

Luke 4:14-30

Luke 4:18,19 "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord."

So how do you capture a life and a ministry with words in a way that enables others to see and feel what it was like even though they never saw it for themselves? This, it seems, was Luke's object in our passage for today. And the vehicle he uses to accomplish this goal was Jesus' own words spoken on the occasion of His return to His hometown after He had become known as a prophet/teacher/healer comparable to John the Baptist.

One way that Jesus distinguished Himself from John the Baptist is that He took His message to the people instead of waiting for them to come to Him. So Jesus was in Galilee and was going from town to town with His message and ministry. With every passing day His reach into the region grew. The people who were healed and who heard Him teach could not wait to tell all that they had seen and heard.

By the time Jesus came to Nazareth, where He had grown up, His fame preceded Him.

And Jesus had a natural desire to explain to His people what had happened to Him and to include them in all that God was doing.

So, as He always did, He went to Synagogue on the Sabbath and made His case. He read Scripture, made a statement, and then interpreted the response that He received.

The Scripture is printed above. It was from Isaiah and was known to be Messianic. Jesus personalized the passage first by implication and then by outright claim.

To preach the gospel to the poor is to be selective or to target a group who you wish to reach. The word "poor" is heard as an economic description today but should be given a broader meaning in the context of Jesus' ministry. Think of the story of Zacchaeus, who was rich but poor as one who was outcast from his own people. And when Jesus went to his house, the crowd murmured against Jesus. Why would He go to His house?

Healing the brokenhearted is giving hope to the hopeless. Beyond every tragic circumstance and every crushing loss is a new beginning, especially when we learn the secret that joy comes to us when we are a blessing to others.

Proclaiming liberty to the captives includes the idea that we all build the boxes which we then live inside. Jesus' teaching takes down walls and sets us free.

Recovery of sight to the blind was both a literal and spiritual exercise in Jesus' ministry. Spiritual blindness is the inability to see truth and to be changed by it. If you offer sight to a blind person, even one who has never seen, they will take you up on it every time. The spiritually blind are usually not so eager. Problem number one is that the spiritually blind usually think that they can see just fine.

To set at liberty those who are oppressed is to find freedom from those who seek to impose a power upon you whose purpose is to put you down or to hold you back. Jesus demonstrated that freedom begins within and that for those who learn this, there is no way that anyone can take this inner freedom away from you.

To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord was really defined by all of the above. When the above is happening we know that He is working.

Jesus' statement was spoken to an expectant and curious congregation. They had come to church that day to see the unexpected. They were looking for a sign, a miracle, something that would wow them. Jesus said, "Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

But the people doubted, "Isn't this Joseph's son?" And so Jesus spoke truth to them and they tried to kill Him.