We are to be the voices for people who are homeless, in need of food, clean water and shelter, or are unemployed. We are to care for the sick, reach out to the lonely and constantly praying for others. Our responses must be filled with compassion and kindness. These are easier said than to practice each day. It is not an easy task.

I read a story about two business men were traveling by train to an important business meeting. In the seat opposite them was an old man with a shaggy beard, dressed in a tattered sweater and jeans. Throughout the ride the two told each other crude jokes with particular reference to the chap in the next seat. When they arrived at the meeting they discovered he was a world class scholar and the meeting's keynote speaker. Realizing he had heard everything they said on route, they apologized. The humble man responded: "It is not my forgiveness you need," he responded, "but the forgiveness of all the common people you hold in such disdain."

"Judge not that you be not judged," said Jesus. You may not be the most popular church in town but remain faithful to teaching the indestructible truth of Jesus Christ. Jesus was not a popular preacher in his hometown.

God's mission in the church is more about being faithful. Yes! Every congregation desires growth. We want to see numbers increase, more offering envelopes and more active participation in worship. We long for more of everything that will lift our spirits and make this ministry once more exciting.

We come here to worship Jesus, learn scripture and to live the values of Jesus teachings. We exercise good stewardship with the limited resources to keep the message of truth through preaching, praying, healing, caring and forgiving. We give support to those who live on the margins. We stand for justice and truth to save the lives of all people.

We belong to "the body of Christ," We come with our imperfections to be the voice, hands and feet of Jesus. Our neighbours need to see Christ clearly through what we do as followers of Jesus.

"For the Spirit of the Lord is upon us; anointed to preach good news today and every day."
Amen.

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