

Called to Proclaim

Hey man, once you get out of this place, you're not supposed to come back," said Perez, the prison guard.

Linzell smiled as he spread his arms wide, and Perez ran the handheld metal detector over his body. Perez had worked at the maximum-security prison for five of the 11 years that Linzell had been there. He was one of a very few guards who had not given Linzell any grief for finding "jail-house religion."

"I'm looking forward to hearing you speak at service today," Perez told Linzell when Perez finished the body check.

"Right. Just what these prisoners need, more Jesus talk," said another prison guard that Linzell did not know.

Linzell had been out of prison for five years. He was married, working a decent job, and was taking a few online seminary courses. The latter came about after encouragement from his wife and some nudging from his pastor.

"How could God ever use me?" Linzell had asked.

Still, Linzell had felt the pull of God to preach. He had ignored it for more than two years, until he could no longer.

Once Linzell yielded, he also surrendered to preparing for the call. It had been both a scary and a glorious journey.

"Don't listen to Dusty," Perez said, breaking in on Linzell's thoughts. "There are several men who have been anxiously waiting for service to start, and there are a couple of men who remember you!"

1. *What evidence do you see that we are living in a hurting world?*

2. *What temporary solutions do hurting people often look to for help?*

3. *Why is Jesus good news for our hurting world?*

Proclaiming Freedom

Luke 4:14-19, KJV

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.

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,

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.

Luke 4:14-19, NIV

¹⁴Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside. ¹⁵He was teaching in their synagogues, and everyone praised him.

¹⁶He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read, ¹⁷and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him.

Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:

¹⁸"The Spirit of the Lord is on me,

because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind,

to set the oppressed free,

¹⁹to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

The same Spirit who had sustained Jesus during His temptation by Satan in the wilderness (Luke 4:1) now led Him to His home region of Galilee, where "news about him spread through the whole countryside." Jesus taught in the synagogues "and everyone praised him" (vss. 14-15).

At last He arrived in His hometown of Nazareth, among the people He grew up with and likely had served as a

carpenter or builder. As it was still the beginning of His ministry, Jesus had likely not been away long. And once again, on the Sabbath, Jesus went into the synagogue to teach. It is interesting to note it “was his custom” (vs. 16) to go to the synagogue; even Jesus, the Son of God, understood the need to be among God’s people for worship.

As He stood up to read, Jesus was handed the scroll of the prophet Isaiah. Jesus took the scroll, unrolled it, and “found the place” He was to read from, near the very end of the book of Isaiah (61:1-2a). Whether the passage was predetermined or chosen specifically by Jesus, it was the perfect word for the moment.

The passage spoke of the Spirit being on the Messiah, God’s anointed one, who would bring five good things to those in need: 1) good news to the poor; 2) freedom to prisoners; 3) new sight to the blind; 4) release to the oppressed; and 5) forgiveness to debtors (as in the Year of Jubilee). The “year of the Lord’s favor” likely refers to the year of Jubilee (Lev. 25:9-15), during which time debts were cancelled and slaves were set free. Jesus would fulfill this prophecy in both literal and spiritual ways.

The importance of this Scripture from Isaiah is shown in Jesus’ message to the disciples of John the Baptist. When John’s disciples came with his question of whether or not Jesus was truly the Messiah, Jesus replied, “Go back and report to John what you hear and see: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor” (Matt. 11:4-5).

Jesus stopped His reading midway through Isaiah 61:2, leaving unspoken the remainder of Isaiah’s statement: “and the day of vengeance of our God.” Possibly this is because this day of vengeance will not occur until Jesus’ second coming. For now, He proclaimed only the prophecy that those hearing Him would witness with their own eyes.

4. *Where did the Spirit lead Jesus? What was the initial response to His arrival?*

5. *What is significant about the passage of Scripture Jesus read in the synagogue?*

6. *What is significant about the part of this passage from Isaiah Jesus did not read?*

Proclaiming Fulfillment

Luke 4:20-22a, KJV

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.

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

Luke 4:20-22a, NIV

²⁰Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him.

²¹He began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

²²All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips.

Once Jesus had finished reading this brief passage from Isaiah, He rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the synagogue attendant who had handed to Him, and sat down. Standing was the usual posture for the reading portion of the synagogue message, while sitting usually indicated teaching.

All eyes were fixed on Jesus. Everyone in the synagogue wondered what this teacher from their own hometown would have to say next about this Spirit-filled, anointed Messiah who had been promised by Isaiah hundreds of years ago—who they now hoped would bring freedom, healing, and the Lord's favor to a hurting, beaten-down, Roman-dominated people. Even given their desire for liberation, they could not have anticipated Jesus' next words.

Jesus began—He wasted no time in proclaiming—that "*Today* this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing" (vs. 21, emphasis added). Those listening to Jesus' message were beholding its very fulfillment. This was the year of the Lord's favor where, both physically and spiritually speaking,

good news was proclaimed to the poor, the blind regained sight, prisoners and the oppressed were set free, and debts were canceled. In short, Jesus had just declared, to the people of His hometown, that He was the Messiah!

It is interesting also to note the tone and style of Jesus' words. He didn't shout or make a big deal. He literally didn't mention Himself. He said only, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." He simply proclaimed the truth and let it speak for itself about Him. But that calm proclamation changed everything.

At first, the response to Jesus' message was positive. "All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips" (vs. 22a). After their initial reaction, however, the crowd quickly changed their opinion and doubted that this man from their own hometown could be the long-promised Messiah (vss. 22b-30).

Ultimately, it wouldn't matter. Jesus would go on fulfilling everything He had just proclaimed—and to fulfill every other promise ever made in God's Word about Him.

7. What is the crowd's attitude as Jesus prepared to

speak? What fueled this attitude?



8. What did Jesus say about the passage from Isaiah He had just read—and therefore, about Himself?

9. How did the crowd react to Jesus' message, at first?

A reconstruction of a first-century synagogue at Nazareth Village in Israel.

Reaching Out to the Hurting

Lydia sat in the corner alone, in the midst of a crowded school auditorium. No one knew that she had tried to take her life last night. She didn't want to be in school, but she definitely couldn't stay at home where her abuse occurred. Before the closing of the assembly, Lydia thought she left the auditorium unnoticed. However, her math teacher, Mrs. Matthews, saw her from the time she entered the auditorium.

During math class, Mrs. Matthews continued to observe Lydia's isolation from her classmates. She also noticed that Lydia's grades were dropping. She started to pray for Lydia as she watched her class and that God would give her an opportunity to speak to Lydia and she would open up to her.

Later that week, Mrs. Matthews saw Lydia waiting at the bus stop and started talking to her about the long wait for the bus and other small talk. Lydia was surprised by Mrs. Matthews talking to her, but she politely answered her. Over the next month, whenever Mrs. Matthews saw Lydia alone, she would go over and start a conversation.

Finally, Mrs. Matthews ran into Lydia off the school campus and was able to share with Lydia more about her own life. She told Lydia how she was bullied in school and then one day she learned about someone who would never bully her. Mrs. Matthews simply told Lydia about how Jesus came to help those that are hurting and His unconditional love for her.

Lydia didn't respond right away, but Mrs. Matthews noticed that she smiled more in class. She also saw Lydia sitting at the bus stop reading the New Testament that she had given her. She prayed that Lydia would not only share with her, but would accept Jesus' love and allow Him to heal her.

10. *How often do you notice those hurting around you?*

11. *What roles do the Holy Spirit and prayer play in helping those hurting?*

12. *How are you reaching out to hurting people in your world?*

Jesus Is the Answer

Jesus' message of good news never grows old. Technology may increase, fads may change, but God's Word never changes. The answer to the troubles of our hurting world today is still Jesus.

► *Do you know someone who is discouraged, lacks peace of mind, or really doesn't see any reason for living? Ask God to give you an opportunity in the next week to share with that person Jesus' message of good news. If you can't think of anyone who needs to hear of Jesus' good news, then take time and pray for God to show you someone this week who is hurting and needs to hear Jesus' good news.*

KEY VERSE

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, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.

—Luke 4:18-19, KJV

“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.”

—Luke 4:18-19, NIV

DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

Week of January 4 through January 10

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross* devotionals on these passages.)

- Mon.** Exodus 3:1-12—Called to Lead Israelites from Egypt.
- Tues.** Judges 6:11-16—Called to Deliver Israelites from Midianites.
- Wed.** Isaiah 6:1-8—Called and Cleansed for Ministry.
- Thurs.** Luke 9:57-62—Single Mindedness Required to Follow Jesus.
- Fri.** Romans 2:1-11—Repentance, Goal of God's Kindness.
- Sat.** John 21:15-19—Jesus Calls Peter to Ministry.
- Sun.** Luke 5:1-11—Don't Be Afraid to Catch People.