

# CALLED TO PROCLAIM

DEVOTIONAL READING: Deuteronomy 8:1-11

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Luke 4

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE: Luke 4:14-22a

## I. Power

### Luke 4:14-15

**14 And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee: and there went out a fame of him through all the region round about.**

**15 And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all.**

14a. The record of the presence of *the Spirit* in Jesus' life in the early chapters of Luke is noteworthy: the Spirit had descended on Jesus at His baptism (Luke 3:22), had led Him into the wilderness for 40 days of preparation (4:1), and had contributed to His power as He began ministering in *Galilee*.

14b-15. Jesus' *fame* has been building over several months by this point. *The region* of Galilee was an area administratively distinct from Judea to the south. While in this area, Jesus was given opportunities to speak *in their synagogues*, and He was successful in so doing. Ideally, the place to worship was the temple in Jerusalem. But wherever a certain number of Jewish families lived, there could be a synagogue. These places became centers of communal religious life. The concept developed when worship in the temple became impossible after its destruction in 586 BC or soon after the Jews' returned to Judea from captivity.

Luke does not give the substance of Jesus' teaching at this time. Later, when Jesus was in Capernaum, Luke noted that the people were "astonished at his doctrine: for his word was with power" (Luke 4:31-32). The Gospel of John adds that Galileans welcomed Jesus because they had seen what He had done while He was in Jerusalem (John 4:45); many believed in Him when they saw the miracles He performed (2:23).

## II. Preaching

### Luke 4:16-17

**16 And he came to Nazareth, 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 Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written,**

16a. Part of Jesus' teaching and preaching tour of Galilee involved a stop in His boyhood home of *Nazareth*. The Gospel writer spoke briefly in Luke 2 of Jesus' upbringing there, indicating that Jesus grew up in a typical Jewish family. He was circumcised in accordance with the Law of Moses and attended the yearly Passover celebration with His

parents—standard things for Jewish boys at the time. Nazareth itself was a village on the lower slopes of Galilee. A topographical feature was that of “the brow of the hill whereon their city was built” (Luke 4:29).

16b. The phrase *as his custom was* indicates a regular practice of teaching and/or preaching in synagogues. This hints at a habit of faithful Sabbath Day attendance developed during boyhood days. There were many practices and attitudes of synagogue leadership that Jesus found lacking (Luke 13:14-16), but such people did not dissuade Him from His own faithful attendance.

Mention of *the sabbath day* is a reminder of God’s creative work. The word *Sabbath*, meaning “rest, cessation from labor,” first appears in Exodus 16:23-30. That text served to remind the covenant people of the requirement for a day of rest, echoing God’s own rest after six days of creating (Genesis 2:2-3). Sabbath observance is a sign of faithfulness to the covenant between God and Israel. “Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the Lord that doth sanctify you” (Exodus 31:13).

After Jesus’ death and resurrection, there is a transition from Saturday (the seventh day of the week) to Sunday (the first day of the week). Nine of the Ten Commandments are based on the nature of God; and since His nature never changes, neither does the application of those nine.

The one commandment that is based on God’s work rather than His nature is the one on keeping the Sabbath. After Jesus’ resurrection, a shift occurs away from focus on the old creation to focus on the new creation available in Christ. The result is corporate worship on the first day

of the week in light of His resurrection on that day (Luke 24:1-7; 1 Corinthians 16:2; Revelation 1:10).

17. The ruler of the synagogue supervised the service to see that it was carried out in accordance with tradition. There are distinct parts to Sabbath services: prayers, reading from the five books of Moses (the Pentateuch), reading from the Prophets, and a sermon or lesson.

The Scripture readings followed a definite cycle. In some synagogues, the entire Pentateuch was covered in one year, with each reading supplemented by a reading from the Prophets. If a distinguished visitor was present, he was asked to give the teaching.

In the Nazareth synagogue, Jesus was given *the book of the prophet Esaias* (Isaiah) to read. This was not a book as we normally think of one today. It was actually a scroll. Scrolls for use in copying Scripture could be made from paper made from the papyrus plant, which grew along the Nile River in Egypt. The scroll handed to Jesus, however, was more likely made from animal skin, which was more durable.

### III. The Point

#### Luke 4:18-22a

**18 The Spirit 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 brokenhearted, 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.**

**22a And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth.**

18a. The place from which Jesus reads is Isaiah 61:1-2, which speaks of God's servant being *anointed* with *the Spirit* and given several responsibilities. The servant's work will be for the good of people, cities, and nations. God will use the servant to bring salvation and fulfill His covenant. The servant is to proclaim good news by saying that the situation will change. The words of Isaiah describe Jesus' ministry.

To be anointed refers to the act of pouring oil on someone's head to symbolize being set apart to a special office, such as priest or king (example: 1 Samuel 16:13). Anointing also symbolized the endowment of the Holy Spirit on someone's life. Together, these ideas indicate the consecration of Jesus to His messianic role and task.

*To preach the gospel to the poor* is exactly what Jesus was tasked to do—and did. In Isaiah 66:2 God says, "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word."

18b. The word *captives* often refers to prisoners of war who are dragged into an exile of servitude by their conquerors (example: Isaiah 5:13); it is also used in contexts of those captives' *deliverance*. Spiritually, the devil holds people captive with no hope of escape on their own (2 Timothy 2:26). Jesus came to set everyone free.

18c. Jesus' subsequent ministry resulted in several recorded instances of healings from physical blindness (Luke 7:22; etc.). Healing spiritual blindness proved to be more difficult because of unbelief (8:10).

19. This refers to the Year of Jubilee, described in Leviticus 25. God instructed the nation of Israel that every seventh year the land was to rest (have a Sabbath). Then after seven such rests (49 years) was to be the year of jubilee. During this 50<sup>th</sup> year, slaves were to be set free and debts cancelled. It was to be a time of great rejoicing.

20. Each synagogue had a *minister* (an assistant) who took care of the building and called the people to the service. He was also responsible to hand the speaker the scroll and to return it to its proper place. Handing back the scroll and sitting down marked a transition to the next phase of the service.

The fact that *the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on Jesus* implies a great sense of expectation. Today we might say, "You could hear a pin drop!"

21. This announcement means that the spiritual year of jubilee has come. Luke connects the *ears* with eyes.

As we see Luke connecting eyes with ears in these two verses, we note a sad contrast of the same connection in Acts 28:27: "Their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, . . . and should be converted."

22a. Jesus' *gracious words* reflects the fact that "the grace of God was upon him" (Luke 2:40). Indeed, the gospel itself is "the gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:24).

Given that the townspeople's next words and actions were much less gracious, even deadly, we wonder why the difference! Jesus gave a reason in Luke 4:24: "No prophet is accepted in his own country." Jesus' ministry was characterized not only by grace but also by truth (John 1:14, 17). The "hometown boy syndrome" had blinded them to reality.

# INVOLVEMENT LEARNING

## CALLED TO PROCLAIM

### Into the Lesson



Unscramble and define the above phrase.

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Where was Jesus from?

A. Bethlehem

B. Nazareth

C. Heaven

### Into the Word

Read Luke 4:14-22a and answer the following questions.

What did Jesus do, and why?

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What was Jesus' mission?

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What did Jesus claim?

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List the six items of Jesus' mission as listed in Luke 4:18-19

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### Into Life

Make a list of ways Christians continue to fulfill the six tasks in the mission of Jesus.

Note which tasks are *physical* in nature and which are *spiritual*.

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Choose one of the tasks of Luke 4:18-19 and write out how you might live it out as a calling.

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### THOUGHT TO REMEMBER

Jesus, the Messiah, has come to set us free.