

Luke 4:14 – 30

^{4:14} And Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through all the surrounding district. ¹⁵ And he began teaching in their synagogues and was praised by all. ¹⁶ And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up; and as was his custom, he entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, and stood up to read. ¹⁷ And the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. And he opened the book and found the place where it was written, ¹⁸ ‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed, ¹⁹ to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord.’ ²⁰ And he closed the book, gave it back to the attendant and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. ²¹ And he began to say to them, ‘Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.’ ²² And all were speaking well of him, and wondering at the gracious words which were falling from his lips; and they were saying, ‘Is this not Joseph’s son?’ ²³ And he said to them, ‘No doubt you will quote this proverb to me, ‘Physician, heal yourself! Whatever we heard was done at Capernaum, do here in your hometown as well.’’ ²⁴ And he said, ‘Truly I say to you, no prophet is welcome in his hometown. ²⁵ But I say to you in truth, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the sky was shut up for three years and six months, when a great famine came over all the land; ²⁶ and yet Elijah was sent to none of them, but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. ²⁷ And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian.’ ²⁸ And all the people in the synagogue were filled with rage as they heard these things; ²⁹ and they got up and drove him out of the city, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their city had been built, in order to throw him down the cliff. ³⁰ But passing through their midst, he went his way.

Historical and Cultural Background

- The Roman Empire had stationed a Roman garrison in Nazareth. So the Nazareth inhabitants would have felt especially bitter about being occupied by the Gentile enemies. This helps to explain their reaction to Jesus.
- Jesus quotes from two places in Isaiah about the Messianic king, compressing them into one quote:

^{61:1} The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me,
Because the LORD has anointed me
To bring good news to the afflicted;
He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,
To proclaim liberty to captives
And freedom to prisoners;
² To proclaim the favorable year of the LORD
And the day of vengeance of our God;
To comfort all who mourn

^{42:1} ‘Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold;
My chosen one in whom My soul delights.
I have put My Spirit upon Him;
He will bring forth justice to the nations.
² He will not cry out or raise His voice,
Nor make His voice heard in the street.

^{42:3} A bruised reed He will not break
And a dimly burning wick He will not extinguish;
He will faithfully bring forth justice.
⁴ He will not be disheartened or crushed
Until He has established justice in the earth;
And the coastlands will wait expectantly for His law.’
⁵ Thus says God the LORD,
Who created the heavens and stretched them out,
Who spread out the earth and its offspring,
Who gives breath to the people on it
And spirit to those who walk in it,
⁶ I am the LORD, I have called You in righteousness,
I will also hold You by the hand and watch over You,
And I will appoint You as a covenant to the people,
As a light to the nations,
⁷ To open blind eyes,
To bring out prisoners from the dungeon
And those who dwell in darkness from the prison.

- Jesus quotes from the Elijah and Elisha stories to frame his ministry:

Story	Moses – Joshua	Elijah – Elisha	John – Jesus
Great prophet summons Israel back to God’s covenant	Moses inaugurates the era of the Sinai Law	Elijah is sent to the Northern Kingdom of Israel	John the Baptist calls all Israel, along with Gentiles
Dies before the final stage of ministry (conquest) truly begins	Moses dies on the mountaintop outside the land (Dt.34)	Elijah taken up by chariots outside the land (2 Ki.1)	John thrown into prison and later killed before the resurrection (Lk.3:19-20, 7:18-35)
Prepares a successor	Joshua	Elisha	Jesus
Who is ‘baptized’ in the Jordan	Joshua parts the waters of the Jordan to cross it (Jos.3:14-17)	Elisha parts the waters of the Jordan to cross it (2 Ki.2:14)	Jesus is baptized in the Jordan (Lk.3:21-22)
Successor marches into the promised land from the wilderness	Joshua spent 40 years in the wilderness and then led Israel into the land.	Elisha returns after Elijah is taken up (2 Ki.2:14).	Jesus spends 40 days in the wilderness and then enters the land (Lk.4:14)
And proclaims God’s judgment on the pagan/paganized inhabitants	The Canaanites	The Northern Israelites (!)	The whole nation Israel (!!)
And rescues a faithful remnant	Rahab and her household spared	Widow of Zarephath receives help and gets her son back from death; Naaman the Syrian is cleansed of leprosy	The disciples constitute a ‘new Israel’

Questions

1. Who did the Jews at Nazareth think ‘the poor’ and ‘the oppressed’ were?
2. Why was Jesus’ message on Isaiah appealing at first?
3. Was Isaiah 61:1 – 2 the only passage Jesus was referring to? Discuss also Isaiah 42:1 – 7, about the Gentiles.
4. Why did the Jews of Nazareth preferentially read Isaiah 61 without reading Isaiah 42 also?
5. Why is ‘recovery of sight’ at the center of the chiasm in Lk.4:17 – 20? Because it’s the main point, and because ‘the eyes’ of those in the synagogue will be shown to be blind through unbelief.

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And he opened the book and found the place where it was written,

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He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives,

and recovery of sight to the blind,

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gave it back to the attendant and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him.

6. Why was Jesus’ reply so offensive? Who was the widow of Zarephath? Who was Naaman the Syrian? Gentiles!!
 - a. Also, who was Elijah’s mission to? The Northern Kingdom of Israel
 - b. And Elisha’s? Also the Northern Kingdom of Israel
 - c. Did the Northern Kingdom accept and embrace their ministry? No.
 - d. What happened to the Northern Kingdom of Israel afterwards? They were overthrown. In 722 BC, Assyria swept in and destroyed many of them and took others captive.
 - e. The Northern Kingdom of Israel was not considered a legitimate community in the eyes of God. See 2 Kings 17. They did not worship at Jerusalem, have Levitical priests, obey the Davidic king,

and maintain a true record of Israel's history. Therefore, they did not actually worship God in truth

- f. What role did Elijah and Elisha play in relation to the Northern Kingdom? As the last prophets to that nation.
 - g. Who is Jesus saying he (and John the Baptist) is (are) to the Israel of that day? The last prophets.
 - h. Will Israel as a whole accept Jesus? No.
 - i. What will happen after Israel rejects Jesus? Exile.
 - j. Who will God's grace go to? In addition to Israelites, Israel's traditional enemies, the Gentiles.
7. How do you think Jesus got away? He doesn't seem to have used some miraculous power. Recall that he doesn't do that for his own benefit. He seems to have stared people down and confronted them with the force of his personality.
 8. Summarize v.31 – 44 by stating: in Capernaum, the issue was that they wanted to just keep him around, like a pet magician or a handyman. Jesus wanted to go further and bless others, too. But they didn't want that.
 9. Application: Jesus you, but he also loves the person you don't. From what we can tell so far, what was Jesus trying to accomplish vs. what were they concerned about? (Jesus wanted to bring something/engage/save all humanity, bringing them together in one body vs. their self-centered and ethno-centered nationalism.
 - a. (for example) If Jesus were to stand before you and proclaim his mission of giving God's blessing to someone, is there someone that Jesus can mention that would get you really mad at him? Why? Can you give your anger over to God?
 - b. (another example application) According to Luke, this is one of the first public declarations Jesus made. The gospel has to do with reaching and ministering to all humans and all human groups. What group is especially hard for you to minister to? Another ethnic group? Those who speak a different language? The poor? The homeless? The less educated and illiterate?
 - c. (For non-Christians in a GIG) Would you like to continue getting to know this Jesus? Shall we meet again next week?