

Jesus the Preacher

Luke 4:14-21

1. Introduction.

- a. This passage begins Jesus' public ministry in Galilee—a section spanning from 4:14-9:50.
- b. As we've been seeing, the Gospel of Luke is foremost a portrait of Jesus Christ. This is the purpose of Luke's Gospel. As such, it is best read as divine biography (c.f., 1:1-4).
- c. Since the beginning of the Gospel, there's been a reoccurring theme that Luke keeps bringing up – namely, the presence and power of the Holy Spirit.
 - i. The Spirit is a unique emphasis in Luke's writing. We see this also in His second volume – the book of Acts.
 1. Jesus' conception (1:35).
 2. John's joy and the presence of Jesus (1:49).
 3. The divine anointing of Jesus (3:22).
 4. The temptations of Jesus (4:1).
 5. Now we see the presence of the Spirit in the ministry of Jesus—and specifically, in the preaching ministry of Jesus (4:14).
 - ii. The nature of how Luke reveals the Spirit is that wherever Jesus is, so is the Spirit.
 1. Jesus' conception (1:35).
 2. John's joy and the presence of Jesus (1:49).
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 5. Now we see the presence of the Spirit in the ministry of Jesus—and specifically, in the preaching ministry of Jesus (4:14).
 - iii. The point is that all that Jesus does, He does by the power of the Holy Spirit. They go hand-in-hand.
 - iv. Conversely, the Spirit does all that He does, but for the purpose aiding the Son.
 - v. Luke's unique interest in the Son reveals the Trinitarian nature of salvation.
 1. Salvation is the plan and will of the Father.

2. Salvation is accomplished through the obedient work of the Son.

3. The Son perfectly obeys by the abiding power of the Holy Spirit.

d. Structure of the passage.

i. Summary statement (14-15).

ii. Jesus teaches in the synagogue (16-21).

iii. The public response to Jesus' teaching (22-30).

iv. Today we'll cover 16-21.

2. The summary statement (14-15).

a. These verses cover about one year of ministry, and reveal that Jesus has been garnering some tremendous fame (15b).

b. These two verse comprise everything we see in the first four chapters of John's Gospel.

i. After His Baptism He goes to Cana for a wedding (Jn. 2:1ff.).

ii. He heads South the Jerusalem, stopping in Capernaum for a few days (Jn. 2:13).

iii. After spending some time in Jerusalem, He heads back to Galilee, passing through the region of Samaria (Jn. 4).

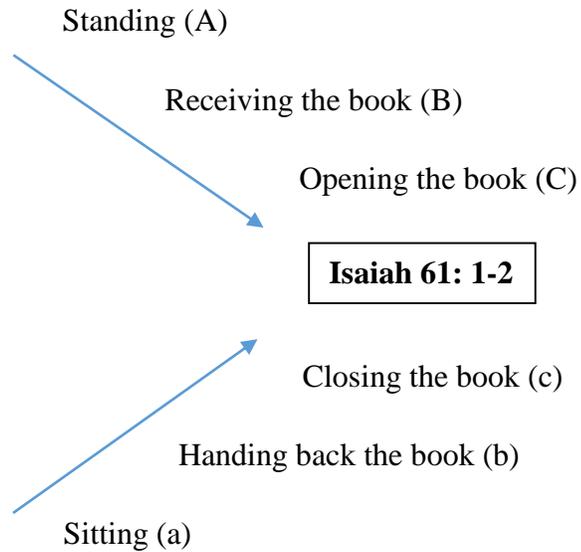
iv. He heads home and begins His ministry in the synagogue of Nazareth (16).

c. The point to understand is that Jesus is a traveling preacher at this point. He's preaching from synagogue to synagogue, garnering a reputation for himself (mostly good at this point).

3. Jesus Preaches in the Synagogue (16-21).

a. Some background on synagogues.

- i. A synagogue was simply a place of gathering. The formation of synagogue required the presence of 10 male Jews over the age of 13 (c.f., Acts 16 and the gathering of women by the river on the Sabbath).
 - ii. Most towns and villages had a synagogue. There were roughly 400 through the nation, according to Josephus.
 - iii. Typical liturgy of a synagogue service.
 1. Open with the singing of a hymn.
 2. Reciting of the Shema (Deut. 6).
 3. Repetition of the 18 blessings.
 4. Selected reading from the Law (the first 5 books of the OT). They were read in the original Hebrew, then translated into Aramaic for the people.
 5. Selected reading from the Prophets (again, read in Hebrew, then translated into Aramaic).
 6. A Rabbi would deliver a sermon from one of the selected readings.
 7. Close with a benediction (or blessing) from the synagogue ruler.
 - iv. The point, here, is that no synagogue had a designated pastor or rabbi. The synagogue ruler was responsible for securing a rabbi to teach each Sabbath. On this occasion, Jesus was recruited to teach.
- b. In vss. 16-21, Luke radically slows down the narrative to focus on this particular moment of Jesus in the synagogue—the critical moment in which He reads from Isa. 61.
- i. Luke records this moment in a chiasmic structure. His purpose in doing so, is to heighten the drama.
 - ii. Vss. 16 and 17 are in perfect parallel with v. 20, forming a chiasmic structure. The very center of the structure is always the emphasized point. In this case, the center is Jesus quote of Isaiah 61:1-2.



4. The role of the Messiah (Isaiah 61:1-2).

- a. He uses the term “to preach (κηρύσσω)” three times within two verses.
 - i. The term means “to herald a message.”
 - ii. This is very instructive for us in understand the role of the Messiah. The primary feature of His three-year ministry would be that of preaching.
 1. We see this all through the Gospel. He goes from town to town, and synagogue to synagogue, preaching.
 2. In fact, Isa. 61 makes a tight connection between the Messiah being anointed with the Spirit, but for the purpose of preaching (Luke 4:18).
 3. Jesus is the first Spirit-filled preacher. To be a Spirit-filled preacher is not so much the idea of having great (powerful) preaching, but rather, it’s preaching which has Christ as its content. And that’s what makes it so powerful.
 - a. Jesus identifies Himself as the subject and content of Isaiah 61.
 - b. He has a self-understanding that He is the Messiah, and that Isaiah 61 is, therefore, speaking of Him.

- c. He uses the pronoun “Me” three times in v. 18, affirming all the more that He is the Christ of Isaiah 61.
 - d. Moreover, He uses the term “today” in v. 21, showing that He is the very present fulfillment of what Isaiah 61 was prophesying.
 - b. There’s a lot of debate regarding the meaning of Isaiah 61:1-2.
 - i. Conservative and liberal commentators are split. Furthermore, this is heavily referenced (and debated) passage in our current social justice culture within the Church. Is it to be understood literally or spiritually?
 - ii. There’s zero debate that Isaiah 61 is essentially the job description of the coming Messiah.
 - 1. As such, the best way to interpret what Jesus meant in the quoting of Isaiah 61, is to follow His ministry throughout the Gospel.
 - 2. This very quickly answers the question as to how we might understand what Jesus meant in quoting these verses.
 - 3. Furthermore, you can simply trace out what the Apostles do in the book of Acts to understand the meaning. If they were to continue on the ministry of Jesus, and pick up His mantle, then we simply need to look at what they do.
 - iii. So is Jesus quote from Isaiah 61:1-2 meant to be understood literally, or spiritually? That’s the debate. It’s an important question to answer, because it determines what faithfulness to Jesus looks like for His followers.
 - iv. The key is to focus on the language of “preach (κηρύσσω).”
 - v. (C.f., Luke 4:43-44).

5. Conclusion.

- a. These four descriptions are a reference to the sinner.
 - i. “The poor (πτωχός).” The picture is that of a beggar in destitution.
 - ii. “The captives.” A term in reference to those in the Babylonian Exile.

- iii. “The Blind.” A reference to those who right now don’t understand the darkness of their own situation. They don’t see who Jesus is, and therefore, their need of His saving work.
 - iv. “The oppressed.” A reference to those enslaved to their own sin.
- b. These four categories are people in need of a total rescue from the bleakness of their helpless situation. Again, they’re symbolic references to the state of the sinner. They’re a category of people in desperate need for someone to condescend to their situation and provide a complete rescue.
 - c. And in the quoting of Isaiah 61, this is exactly what Jesus is proclaiming that He has done. He’s come for the sinner, and He’s come with some very good news.

Small Group Questions:

1. What stood out in this sermon?
2. Spend some time sharing your testimonies. How were you made aware of your sin? When did you first realize your need of salvation?
3. What are some implications of this passage for those who follow Christ? How can it shape your understanding of what you should be as a Christian?