

# "I am Sending You"

*Luke 4:14-30*

Right from the start of Jesus' ministry, He stated clearly that the kingdom was near and so He called on people to repent of their sins. The Jewish people's perspective about the Kingdom – based on Scripture – was that it would be a political entity with their Messiah defeating all Israel's enemies and establishing a reign of peace and prosperity. While the Bible still teaches that and Jesus affirmed its future coming many times, He established early on that the kingdom of God starts now as a spiritual entity made up of people who believe Jesus is King and so we submit to Him by faith since He paid for our sins

When Jesus came and started His ministry, He had to convince His hearers of this since most of whom were religious but not necessarily people of faith. Mostly because their shepherds (the Pharisees, Sadducees, scribes, and rabbis) had approached God's Word legalistically, concluding erroneously that to be right with God was based on your own ability to keep as many laws as possible. Believing that your own righteousness saved you. But Jesus was here to tell them no one is righteous, so He would die for them and now make it possible through faith that God would declare them righteous just like Abraham who was declared righteous by believing God's words.

Jesus handpicks twelve disciples. He first invites them to Come and See; check out His life and teachings. John the Baptist told people Jesus was the Messiah. Jesus begins teaching and healing, letting that speak for Him. After a few weeks of this He calls some of His first followers to leave their families and leave their jobs to Follow Him and He will make them fishers of men. In His three short years of ministry, Jesus is going to model for them how to do just that. And since He has just returned to Galilee with them - their home and His - He shows them that sharing His message is not going to be easy with those who know you – your families and your friends and neighbours.

When the risen Christ appears to the 11 in the upper room He reminds them that His calling to make fishers of men had not changed. In John 20:21 He recommissioned them,

*<sup>21</sup> Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." <sup>22</sup> And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit*

As instructed later, they were to wait for the Holy Spirit but by blowing on them here He was giving them a word picture that they would understand this when the great wind happened on Pentecost as they received the Spirit. He also told them, when they receive the Spirit they would be empowered to be His witnesses. And here, the Spirit leads Jesus to Nazareth.

Sharing the gospel with anyone at any time is always a challenge. It's important for us not to rush into it but to pray for and trust in the Spirit's leading to be His witnesses. We want to be sure we are being sent to share the gospel not in our own strength.

## **Being Sent Requires Holy Spirit Boldness** **(4:14-17, 22)**

Especially when it comes to sharing Christ with those who know us, like family and our community. Luke summarizes

what Jesus has been doing. Like Matthew and Mark, Luke makes no mention of the ministry Jesus began in Judea while making His way back home. This is how we know people are following Him and praising Him for all He's been doing. While there's no mention of Jesus praying here, we do know He spent a lot of time in prayer before He made decisions or went places to minister. So I think I'm safe to apply to us what Jesus would have practiced and that is we need to

### ***Pray and watch for the Spirit's leading (v.14)***

... for when and how to share Jesus with others. How can we know for sure? We know when we do it in our own strength and maybe with an agenda and it usually doesn't go well. What didn't we do? We probably didn't pray or we didn't wait. We need then to prepare our minds spiritually to want to share Christ and in praying we will find we will be more patient, watching for opportunities rather than forcing the situation. If we we're in a gathering with friends/family hoping to share the gospel and an opportunity doesn't arise, trust God that it wasn't the time. A farmer has to break up the ground before the ground is receptive to the seed. If you throw seed on top of hardened ground, it just bounces off and usually is burnt up by the sun or is washed away by rain.

Jesus is led to go to a hard place – home. Why is it hard to share Christ with those closest to us? They know us, good and bad. And we care about them, meaning we don't want to hurt their feelings. Look at the respect they have for Jesus:

*<sup>15</sup> He taught in their synagogues, and everyone praised him.*

*<sup>22</sup> All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips. "Isn't this Joseph's son?" they asked.*

"Hey Jesus, good to see you! I remember when your dad was alive and he taught you how to use the saw for the first time. Oi ve! What a struggle at first, but you did him proud."

"Hi Jesus. Remember me, your old neighbour Ruth who used to baby sit you when you were small? Remember my son Zechariah, oh you two loved to play together.

We know what that's like. It wouldn't have been any different than some of our older relatives reminding us of when we were a child and still treat us like that. And you have this important message that can help them but also hurt them. Do we tell them? We all want to be liked but

### ***Don't let the lure of likes distract you (vv.15-16, 22)***

... from the reality of their lostness and eternal suffering waiting for them if they don't accept Christ. It's not our job to save them, but it is our responsibility to share the gospel. It's hardest to do this to people in your family, your friends, co-workers, schoolmates and teammates. We all want to be liked but they need to be saved, which is more important.

Jesus is grown up now. He's been preaching and teaching in other synagogues and now He comes back home to the place where everyone knew Him. He's invited to speak – of course you're going to invite Him to speak! Whether Isaiah 61 was the assigned reading or He chose it, we're not sure, but He reads it and then drops a bomb on His family and friends and essentially says, 'I'm the One Isaiah wrote about. I'm the Messiah.'

Before we discuss their response, remember, Jesus challenges people with the Word of God.

## ***His Word is our strength (v.17)***

The Bible is God and Jesus' words about themselves and their plan for this world. You and I need to show people that what we believe comes from God Himself. He's the one who says, 'All of us have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God' and that 'none of us are righteous, not one.' That it is 'faith alone by grace that we are saved, not by works'. God's Spirit through God's Word saves people because His words are eternal and have power that can open hard hearts. Use the Word. You may not have memorized it but you can say what it says and point them to see it for themselves.

Sharing the gospel with family and friends is one of the hardest things we'll ever do. What we have to keep in the forefront of our minds is that ...

## **Our Friends and Family are in Bondage to Sin** **(4:18-21)**

They may look like they are enjoying life, but they don't know that sin is controlling their lives. Their pursuit of joy and purpose apart from God never fully satisfies them. Their self-confidence is just that – self. And what do they have when that wears down or their world crashes and their hopes dashed?

Since Jesus was Jewish and His family and friends were religious Jews, He was able to use the context of being a guest asked to read and share at a synagogue service. He takes this opportunity and uses Scripture to share the gospel. And the gospel is good news and people ...

### ***They need to hear good news because they are spiritually poor (v.18b)***

The word 'gospel' in Jesus' time was primarily used to refer to a proclamation from the king that was to benefit everyone. Jesus and the New Testament writers took that term and applied it to the message from King Jesus that His good news will change people's lives now and forever. If we believe that, then we will boldly share the gospel ourselves.

For Jesus to stand up and read Is. 61:1-2 and then declare 'Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing' required great boldness. Jesus is divine but He's also fully human. He declares to His friends and neighbours, by the way I'm the Messiah. Isaiah 61 says so.

Here in Isaiah, the prophet proclaims that because of Judah's disobedience, they are going to go to Babylon. Exiled. Imprisoned. But God gives them hope through Isaiah because there are many prophecies of their future return, enjoying the blessings of joy, peace, and provision under the Messiah. Problem: Israel returned from exile in 536 BC but were still waiting to experience the blessings of joy, peace and provision.

Jesus proclaimed good news to the poor. The poor in Scripture are not just those who are physically poor but those who because of their poverty recognize their inability to meet all their needs and improve their life on their own. Listen to these other verses from Isaiah

*Is. 66:1 This is what the LORD says; "Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. Where is the house you will build for me? Where will my resting place be?"<sup>2</sup> Has not my hand made all these things, and so they came into being?" declares the LORD. "These are the ones I look on with favor: those who are humble and contrite in spirit, and who tremble at my word.*

Humble and contrite [poor] in spirit.

*Is. 29:17 In a very short time, will not Lebanon be turned into a fertile field and the fertile field seem like a forest?*

*18 In that day the deaf will hear the words of the scroll, and out of gloom and darkness the eyes of the blind will see.*

*19 Once more the humble will rejoice in the LORD; the needy will rejoice in the Holy One of Israel. 20 The ruthless will vanish, the mockers will disappear, and all who have an eye for evil will be cut down—*

Who flocked to see Jesus? The poor, hurting, blind, lame and crippled. All of whom were oppressed by the heavy yoke of the religious leaders who said, 'Your infirmity proves you are a sinner and can't enter God's presence.' Or the Romans who shoved aside anyone who got in their way because they could.

Why did Israel go into exile? Because they rebelled against God. Their sin resulted in their loss of freedom. People bind themselves because of sinful choices. They make bad decisions. They depend on the wrong things for happiness and the wrong people to meet their needs. Only Jesus frees us from our sin and its power over us.

When Israel was in exile they longed to return home. Many trusted God to get them back, as Daniel demonstrated in Ch. 9 when he realized the 70 years of captivity were almost up so he prayed to God believing the promises of God were true. They may have been released from physical captivity but in sin

### ***We are held captive and can't see spiritually (vv. 18b-20)***

God put Daniel and Ezekiel and others in Babylon to remind the people of God's Word and give them hope. Many people in Jesus' day didn't experience a change in their circumstances but through faith in Jesus they saw hope beyond their circumstances. That life is more than just surviving but to live for God's purposes and know that we have a sure and better hope waiting for us when this life ends. Remember, our life is a vapour and lasts so briefly compared to eternity. Which means our trials are a vapour too.

While Jesus did heal a number of blind people, He healed many more spiritually blind people. Everyone's testimony can be abbreviated to 'once I was blind but now I see'. Once we understand who Jesus is and what He's done for us we find true hope. Jesus ended His quote from Isaiah 61 at 'And to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour', this was a reference to Israel's once every 50 years Jubilee. Where all your debts were wiped out. Where everything you lost or sold gets returned. Where everyone starts over again with a clean slate. Why did God institute the year of Jubilee? To demonstrate He's a God of grace and wants to wipe out all your debts. And Jesus says the Jubilee is here today if you believe:

### ***Every day is an opportunity to be saved (v.21)***

Jesus announced to the people in His hometown, 'You don't have to wait for the 50<sup>th</sup> year to experience forgiveness and removal of debts, you can experience it today because 'Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing'. The reason why the people got so mad was because they realized in saying this Jesus was declaring He had God's authority to announce this – which He did – but they didn't believe Him.

Sadly, there is no evidence in Israel's history that they ever practiced the year of Jubilee. Most likely because those who gained land and money from others had no desire to return it! But think of the powerful word picture God was showing them. That once in your lifetime you can experience all

your debts wiped clean and all your losses restored. All because God said so. Jesus was saying, I've come to cancel all your debts.

He then uses two Old Testament witnesses to back up what He said which angers the crowd. So we need to

## **Be Prepared for Both Rejection and Salvation** **(4:23-30)**

When Jesus quoted Is. 61:1-2 he stopped at a crucial point and did not finish v.2, which said,  
*to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor and the day of vengeance of our God,*

The prophets all prophesied that when the Messiah came He would defeat Israel's enemies who, so they thought, were mostly Gentiles. Who does Jesus lift up as examples of people of faith, who were poor and became rich or were rich and realized they were poor? Gentiles. Jesus said, 'Remember Elijah and Elisha, Israel's two greatest prophets? Lots of Jewish widows needed help from God in Israel yet God sent Elijah to a Gentile widow in Sidon to meet her needs because she had faith. Then God used a Jewish slave girl to tell her Gentile master Namaan the Syrian, who had leprosy, to go see Elisha in Israel. A rich successful man who initially is offended by Elisha, humbles himself and shows faith. Unlike Namaan, Jesus friends and neighbours

### ***Reject Jesus because they are offended (vv.23-25, 28-30)***

We too will be rejected because the gospel points out we don't measure up to God's standards. People get upset at God's messengers for telling them the truth, truth they don't want to acknowledge. Jesus' family and friends were offended by Him, enough to want to kill Him. We need to accept that people will reject us because they reject Christ. By the way, Jesus models quite clearly that being led by the Spirit can still result in rejection. Sometimes we mistakenly think that rejection happens because we miss the leading of the Spirit. It can, if we have done it arrogantly for sure. Yet perhaps a different mistake we make is that we don't expect some people

### ***To accept the gospel by faith (vv.26-27)***

Jesus used Namaan as a great example that even the powerful and wealthy can repent and turn to God by faith. If we believe the gospel changes lives, then let's believe the gospel will change a life here and there when we share it!

Jesus went to His hometown to tell them what they should have already known. They of all people should have known Jesus was the Messiah. They knew about Mary's pregnancy, the trip to Bethlehem, the miraculous escape to Egypt and return home. They never saw or heard Jesus sin growing up. Jesus gives them this great opportunity to accept Him but they don't.

The people who live around us should see by our lives how Jesus makes a difference. That our changed heart has resulted in changed actions that build up our community. It is important to live out the gospel to earn the opportunities to share it. We know lots of good people around us, but they are still lost. As much as we want them to like us, we should have a greater desire that they be saved. Pray for open doors to share Christ. Wait for the Spirit to lead. Live in such a way that you've earned the right to be heard. Don't force Jesus on people but humbly yet boldly tell people that today they too can have all their debts against God wiped clean. That their spiritual poverty will turn to eternal riches, and that freedom from sin and from the pressures of this world to mould them into what they want, no

longer has to define who they are. Let's help people understand God loves them, Jesus died for them and they too can find freedom today from sin.

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If you have any comments or questions about this sermon please  
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