

Check Your Expectation - Luke 4:14-30

Josiah Haas

Good morning First Free! My name is Josiah Haas and I am one of the pastoral apprentices here. Wow it is great to be together in person! It's awesome to hear you all singing and to be gathered together in fellowship

It's kinda fun- today ended up being an apprentice led-service! Thanks Drew for leading worship and reading the text for us. The apprentices are actually going to be leading the Good Friday service this year, and it's going to be in-person. So, come out and join us. It has been such a privilege it has been to serve here over the last year. I'm going to be graduating in May and moving on to the next thing God has for my fiancé Ruthie and I this summer, and I don't know how many more times I will have the chance to express my gratitude. So, let me just say this: First Free you have been my family for the last three years. I'm so grateful for how you've welcomed me and poured into me during my time in seminary. I've learned so much from so many people and I know those relationships will continue into the future. I love you guys, and thanks for loving me.

Pray

Today's story is one of the most important and fascinating stories in the Bible. You don't need Disney plus to be entertained- some of the craziest stories are found right here in God's word! This story is WILD. First, I want to actually walk through this story so that you can understand how absolutely insane it is. It's crazy! So, buckle up! Then after understanding the story we're going to see who Jesus is and 3 things that his freedom entails.

¹⁴ And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and a report about him went out through all the surrounding country. ¹⁵ And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all.

Jesus returned- from where? The wilderness for 40 days and nights

Jesus has been in a spiritual battle. He's been hungry and thirsty and tempted to use his power in inappropriate ways

He's been at war, but he returns victorious!

Now he launches from his time of testing into his ministry

God had used this time of testing to empower him

Jesus is beginning to fulfill God's purpose for him

A short principle: **God uses times of testing to empower us for His purpose**

This could be a whole sermon, but it's a point worth making.

If you are in a time of testing, of frustration, of trial, of wondering what God is doing in your life, then know from the life of Jesus that God uses those times to empower of for His purpose.

You can cling to that. You can have hope in that.

¹⁶ And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read.

Jesus comes back to his hometown

We see this phrase- “as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath”

We see many examples of Jesus going to synagogue, but here is the only mention that this was his habit.

Let’s dwell on this for a minute- Jesus regularly attended synagogue

Jesus is the Son of God- why did he regularly go to synagogue?

He doesn’t need to learn anything

He is fully God!

He is not only a faithful attender, but he attends in the midst of people who would reject him

These people are about to run him off a cliff!

These are the very types of people that are going to conspire against him

These are the people that eventually will have him crucified

Why does he do this?

He does this because Jesus is faithful and obedient to his Father

He is our model for faithfulness and obedience

Can I be honest about something?

There have been a lot of unfortunate effects of this pandemic that are going to influence people for years to come

One of my fears is that people are getting so comfortable that they are not going to come back to church when the time comes.

My fear is that they have made a habit of not attending church

COVID has been a part of our lives for a year

We’ve formed habits, for better or for worse

In Jesus, we see the example of faithful obedience to gather in worship of his Father

In the midst of people who would reject him!!

He didn’t have any excuses, and that means we don’t either

Strive for faithful obedience to the Father like Jesus

As cases drop, vaccines are distributed and as we open up again, make it a habit to come and worship God

17 And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written,

18 “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,

because he has anointed me

to proclaim good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives

and recovering of sight to the blind,

to set at liberty those who are oppressed,

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

20 And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. 21 And he began to say to them, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” 22 And all spoke well of him and marveled at the gracious words that were coming from his mouth. And they said, “Is not this Joseph's son?”

Jesus gets up to read from Isaiah

It's a regular synagogue service with the reading of Scripture
 He reads a well-known passage of Scripture that everyone would have known

Notice how the narrative slows down here

Before Jesus is broadly teaching and preaching in Galilee
 And all the sudden we zoom in to this one scene

*This is a signal by Luke that something very important is happening

We start moving in slow motion: he stood up... he unrolled the scroll... he found this place... he reads... he rolled up the scroll... he gave it back to the attendant... he sat down... and all the eyes in the synagogue were fixed on him... and he said to them...

Everything is leading up to this one moment...

What is about to happen will change the course of history

The insanity of what is about to happen cannot be adequately expressed

What is about to happen is like in undercover boss when the employees realize that it was their boss all along

What is about to happen is like Jesus' superhero reveal

Like when Ironman, in front of the press, reveals for the first time "I am Ironman"

I got really excited about that analogy- maybe that just reveals that I'm a giant nerd

What is about to happen actually happened to me one time; Drew was there and can confirm my embarrassment. I go to Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, which has housed many famous scholars over the years. Since D.A. Carson retired, the most famous theologian there is named Kevin Vanhoozer- very famous in the biblical academic world. Of all the people I wanted to meet, he was at the top of the list. It was the first day of seminary, and we were sitting at tables having lunch. I sat down right next to him, having no idea who he was and asked, "So what do you do here?" Just like a big dummy. Everyone at the table gave me that look, like "oh this poor poor boy he has no idea who that is." He answered very humbly just saying "Yeah I'm actually on faculty here." And another professor graciously told me that I was sitting next to one of the foremost systematic theologians in the last two decades.

These moments don't come close to showing the significance of this moment in Jesus' life

Everything leads up to this one moment where Jesus says "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing"

*He says, "I am the Messiah"

These words written hundreds of years ago are about him

And the people are excited! They are marveling! They are in wonder!

They're saying- "isn't this the hometown boy? Didn't he use to play and run around these fields with our kids?"

This is one of the Foster's, Lee's, Wilkins, Cha's, Hower's that you remember when they were just a little kid

This is who Jesus was to them

They have been waiting and waiting for God's Messiah to come and deliver them- and he is here! It's the hometown boy! It's a feel-good story! Everything is going so well!

*This story is surely going to have a happy ending right?! No, things are about to take a complete 180 here.

23 And he said to them, "Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, "Physician, heal yourself." What we have heard you did at Capernaum, do here in your hometown as well.'" 24 And he said, "Truly, I say to you, no prophet is acceptable in his hometown. 25 But in truth, I tell you, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heavens were shut up three years and six months, and a great famine came over all the land, 26 and Elijah was sent to none of them but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. 27 And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian." 28 When they heard these things, all in the synagogue were filled with wrath. 29 And they rose up and drove him out of the town and brought him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they could throw him down the cliff. 30 But passing through their midst, he went away.

Isn't this a fascinating story? This is must-see TV!

Here's what happens: Jesus quotes them a proverb that reveals their thoughts

They want a sign- they've heard of his previous works and they want to see

*They feel entitled to it because he is from their hometown

Jesus goes on to say that prophets are not acceptable in their hometowns, citing two examples that would have been very well known

1. Elijah- there's a giant famine in the land. God sends him to a woman in Zarephath in Phoenicia

She's gathering sticks to eat and is going to die.

Elijah shows up and tells her to make him some bread

She does, and for as long as he's there the flour and oil never run dry

They just keep being filled up!

2. Elisha- Elijah's successor. Naaman is a Syrian military commander with leprosy.

Naaman comes to Elisha's house

Elisha tells him to wash 7 times in the Jordan and be healed

Naaman says- you're crazy! Why don't you just heal me right now?

Walks away mad, but his servants convince him to go wash 7 times.

He does and is completely healed.

What is significant about these stories? God is working in people outside of Israel.

Jesus is essentially saying, "You don't have an exclusive right to God's work."

And this ticks these people off- they become an angry mob and run him out of town

They try to throw him off a cliff- this is the craziest response to a sermon! Please don't do this to me! I beg of you!

But then what happens is even better- Jesus goes Tom and Jerry on them!

Tom is causing a ruckus and there's a dust-up

Jerry just walks out completely unharmed

That's what Jesus does- he just passes right through them. No problem

What a story! However, this is not just for your entertainment- there is deep meaning in this story

The first question this text brings us to ask is: who is Jesus?

Who is this man who claims to be the fulfillment of God's words and who mysteriously passes through an angry mob?

Let's not gloss over the importance of this question:

*The question of who Jesus is is the most important question you will ever answer.

*How you answer this question changes not only your life but your eternal destiny

Who is Jesus?

Our text today shows us this: Jesus is the fulfillment of God's promise for freedom

Let me read again what Jesus said:

*¹⁸ "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives
and recovering of sight to the blind,
to set at liberty those who are oppressed,
¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."*

When Jesus says he fulfills these words, he is claiming to be God's Messiah

God repeatedly promised his people in the Old Testament that he would send a deliverer

All the Scriptures in the OT prophesying of a Messiah are talking about him

He is not just quoting Isaiah

He is claiming that the Spirit of the Lord is upon HIM

That HE has been anointed to bring God's freedom

Now when the people of Nazareth hear this, they are excited!

They are excited because they have an expectation of what the Messiah was going to be

They expected that the Messiah was going to be political

*They are expecting a king

The beginning of this Messianic passage: *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me.*

*In the OT, do you know the places where the Spirit is mentioned as giving an anointing?

The establishing of kings.¹ Look at King Saul and King David in 1 Samuel.

So, when they hear Isaiah 61 being read, they're thinking about a king who is going to bring freedom them from the grasp of the Roman Empire

All throughout the gospels we see this expectation of the people of Israel

They think he is going to be a king that would be even greater than the great King David

A king that defeats their enemies and establishes Israel back to prominence.

And over and over Jesus shows that that is not the type of kingdom he is bringing.

Jesus will be a king, but not in the way that they were expecting

¹ John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40-66*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 564.

The freedom that Jesus was going to bring is not what they expected

Jesus is the fulfillment of God's promise for freedom- but his freedom is not what they expected. And so that brings us to ask- what does Jesus' freedom entail? Here are three things...

1. Salvation for Sinners

When Jesus says he is proclaiming good news to the poor, the word here refers to those that are in despair. The range of the word extends beyond monetary needs. It's talking about anyone who is in need.²

To read this passage and not see the spiritual implications would be completely short-sided.

We are in spiritual poverty and need the good news of a Savior
 We are held captive to our sin
 We are blinded by our own shortcomings
 We are under spiritual oppression

We all have sinned and fall short of God's glory

Don't believe me?

*Look outward- do you not see sin running rampant in our society? Do you not see injustice reigning? Do you not see people being killed? Do you not see scandals happening left and right?

*Sin is all around us. But sin is also in us.

*Look inward- you know the depths of your own wickedness. You know your evil thoughts. You may put on a good show but if you're really honest you know that you're drowning in your own criminality.

We all are held captive to our brokenness, and we need freedom. But there's good news.

Jesus says he is proclaiming the year of the Lord's favor.

You know, an interesting thing to consider here is that Jesus stops in the middle of the sentence in the quote from Isaiah

In Isaiah, it says, "to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor AND the day of vengeance of our God."

Why does Jesus stop short? Why doesn't he include the part about God's judgment?

I believe it's because Jesus is making a point.

Don't get me wrong- judgment is God's and it will come in the end.

But on this day, Jesus is emphasizing that SALVATION is here.

Freedom is here! Deliverance is here!

From that moment he spoke until the day he comes again; the year of the Lord's favor is here for you and for me

If you don't think you need Jesus's salvation- you need to check your expectation.

*Whether put your faith in Christ 50 years ago or never heard him- you need Jesus' freedom

² ² Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah*, 564.

2. Help for the Hurting

On the one hand, to read this passage and think Jesus is not talking about our sin is short-sided
 On the other hand, to read this passage and think that Jesus does not have a heart for those who are physically poor and actually in captivity would be completely naïve.

If you don't believe me, just read the rest of the book of Luke

*Jesus heals those who are physically sick

*He restores sight to those who are blind

*He releases people from spiritual oppression

*He hangs out with the people that are neglected by society

**He embodies this very passage in the rest of his life on earth

If you think that following Jesus has nothing to do with helping those in need, you need to check your expectation.

All throughout Scripture we see examples of God's care for the orphan and the widow
 Jesus has a deep care for them too

This is something that the people of Israel often failed at

Over and over again God rebukes Israel for neglecting the orphan and the widow

They don't welcome the stranger in

But Jesus is saying that these people are the very people he has come for

I remember a significant realization I had about God's heart for the hurting:

A couple years ago I went on a mission's trip to Honduras. There was a missionary couple who took in at that time 18 Honduran kids who didn't have a place to live. They by the way are an incredible example of the embodiment of Jesus' mission. There was a small girl there who was completely blind. Could not see anything. Yet she was one of the smartest and most amazing people I've ever met. She would run around with all the other kids with no problem- playing soccer and going on the swing set. We had a great week there, and we came to the time where we had to say goodbye. And I just didn't want to say goodbye. I remember looking down on her and having so much love and compassion for her. I had only known her for 10 days and I cared about her so much. All I wanted was to give her freedom from her blindness. But I couldn't. Even so, I'll never forget this moment, she reached toward me and said, "Josie, hug me." So, I picked her up, and gave her a big hug.

That moment, God showed me a little bit more of his heart for those that are hurting.

God looks down on those who are widows, who are orphans, who are oppressed, who are being trafficked and held in slavery, and he reaches down and longs to give an embrace

God burns with love and compassion for the hurting

3. Liberation for All Nations

What was another one of the false expectations of the people of Nazareth?

They expected the good news was for them exclusively

A certain amount of ethnic pride had built up in Israel

They were God's people; they were his chosen race

They were anticipating the day when God would restore them to greatness again
 Though they had failed him over and over
 The thought of God working in people outside of Israel is so atrocious, it's so appalling that they
 form an angry mob and run Jesus out of town.

*Jesus will repeatedly say that his kingdom will be for all people, not just Israel

This passage also shows how God's mission extends to the Gentiles too- praise God! Cause
 that's most of us.

The gospel extends all over the world to each and every person.

Every race, every language, every country

If you think that Christianity only looks like First Evangelical Free Church, then you need to
 check your expectation.

The beauty of Christianity is that there are followers of Jesus all over the world that are
 much different from you and me.

*Each culture brings a beautiful expression of Christian living

*We're united in Christ, but there is beauty in our diversity too

*There is much beauty in hearing voices of people in Asia and Africa and Europe and
 South America and other places lifting up praise to God

God's freedom extends to people of every nation

Jesus is the fulfillment of God's promise of freedom

His freedom entails salvation for sinners, help for the hurting, and liberation for all nations

Let me close with this:

When I was a camp counselor, we used to do this activity called the maze. What would happen is
 that we would tie ropes to trees and make a giant maze, and then we would blindfold everyone
 and put them in the center of the maze. Then we would tell them they had to find their way out.
 However, what they didn't realize was that there was no way out. They were trapped. So, they
 would begin feeling around and walking. And I would ask them, "Do you want some help?" And
 if they reached out for help, I would take their hand and guide them under the ropes and out of
 the maze. But if not, they would keep wandering. One time when I did this activity, this one kid
 would not accept my help. Everyone else received my help, but he kept rejecting it. He was like,
 "No I want to find my own way out! Everyone else did it I can do it too!" So, we just let him
 wander and wander and wander. The whole time all I'm thinking is, "Man I keep offering you
 freedom, if only you'd receive it." He never did. Just like the people of Nazareth.

Jesus was not what the people of Nazareth expected- so they rejected him

This is his hometown people! He's looking at them and saying, "I love you! I want to
 bring you freedom from your religious rule-following! I see how you are in captivity and
 I want to bring you deliverance! I have this free gift to offer you and its more than
 anything you could imagine."

But they formed an angry mob and drove Jesus out of town

Jesus might not be who you expect either

How will you respond?

Friends, Jesus came to bring you freedom. It is the year of the Lord's favor. He's looking down at you with love and compassion. He's saying, "I love you! I want to bring you freedom! I see how you are in captivity and I want to bring you deliverance! I see how you're blind and wandering through this maze on your own. I have this free gift to offer you and its more than anything you could imagine!!! If only you'll just receive it!"

How will you respond?

*Will you reject him?

*Or will you accept him?