

To Seek and To Save the Lost

Jesus Preaches in Synagogues

Luke 4:42-44

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Scripture

Luke began the public ministry of Jesus when Jesus was in the region of Galilee. The basic question that Luke asked and answered was: “Who is Jesus?”

Luke began by giving a summary of Jesus’ *ministry* in Galilee (4:14-15). Next, he gave an example of Jesus’ *teaching* (4:16-30), *authority* (4:31-37), and *power* (4:38-41). Then, he told us about Jesus’ *preaching* (4:42-44).

Let’s read about Jesus’ preaching in the synagogues in Luke 4:42-44:

⁴² And when it was day, he departed and went into a desolate place. And the people sought him and came to him, and would have kept him from leaving them, ⁴³ but he said to them, “I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well; for I was sent for this purpose.” ⁴⁴ And he was preaching in the synagogues of Judea. (Luke 4:42-44)

Introduction

Imagine a foreigner coming to the United States of America for a visit. Let us say that he is a pastor and theologian, and he is interested in learning about preaching in this country. What kind of preaching would he hear?

The well-known German pastor, theologian, and martyr, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, did come to this country in 1930 to study for two years. The preaching he heard shocked him. He visited scores of churches during his two-year stay. He observed:

The sermon has been reduced to parenthetical church remarks about newspaper events. As long as I’ve been here, I

have heard only *one* sermon in which you could hear something like a genuine proclamation. . . . One big question continually attracting my attention in view of these facts is whether one here really can still speak about Christianity. . . .

In New York they preach about virtually everything; only one thing is not addressed, or is addressed so rarely that I have as yet been unable to hear it, namely, the gospel of Jesus Christ, the cross, sin and forgiveness, death and life.¹

That is a sad commentary on the state of preaching in this country in the early 1930s.

One would hope that things have improved since then. However, turn on the television today and you are likely to hear preaching about health, wealth, self-improvement, liberalism, and so on.

Jesus lived in the late 20s, and he was a preacher. Although he performed miracles, he was primarily a preacher. So, what did people hear who listened to his preaching?

Today, I would like to analyze the preaching of Jesus.

Lesson

An analysis of the preaching of Jesus in Luke 4:42-44 will teach us the necessity of responding to Jesus' preaching.

Let's use the following outline:

1. Jesus Spent Time Alone in Preparation to Preach (4:42a)
2. Jesus Resisted the Agenda of Others (4:42b)
3. Jesus Was Constrained to Preach (4:43a, 43c)
4. Jesus Preached the Good New of the Kingdom of God (4:43b)
5. Jesus Preached in the Synagogues of Judea (4:44)

¹ Eric Metaxas, *Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Martyr, Prophet, Spy* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2010), n.p.

I. Jesus Spent Time Alone in Preparation to Preach (4:42a)

First, Jesus spent time alone in preparation to preach.

Luke began the public ministry of Jesus in the region of Galilee. He first described Jesus' visit to his hometown of Nazareth in Luke 4:16-30. However, the people of Nazareth rejected Jesus' claim to be the promised Messiah. In fact, they wanted to kill him, but Jesus left them and went down to Capernaum.

The people of Capernaum responded positively to the ministry of Jesus. Luke recorded events that took place on a Sabbath day in Capernaum. Jesus taught with authority in their synagogue and also cast a demon out of a man (4:31-37). After the Sabbath worship service Jesus healed people of their diseases and cast demons out of people (4:38-41). Then, after all had been healed of their diseases and demons, Jesus finally went to sleep. He was exhausted after a long day of ministry.

Very early the next morning, **when it was day**, before anyone else was awake, Jesus **departed and went into a desolate place** (4:42a). The Gospel of Mark tells us that Jesus went to pray (Mark 1:35).

Jesus' ministry was extremely draining. It is doubtful that anyone in history had as an exhausting schedule as Jesus. And even though his ministry was draining, he knew that he needed to spend time in preparation to preach and serve people. And so Jesus spent an extended time in prayer prior to preaching and serving people, even though his days were extremely busy.

Does prayerful preparation make a difference?

- David Watson notes, "Prayer has always been a primary mark of the saints of God in every generation of the church. George Whitefield, who retired punctually at ten p.m. every night, rose equally promptly at four a.m. in order to pray."
- John Wesley spent two hours daily in prayer, and commonly said, "God does nothing but in answer to prayer."

- Martin Luther said, “If I fail to spend two hours in prayer each morning, the devil gets the victory through the day. I have so much business I cannot get on without spending three hours daily in prayer.”
- The leaders of the Clapham Sect, such as William Wilberforce, who initiated enormous social reforms in England, such as the abolition of slavery, habitually gave themselves to three hours of prayer each day. They organized Christians throughout the country to unite in special prayer before critical debates in Parliament. They knew, and persistently proved, the power of prayer.
- William Temple replied to his critics who regarded answered prayer as no more than coincidences, “When I pray, *coincidences* happen; when I don’t, they don’t.”²

Do you find a lack of spiritual power in your life? It may well be because you don’t spend much time in prayer. Join me on Wednesday evenings at 6:30 p.m. to pray for our church.

Jesus spent time alone in prayerful preparation to preach.

II. Jesus Resisted the Agenda of Others (4:42b)

Second, Jesus resisted the agenda of others.

When the people of Capernaum woke up on Monday morning, it is understandable that they wanted to be with Jesus again. But when they went to find him, he was gone! **And the people sought him and came to him.** Jesus had his quiet time interrupted when they found him. They were so delighted by the power of Jesus to deliver them of their diseases and demons that they **would have kept him from leaving them** (4:42b). They wanted to keep Jesus for themselves.

But the miracles of Jesus were not the goal. They were simply signs affirming his Messiahship. As John MacArthur said, “Jesus was not primarily a miracle worker, but a preacher

² Galaxie Software, *10,000 Sermon Illustrations* (Biblical Studies Press, 2002).

of the gospel.”³

And so Jesus resisted the agenda of others. He would not allow others to dictate what his ministry should be. He knew what God had called him to do, and that was to preach.

Every Christian needs to have a clear vision of God’s agenda for his or her life. You need to know what God has called you to do in your service to him. If you don’t know what it is that God has called you to do, then begin by serving in an area of ministry that you think you might enjoy. If that is God’s call on your life, you will be affirmed. If that is not God’s call on your life, you will be redirected by different opportunities.

That is why next Sunday’s Ministry Fair is so important. I ask you to attend the Ministry Fair after the Worship Service. It will only take an hour or two of your time. But you may discover God’s agenda for your life!

III. Jesus Was Constrained to Preach (4:43a, 43c)

Third, Jesus was constrained to preach.

Jesus **said to** the people of Capernaum, **“I must preach . . . to the other towns as well; for I was sent for this purpose”** (4:43a, 43c). The *ESV Study Bible* note states, “Luke often refers to what **must** be, emphasizing the necessity of God’s providential plan being fulfilled.”⁴ Jesus *had* to preach. He was compelled to preach.

All true preachers are constrained to preach. Paul wrote in his first letter to the Corinthians, “For necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!” (9:16). Part of the reason Paul, Jesus, and all true preachers are constrained to preach is because God has called them to preach. There is a clear sense that God has assigned a task, and it has to be done.

³ John F. MacArthur, Jr., *Luke 1–5*, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2009), 297.

⁴ Crossway Bibles, *The ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 1959.

You may not be called to be a preacher. But God has called every Christian to serve him in the body of Christ. Again, I ask you to attend the Ministry Fair so that you can take your place of service in the body of Christ.

IV. Jesus Preached the Good News of the Kingdom of God (4:43b)

Fourth, Jesus preached the good news of the kingdom of God.

Jesus said to the people of Capernaum, **“I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God”** (4:43b). The **kingdom of God** was the theme of Jesus’ message. He did not preach health, wealth, self-improvement, liberalism, and so on. No. He preached **the good news of the kingdom of God**.

This is the first time in Luke’s Gospel that he mentioned **the kingdom of God**. Luke in fact mentions **the kingdom of God** 31 times in his Gospel, more than any of the Gospel authors. So, I would like to take some time to explain some aspects of **the kingdom of God**. I won’t be comprehensive, as we will have many more opportunities in the rest of Luke’s Gospel to examine further aspects about **the kingdom of God**.

Here are some basic facts about **the kingdom of God**.

First, let me define of the kingdom of God. There are many definitions of the kingdom of God. I like the definition given by Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, because it is short and simple. Dr. Lloyd-Jones says that the kingdom of God “is best defined as the *rule* of God. The kingdom of God is present wherever God is reigning.”⁵ In other words, the kingdom of God does not refer to a geographic territory but rather to a relationship.

Second, notice the kingdom of God in the Old Testament. Though the phrase “the kingdom of God” does not occur in the

⁵ David Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *The Church and the Last Things* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1998), 4.

Old Testament, the idea of the rule of God over the entire world was clearly communicated in the Old Testament. For example, Daniel saw the kingdom of God overcoming the kingdoms of this world. He wrote in Daniel 2:44, “And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, nor shall the kingdom be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever.”

Then Daniel specifically associated the coming kingdom of God with the Messiah in Daniel 7:13-14, “I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.”

So there was an expectation in the Old Testament that God would come and rule one day in the person of the Messiah.

Third, John preached that the kingdom of God was coming. Following the Jewish convention of avoiding the use of God’s name, Matthew usually speaks of “the kingdom of heaven.” Therefore, “the kingdom of heaven” is the same as “the kingdom of God.” So, when John came, his message was, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 3:2).

Fourth, Jesus preached that the kingdom of God had arrived. Jesus said, “But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you” (Matthew 12:28). On another occasion the Pharisees asked Jesus when the kingdom of God would come. He answered them, “The kingdom of God is not coming in ways that can be observed, nor will they say, ‘Look, here it is!’ or ‘There!’ for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you” (Luke 17:20-21). Jesus’ message was that the kingdom of God had come!

Fifth, entry into the kingdom of God is vitally important. When people were invited to enter the kingdom of God, they should do so immediately and not make excuses for delaying entrance into the kingdom. Jesus said to a man, "Follow me." But he said, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father." And Jesus said to him, "Leave the dead to bury their own dead. But as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God." Yet another said, "I will follow you, Lord, but let me first say farewell to those at my home." Jesus said to him, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:59-62).

Finally, childlike trust is the condition of entry into the kingdom of God. Jesus said, "Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it" (Luke 18:17). Simply put, one must submit to the rule of God like a little child lovingly submits to his parent. Entry into the kingdom of God is the simple act of submitting to the rule of God and following him in every area of our lives. It is believing that Jesus is indeed the King of kings and Lord of lords who paid the penalty for all our sins, who forgives us, and calls us to repent of our sins and follow him. Jesus is saying that it is not complicated. Even a child can trust God and turn from sin.

So, are you a citizen of the kingdom of God?

V. Jesus Preached in the Synagogues of Judea (4:44)

And fifth, Jesus preached in the synagogues of Judea.

The preaching ministry of Jesus was not to be confined to Capernaum. Even though the people wanted Jesus to stay, he knew that his message had to get out all the people of Israel. And so Luke said that Jesus **was preaching in the synagogues of Judea** (4:44). The term **Judea** most likely did not mean only the southern part of Israel but rather was a generic term to refer to the entire nation of Israel.

Commentator Douglas J. W. Milne said, “From this verse we can glean a rich theology of mission according to Jesus.”⁶ What I would simply note is that Jesus wanted the good news of the kingdom of God to be proclaimed to all people.

We have a responsibility to communicate the gospel to all people. You may not be called to be a preacher. But you live and work in this community. You must proclaim the gospel with the people in your circle of contacts.

You may say that you are not good at sharing the gospel. Well, attend the evangelism training classes. There is a meeting this afternoon and another next Sunday afternoon at 2:00 p.m.

Or, you can invite people to attend a worship service.

When I was a new Christian and not very confident about sharing the gospel, I regularly invited people to our church’s worship service. And several of them came to faith in Christ!

One study noted 19% of adults made a profession of faith in Christ through a friend sharing the gospel, and 14% of adults made a profession of faith by attending a worship service.⁷

So, proclaim the gospel wherever you are. And, if you are not good at sharing the gospel, invite people to a worship service so that they can hear the good news of the gospel.

Conclusion

Therefore, having analyzed the preaching of Jesus in Luke 4:42-44, we must respond to Jesus’ preaching.

If you are a Christian, you must be active in advancing the kingdom of God. God has equipped every Christian with a spiritual gift. It was never intended for your own personal benefit or for your nuclear family’s benefit. God gave you a spiritual

⁶ Douglas J. W. Milne, *Let’s Study Luke* (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2005), 61.

⁷ See <http://www.barna.org/barna-update/article/5-barna-update/196-evangelism-is-most-effective-among-kids?q=conversion>.

gift to be used in your church family to advance the kingdom of God. So, make a commitment today to be active in serving in God's kingdom.

If you are not yet a Christian, you must transfer your citizenship from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of God. Don't delay! You don't know when God will call you to stand before him and give an account of your life. If you are not a citizen of the kingdom of God, you will spend all eternity in hell.

So, believe that Jesus is the Messiah. He is the one sent by God to deliver you from sin and Satan. Ask God to forgive you, change you, and enable you to turn from your sin.

When I was a seminary student in Chicago I joined a group of students who preached on the streets in downtown Chicago on Saturday nights. I will never forget one night when I spoke with a young man about his eternal destiny. I asked him if he wanted to go to heaven. I have rarely spoken to anyone who did not want to go to heaven. So, I was surprised when he said that he wanted to go to hell.

"Why do you want to go to hell?" I asked.

"Because that is where all my friends will be," he said. "I want to join them so that we can continue to party together."

Many people think that hell is a place where one can continue partying with friends. What a misunderstanding that is of hell! Friends, hell is a place of eternal torment. It is a place of unspeakable anguish. It is a place where suffering never stops. Don't ever think that hell will be a pleasant experience.

Ask God today to grant you faith and repentance so that you can become a citizen of the kingdom of God. Amen.

Mission Statement

The Mission Statement of the Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church is:

*To bring people to Jesus Christ
and membership in his church family,
develop them to Christlike maturity,
equip them for their ministry in the church
and life mission in the world,
in order to magnify God's name.*

Sermons by Rev. Freddy Fritz

This sermon, and other sermons, by the Rev. Freddy Fritz can be found at:

1. www.tampabaypresbyterian.org/sermons
2. www.sermoncentral.com/contributors/freddy-fritz-sermons-11181.asp
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PRAYER:

O God our Father, we are learning so much from Luke. Today we learned about the preaching of Jesus. Help each one of us to respond to the preaching of Jesus.

For those who are Christians, help each one to get active in serving you and advancing your kingdom.

And for those who are not yet Christians, help each one to exercise childlike trust and submit to the rule of Christ. Help each one to trust in Jesus and turn from his or her sin.

And for this I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

BENEDICTION:

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and always. Amen.

CHARGE:

Now, brothers and sisters, go and serve God wholeheartedly!