

Global Gospel

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Preacher: Jeremy Martinson

[0 : 00] You may have a seat, and please take out your Bibles, and if you would, turn on over to Luke chapter 4.

Luke chapter 4, today, Lord willing, we are going to wrap up this sermon series that we started in 2 Kings chapter 5, and we are going to finish by looking at a text in the New Testament, in the life of Jesus, where Jesus references this story in 2 Kings chapter 5.

So, here is our text for today, Luke chapter 4, starting in verse number 14, and we are going to read down through verse number 30.

Luke chapter 4, starting in verse 14, and down through verse number 30. And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and a report about him went out through all the surrounding country.

And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all. And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read.

[1 : 12] And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll, and found the place where it was written. The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. And he rolled up the scroll, and gave it back to the attendant, and sat down.

And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. And he began to say to them, Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing. And all spoke well of him, and marveled at the gracious words that were coming from his mouth.

And they said, Is not this Joseph's son? And he said to them, Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, Physician, heal yourself.

What we have heard you did at Capernaum, do here in your hometown as well. And he said, Truly I say to you, no prophet is acceptable in his hometown.

[2 : 17] But in truth I tell you, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heavens were shut up three years and six months, and a great famine came over all the land.

And Elijah was sent to none of them, but only to Zarephath in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian.

When they heard these things, all in the synagogue were filled with wrath. And they rose up and drove him out of the town, and brought him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they could throw him down the cliff.

But passing through their midst, he went away. Thank you, Kara, for serving us. Father, we are grateful to have your word. Lord Jesus, we are humbled at your kindness, and your grace, and your love.

Thank you for going to the cross on behalf of sinners like us. Thank you for taking our shame, and our sin, and bearing it away.

[3 : 26] Thank you for rising from the dead, so that we may be justified, and have a right relationship with God. Blessed Holy Spirit, please come, and open your word to us.

Help us, as we have now heard it read to us. Help us to understand the things that we have heard. Lord, help me to be faithful in opening, and explaining, and endeavoring to exposit and apply your word.

Please keep me from error. Keep me from foolishness. Please watch over our hearts. Holy Spirit, would you please grant life and faith today, so that some sinner calls upon the name of the Lord Jesus, and is saved.

We ask this, for your glory, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and for our good, we ask in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Amen. Do you know what a caricature is? Children, do you know what a caricature is? Okay. A caricature is a portrait that is in the form of kind of a sketch, a kind of a rough sketch, and when you make a caricature of someone, you tend to emphasize some peculiarity about them, something about their face or their body that you kind of want to draw attention to because it's peculiar or funny or maybe a little odd.

[5 : 03] The best caricatures will retain enough of the likeness of the person so that you can still tell who they are, but when you look at them, it's sort of funny, and it makes us smile because it's a cartoon.

Here's a few examples of caricatures. Notice how you can still recognize the person even though some of the features are exaggerated.

Who knows who this is? Yes? I was counting on you, Thompson family, to come through with that one. Tom Brady. How about this one? I was counting on the Orcutt family for this one.

Keanu Reeves. Very good. Next? Morgan Freeman. See how it kind of emphasizes, it exaggerates some of his features, but it's a rough kind of a cartoon sketch.

Next? LeBron James. A little more difficult. This one is a freebie for everyone. Abraham Lincoln, right? Now, as we heard Luke chapter 4 read to us, doesn't the reaction of these people to Jesus seem exaggerated?

[6 : 23] Almost like a caricature. Something seems very out of place here. Maybe we could empathize with their questions and their confusion.

But being angry enough to hurl someone off the side of a cliff, what is going on here? What fuels that kind of bloodthirsty anger?

Here's what I want to poke at today during our time in the Word. I want to explore this, that the gospel is a real threat to false religion.

In the first 13 verses of Luke chapter 4 that we did not read, Jesus rejects the devil's temptations. And then he returns from the wilderness to the region of Galilee, and he launches his public ministry.

And as you might expect, Jesus catches everyone's attention. And that is no exaggeration. Look at verse number 14. Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the entire vicinity.

[7 : 42] And he was teaching in their synagogues, notice this, being praised by everyone. And then we read this.

He came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as usual, he entered the synagogue on the Sabbath day and stood up to read.

The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. And unrolling the scroll, he found the place. I have to stop and tell you this.

This, to me, would have been such a peculiar scene. Here's Jesus. He's about 30 years old. They hand him the scroll of Isaiah, which I suspect is a significant scroll.

Because in our Bibles, Isaiah has, what, 63 chapters. Is that right? 66 chapters. 66 chapters. And the text that Jesus chooses to read is from Isaiah 61.

[8 : 48] And they read, of course, right to left. So Jesus is scrolling, scrolling, scrolling, scrolling. Literally, he is scrolling to get to the right spot in this massive scroll of Isaiah so that he can read this particular text on this particular day.

He found the place where it was written. Isaiah in our Bibles, chapter 61. The Spirit of the Lord is on me because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

Verse 20. Then he rolled up the scroll, again, still funny to me, and he gave it back to the attendant and he sat down and the eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fixed on him.

And he began by saying to them, today, as you listen, this scripture has been fulfilled.

[10 : 13] What was it like in the synagogue in Nazareth in that moment? What was the mood in the room? What was the temperature of the crowd?

Imagine being inside the ark. You have been waiting with all of these animals and suddenly you hear the rain start to fall.

Did you hear rainfall this week in our community? Yeah. Some hard, heavy rain. Imagine being in the ark as the rain begins to fall and you realize what God said is coming true.

Imagine standing on the good side of the Red Sea and you are singing because Miriam is leading all of the people in worship to the Lord and you're singing and dancing and celebrating that God has delivered you through the Red Sea and you are seeing dead Egyptians washing up on the shore and you are thinking to yourself what God said would happen has happened today.

God did what he said. Imagine the shepherds arriving in Bethlehem and finding baby Jesus and I imagine these shepherds elbowing one another and saying I told you we weren't crazy.

[11 : 43] I told you we saw an angel out there. I knew it and today what the angel said has been fulfilled. We've seen him.

the mood in that synagogue in Nazareth that day must have been similarly exciting and surreal.

Did I hear him correctly? Did he just read that text that refers to the Messiah? Did he really just say today that text is fulfilled and you were all here?

But then that means he's claiming to be the Messiah. This is a pivot point in redemptive history.

You almost expect the heavens to open don't you? And some kind of a light to come piercing through this synagogue and a choir of angels to start singing the doxology. This is the moment.

[13 : 01] Today it is fulfilled. If you were there you would never forget this. This would be one of those days that you would look back and you would say when I was a kid or when I was a young person I was in the synagogue the day that Jesus said today it's fulfilled in your hearing.

It seems like the initial response of Nazareth is genuine excitement but some are irritated.

Verse 22 they were all speaking well of him and were amazed by the gracious words that came from his mouth and yet yet they said isn't this Joseph's son?

In other words he's one of us I know his dad where are his credentials?

Anyone can claim to be the Messiah what has he done to prove himself has he offered us any evidence at all for this claim he needs to prove himself kids do you know what it is when we when we say jinx do you know what I'm talking about when you say jinx two people say something at the same time and then you say jinx it's just a funny little thing that we say right something like that happens here a little jinx because while they are thinking these thoughts in their head Jesus tells them what they're thinking look at verse number!

[14 : 54] 23 then he said to them no doubt you will quote this prophet to me doctor heal yourself what we've heard that took place in Capernaum do here in your hometown also!

now if they had been humble they would realize that Jesus' ability to read what was going on inside of their minds when he says you're about to say to me doctor heal yourself you're going to quote this proverb to me if they were humble they would have realized that Jesus just did a miracle for them in telling them exactly what they were about!

to say but when Matthew records this story in his gospel chapter 13 he tells us instead of being humble they took offense at him and these irritated feelings about Jesus turned into resentful thoughts about Jesus we heard about Capernaum we know what you did there we know that you healed sick people there have you forgotten charity begins at home you have a duty an obligation a responsibility to heal right here right now in your hometown!

too verse 24 he also said truly I tell you no prophet is accepted in his hometown oh so now you're telling us that we're not honoring you that's rich Jesus son of Joseph we know who you are but who do you think you are this is like peeling off the layers of an onion on the outside are these irritated feelings and then next there are these resentful thoughts towards him and then open contempt this downward spiral perhaps feels a little exaggerated to us like a caricature but consider this illustration

Chloe returns home to us from Boyce College worships with us one time at Steadfast and then doesn't return and when one of the brothers goes to her and says why are you not worshipping with us Chloe says I'm not sure that y'all really believe I'm going to go to a church where there is real engaging worship and where the preaching is actually good I'm going to go somewhere where people truly love each other I found a place where people are more open during small group discussion do you feel the angst rising up inside of you you're one of us

[19 : 08] I know your dad do you think you're better than us you should be worshipping with us you think you're too good for us Jesus continues verse 25 but I say to you there were certainly many widows in Israel in Elijah's days when the sky was shut up for three years and six months while a great famine came over the land and yet Elijah was not sent to any of them except a widow at Zarephath in Sidon and in the prophet Elisha's time there were many in Israel who had leprosy and yet not one of them was cleansed except

Naaman the Syrian! Why can't Jesus do in his hometown Nazareth what he has done in Capernaum?

Why not? It's the same reason why Elijah provided food for a widow in the middle of a three and a half year famine but not just any widow a foreigner were there not other widows in Israel that he could have cared for of course but he cared for a widow who is a foreigner it's the same reason why Naaman the Syrian is cleansed of his leprosy rather than any one of the lepers in Israel at the time of Elisha why can't Jesus do in his hometown Nazareth what he did in Capernaum because as it relates to the kingdom of God these foreigners these godless pagan

Gentiles these people that the Jews loath they are in a more favored position than them well as you might expect this touched a nerve verse 28 when they heard this everyone in the synagogue was enraged and they got up drove him out of town and brought him to the edge of the hill that their town was built on intending to hurl him over the cliff but he Jesus passed right through the crowd and went on his way at first they spoke well of him and then they are irritated and then they are resentful and then they are contemptuous and now they hate

Jesus enough to murder him what is underneath this well let's remember a handful of things first of all these are not just ordinary people these are not randos these are people in Nazareth these are Jesus his friends his family people who watched Jesus grow up people who know him but secondly these are not just average Jews they're in the synagogue these are pious devout religious people but here's the real problem number three the two stories that Jesus chooses to reference don't align with their religion oh they're religious but the two stories that

[23 : 57] Jesus mentions are out of alignment with their religion instead of celebrating God's gracious love for a foreign widow instead of celebrating God's gracious love for the Syrian general Naaman they hear these stories and they become enraged and not just one or two everyone in the synagogue felt what Jesus was saying and everyone had heard enough see Jesus tipped over their sacred cow didn't he Jesus tore a chapter right out of their systematic theology scroll God's love and mercy and grace is not exclusively for the Jews it is those outside of the line of

Abraham they could and they did receive God's grace when I was young I spent a fair amount of time in the summer at a Bible camp and after that's where Lois and I met that's another story for another sermon but after that after we met and after we were married Lois and I went back to this particular Bible camp and we served there with our family for a number of years together there's a famous and very popular game at Storybook Lodge and the name of that game is Capture the Flag perhaps some of you have heard of it now Storybook Lodge is up on the Iron Range of northern Minnesota so the soil is very sandy there is sand everywhere it is one of my least favorite things about Storybook!

Lodge is that there is just sand and it gets in everything and everywhere and it's coarse and rough anyway when you are playing Capture the Flag the guy who was in charge of sports would take one of those chalk line drawers it's a wheeled thing and you dump chalk in it and then you push it and it leaves behind a row of chalk a line of chalk and then we would know who was on what side to play capture the chalk line some of us who thought we were funny would come behind him and kind of drag our feet through this sandy soil and knock out this chalk line so that you couldn't see it anymore and it was kind of this funny little running joke that we had I thought it was funny until I had to be the one making the chalk line then it was not funny anymore I suspect that these people in the synagogue in

Nazareth wish that the little slave girl had just kept her little slave girl mouth shut because when she says if only my master would go to the man in Samaria the prophet in Samaria if only you would go there he would cure you of your leprosy the little slave girl's gospel message exposed their pride and their prejudice it exposed that they saw themselves standing on one line and everybody else on the other side of the line and we are God's people and you are not God's people and then comes along this little Jewish slave girl who invites the foreign

Gentile a murderer a terrorist a leper a sinner to go and seek out the man of God in Samaria I wish you had kept your little mouth shut because it exposes their pride and their prejudice her gospel message pulled the rug right out from under centuries of religious belief religious belief that said we need to hold this line we are God's people they are not God's people we are the children of Abraham they are not the children of Abraham we gotta hold this line and she exposed that line for what it was and Jesus by calling their attention to Naaman the Syrian general cleansed from his leprosy exposes that line for what it is false religion these devoutly religious

[29 : 25] Jews would never have permitted Naaman to enter the kingdom of God but Jesus would and by referencing the story of Naaman Jesus declares to them he announces to them not only would I permit him I have welcomed him joyfully into my kingdom how scandalous Naaman the foreigner the enemy the idolater the leper the sinner and Jesus says God will have mercy on whom he will have mercy and they begrudge his generosity the gospel threatens false religion false religion says being a descendant of

Abraham is what matters most you're in others are out false religion says you gotta clean up your life you need to get right with God false religion says you're gonna need decades of studying the Bible it's just too hard to make sense of you're never going to understand the truth false false religion says you better get yourself a degree in Hebrew if you're going to understand what God really has said false religion says you need perfect attendance at Sunday school and once you have missed that boat you can forget it false religion says you need to keep all those ten commandments!

You failed there's no hope for you you better you better figure out another plan false religion says the way to God is through circumcision or through tithing or through celebrating the Lord's Supper through communion false religion says do more try harder be better and this little slave girl our sister has a better message she says if only if only you would go to the man of God in Samaria he will cure you of your leprosy the gospel says if you know that you are weak and wounded sick and sore with sin that's all the fitness

Jesus requires of you in other words all that Jesus asks of you is that you feel your need of him that you realize I am sick and sore with sin the gospel is a real threat to false religion because Jesus says come to me all who are weary and heavy laden just come come come to me and I will give you rest you don't have to bring anything you don't have to offer me anything just come and I will give to you all that you need the gospel says believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved Jesus threatens their false religion and so he must be eliminated and I think this explains at least in part their bloodthirsty urge to hurl

Jesus over the cliff but let me peel back if I can one final layer of this onion I suspect that their murderous intentions are motivated by the devil himself see when Jesus reveals their thoughts we want you to do for us what you did in Capernaum their unspoken demands silently echo the devil's words while tempting Jesus you say that you're God you say that you're God then turn these rocks into bread prove it you say that you're God then throw yourself off the top of the temple if you really are God's son then we ought to see the angels swoop in to save you prove it prove that you are who you say you are and the words in the synagogue that day they're just echoing the devil's temptations you need to prove it to us what you did in

[34 : 46] Capernaum do here also in your hometown! think the devil did not have to wait too terribly long he found his very next opportunity in the synagogue that day he tempts Jesus to prove himself how by using those that he knew as a man Jesus would be least willing to offend those who knew his family those who remembered his dad those that he grew up with those who knew

Jesus most and best and for the longest religious people wouldn't you be tempted wouldn't you be tempted to measure up to the expectations of those who grew up watching you wouldn't you want to defend your reputation wouldn't you want to show off your credentials and your accomplishments don't we all want to be in some way liked and well liked wouldn't you want to do whatever you could to get their affirmation what a temptation I'm so grateful for Hebrews chapter four that we understand that our Lord Jesus Christ is not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses but one who is able to sympathize with us because he has been tempted as we are yet without sin

Jesus wasn't fooled by the devil's scheme and Satan's frustration with this fourth failed attempt to get Jesus to sin boils over in the Nazarene's collective urge to murder Jesus what are they doing they're following in the footsteps of their father the devil Jesus says John chapter eight he was a murderer from the beginning!

the devil would love for false religion to continue to hold the line between Jew and Gentile and Jesus takes and drags his foot across that thin chalk line and says no way no way Jesus announces that the good news of God's love mercy and grace is not just for Abraham's the good news of God's love mercy and grace is also for Naaman's it is a global gospel a message of hope for whosoever will believe brothers and sisters if we will follow in the way of Jesus if we will follow in the way of Jesus then we will repent of our pride and prejudice we'll repent of our religious superiority we'll repent of any mindset that says it's us versus them the haves versus the have nots the well enlightened versus those who just don't get it me and my pagan neighbors we will repent of all of that pride and prejudice and when it pops up again we'll repent of it again and we will call one another to repent of those things when we spot them in each other if we will follow the way of

Jesus then we will humbly! gently but oh so very firmly warn those who are caught in the clutches of false religion we will invite them to repent and we will repent ourselves when we recognize I have been caught in the clutches of some false religion!

[39 : 41] I am thinking that I am earning this! If we will follow the ways and the words of Jesus then we will urge everyone and I am certainly not exaggerating we will urge everyone that we encounter to repent and believe this gospel because it is through the life and the death and the resurrection of our Savior the Lord Jesus Christ that God is pleased to make hopeless!

wounded! sick! and sore sinners! Whole! Let's pray! Father we are grateful to receive your word thank you for your kindness to give it to us thank you for your providence to see to it that your word is preserved and properly collected kept for us down from generation to generation would you please help us to be faithful in passing on this gospel to our children and our grandchildren help us to contend eagerly for this gospel as Jude writes to us help us to be the kind of people who are unwilling for there to be any sort of perversion of the gospel any sort of false religion any sort of chalk line that would separate between us and them oh good father we ask that as your holy spirit exposes our pride and our prejudices that you would help us to repent and to recenter and refocus again on this gospel message that the blood of

Jesus is sufficient and powerful to rescue save redeem and reconcile the very worst of sinners even sinners like us blessed Holy Spirit would you please do work in our hearts in these next several moments as we prepare to celebrate the Lord's Supper together good father we confess that while we were still sinners our savior the Lord Jesus Christ died for the ungodly and that while we were your enemies you sent your son all the way to the cross on behalf of those who are sinful and sore and sick with sin father please continue to move us towards repentance remind us of the forgiveness that is ours thank you that where our sins are many your mercy is always more give us courage boldness energy zeal initiative to take this global gospel out into the world father would you please draw a sinner to yourself today who has never responded to the preaching of the gospel thank you for doing work in our hearts please grant life and faith so that sinners respond by repenting and believing in the

Lord Jesus we ask this for your glory and our good in Jesus name amen