

Luke 4:14-30 – Really accepting Jesus

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Main Point – Don't reject or just be amazed by Jesus, joyfully accept him as your Lord and rescuer

Next week, we jump to the night before Jesus' death.

We'll have a short series in the lead up to Easter – in Luke 22-24.

Then we'll return to Luke ch4 after the Meet Jesus Mission later in the year.-----

Please keep your Bible or device open at Luke ch4. **Let's pray...**

If you ask people, **if they think they are free?(SLIDE)** I think most will answer 'Yes'.
If they are not literally imprisoned, or chained up, locked up, then people consider themselves free.

And we want to be free don't we?

Free to be who we are, and do what we want.(**SLIDE**)

But are we really free?-----

Or are we prisoners to our own sinful desires?--- Captives to sin, and under the power of the devil, and with a fear of death?---

And totally unable to save ourselves?-----

Last week, we thought about temptation.

And for most of us who know how hard the battle with sin is, and who know what it's like to feel beaten, defeated and overwhelmed by sin, we might know we're not truly free.

The bible says, we're actually not free, not spiritually free.-----

We're enslaved and invisibly chained to sin and death and unbelief.

Unless, and until, God sets us free through Christ.-----

The question is, Has God set you free, free from eternal death and judgement for sin?---

Our genuine response to Jesus will help you know the answer.-----

Last Sunday in the first part of Luke ch4, we heard how Jesus was baptized.

And the HS came on him, filled him, and led him into his time of testing.

God the Father declared Jesus to be The Son of God.

And through 3 rounds of temptation by the devil himself, Jesus showed himself to be, The Son of God.

Where we fail, he succeeded.

And we heard how he is our champion, who can bring forgiveness, and help us when we're tempted. So we need to run to him in faith.-----

Empowered by the Holy Spirit, Jesus' public ministry has begun.

He is going around **Galilee(SLIDE)**, preaching in Jewish synagogues.

And he's becoming really popular.

Bigger than Taylor Swift or Ed Sheeran, he is praised 'by everyone'. Glorified by all.

Then he returns to his hometown.

And we come to my first point, The Mission of Jesus.(SLIDE)-----

As the famous guest preacher and rabbi, how now returns to his hometown synagogue in Nazareth.

He's given the very long scroll of Isaiah, and he unrolls it a very long way, cos it's a long book.

Down to **Isaiah 61 vv1-2** and he reads it out.(**SLIDE**)

He rolls it up, sits down. Then with everyone fixed on him, wondering what he's going to say, he declares, 'Today... this Scripture has been fulfilled'. Wow.

Let's come back and consider what the Isaiah passage said.

For if Jesus is saying it's fulfilled, and clearly suggesting He has fulfilled it; this is big.---

Back in **v18(SLIDE)** Jesus read out – the Spirit of the Lord is on me.

In Isa 61, the 'me' refers to the Servant of the Lord, the Messiah; the promised King and rescuer of God's people.

He will have the Spirit of God.

And we've read multiple times in Luke's Gospel, how God's Spirit came down on Jesus at his baptism and has remained with him.[3.22;4.1,14]

And God's Spirit has anointed Jesus to... fulfil his mission.-----

What we read here, is like Jesus' mission statement.

He is anointed, set apart, empowered by God, to do, 5 things:

1. To preach good news to the poor.
2. To proclaim release to the captives
3. And Recovery of sight to the blind
4. To set free the oppressed
5. And proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.

[Here, the phrase 'heal the broken hearted' from Isa 61 isn't mentioned, and 'setting the oppressed free' from Isa 58.6 was inserted. We're not sure why.

Interestingly, Jesus stops short of reading Isa 61 v2b, which speaks of the day of God's vengeance.

Because remember there's a now and not yet elements to Jesus. He comes the first time to bring salvation. When he comes again it will be the day of judgement, and God's wrath on all who've rejected him]

Now there's much debate by bible scholars about what Jesus means by '**the poor**'.

In Isaiah's context, the poor were people suffering & exiled due to their disobedience.

Poor can refer to people materially, financially, religiously or socially, poor.(**SLIDE**)

Or it could refer to spiritual poverty – like the poor in spirit [Mt 5.3]– knowing you can only approach God with nothing to offer.

In line with that, release to the captives, can also mean forgiveness for those captive to and imprisoned by, sin.-----

We see from Jesus' future ministry, he didn't primarily come to lift people out of financial poverty, or make them wealthy.

He came most of all, to save people impoverished by sin.---

Likewise, Jesus didn't come to break everyone out of the Roman prison, and start a rebellion.

He came to set people free from oppression and captivity to sin, and the judgement it brings.-----

The poor is certainly those impoverished by their sin.

But it's also those impoverished in the world.

Throughout Luke's Gospel the people who respond most passionately and quickly to Jesus are the materially poor; the destitute, the beggars.

We see throughout Luke's Gospel that Jesus had a special concern for the materially n' socially poor.

And Jesus saved a few from physical blindness, like Blind Bartimaeus (Mk 10.46ff).

But that was also just a physically sign of Jesus' spiritual power.(**SLIDE**)

An outward sign that shows Jesus' power to open people's eyes and hearts spiritually.

2 Cor 4.4 says(SLIDE) the evil one, the god of this age, has blinded the minds of unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the glory of Christ, the image of God.

Well, God is able to change that. And bring light to people's spiritual darkness.----

Jesus, God's Son, is able to bring light to people's spiritual darkness.(**SLIDE**)

And set us free from the power of sin, and Satan and death.-----

In **Charles Wesley's** second year of uni, he and some friends formed a new Christian group, called 'The Holy Club'.

They covenanted with each other to live disciplined Christian lives, with serious bible study, prayer, fasting, and charitable works.

After uni they went on overseas mission together. But Charles still had doubts about his salvation, and no assurance that he was a child of God by grace.

Then Moravian friends spoke to Charles and his brother John, about the salvation that comes by grace through faith in Christ.

And in 1738, Charles was justified by faith.

And he experienced the Spirit of God chase away the darkness of his unbelief.

And one hymn he wrote afterward was this. **(SLIDE)**

The wonderful hymn, **And Can it be**

In the 4th verse he writes and sings:

Long my imprisoned spirit lay
Fast bound in sin and nature's night;
Thine eye diffused a quick'ning ray,
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light;
My chains fell off, my heart was free;
I rose, went forth and followed Thee.

For many of us who've experienced a conversion moment, you might know what that's like. But for all believers, faith & trust in Jesus brings light, and freedom, and life.-----

If Jesus has set us free, then we are to point people to the One who sets them free.

The one who enters temptation to purchase our salvation.

The one who has come into our broken world with the promise of rescue.----

That's why it's good news.

And why the angels shouted, Joy to the world.-----

We are meant to announce to the blind, that if they believe in this Jesus, they may never see with their physical eyes in this life.

But they will see glories they cannot imagine.----

We are meant to announce to prisoners, that they may still have to serve lifelong sentences.

But they will be free inside that jail if they believe.-----

We must tell the poor that they may not receive riches and may have to serve the Lord the rest of their lives in poverty.

But in glory they will receive riches they cannot imagine.-----

Christ wants us to go to our neighbours, and tell our friends, and make this known.

Jesus came to proclaim good news to the poor and bring freedom for the oppressed.

And that message now goes out through us.-----

Next point, The Rejection of Jesus. (v22-SLIDE)

V22 says, after Jesus finished speaking, people spoke well of him, and were amazed by him.

They marvel at what he said, his gracious or beautiful words.

But then they say, 'Isn't this Joseph's son?'-----

Remember this is Jesus' home town, and they might be amazed and wowed by his gifts, his teaching.

But it seems they think – we know his Dad, we know his Mum, we know the family.

Their familiarity makes them think he's ordinary.

They can't get beyond the fact they know his family.-----

Sometimes we can be so familiar with someone that we think they are ordinary?

Like, if you have or had loving parents.

You can think it's normal and ordinary, when many others know it's not.
 Or you might be so familiar with someone like your spouse, your teacher, your youth group leader, when really, they might be extraordinary.
 And when it comes to Jesus, do you think he's pretty ordinary?

Or is he extraordinary, on another level?-----

Because only if you know he's extraordinary, will you really commit.
 Only if you know how awesome he is, and how he really rescues you, will you be all-in for Jesus.

If we don't grasp who Jesus really is, we won't go all-in for him.

And if we don't do that, then we risk missing out.-----

These people, in first century Nazareth, can't get past what they think they know.-----

The people in Luke 4 lack imagination.

They lack any openness to the fact that they might have got Jesus wrong.-----

Because Jesus is not an ordinary person.

Yes, he didn't go-public about that until he was 30, but that doesn't make it wrong.

And maybe they were looking at the wrong things; worldly things.

Cos Jesus didn't have great looks, or wealth, or a powerful position.-----

But the people can't see past who they think Jesus is.

Maybe you need to get past what you think you know about Jesus?-----

Can you see past what might seem ordinary about Jesus to you, to be struck by the extraordinary?-----

These days **Who do people think Jesus is?**-----

Muslims think Jesus was a great prophet, but not the SoG.

God would never become human.

For them Jesus is not the Lord who died and rose again.-----

Hindus honour Jesus by worshipping him as another of their thousand gods.

But not the only Saviour – the way, the truth and the life.

Atheists reject Jesus, because they reject the supernatural claims of Christians, and the transcendence of the God of the Bible.

Many secular and agnostic people believe Jesus was good but irrelevant.

Many "religious" people and nominal Christians believe he was a good moral teacher.

And they send their kids to Christian schools for the good morals.

But they don't worship Jesus as the only Saviour and Lord of their lives.

People marvel at Jesus still but don't follow him.-----

What about you?-----

Maybe you've been in church all your life. You grew up in church, maybe in this church.

And you've heard the bible preached for years, heard sermons on Jesus a thousand times, and you think you know it.

"Yeh, I know it all, I know Jesus, I know all the bible stories".

But do you have a relationship with the real Jesus?-----Think about that.-----

In Luke 4 Jesus doesn't read from Isaiah 61 primarily to teach the Nazareth Jews about his mission; but to say he fulfils it, and get a reaction.

And what he says in **vv23-24** causes a reaction doesn't it.

Jesus said from Isaiah 61 – This is the moment. This is me.

And they say, this is outrageous.-----

It's helpful to see that in the parallel account in **Mark 6v3,(SLIDE)** we learn they were offended by Jesus first, before he said what we read in Lk 4.24.-----

The people just couldn't accept that Jesus was the Messiah, the promised Lord who would rule and rescue them.-----

That's why Jesus goes on to say what he does, in **vv25-27**.-----

In the prophet **Elijah's** day, Ahab was King and Israel was worshipping idols and rejecting the Lord.

And as we read in **1 Kings 17**, (**SLIDE**) Elijah was sent to non-Israelite **widow** in Sidon. She fed him, and the Lord miraculously fed her.

The Israelites missed out.-----

In **Elisha's** day Jesus said, many had leprosy, but they weren't miraculously cleansed and healed.

Only Naaman the Syrian was – another non-Israelite.

2 Kings 5.15 reveals he came to worship the Lord God and turn away from false gods.

I'm sure we will see Naaman the Aramean army commander, in heaven.-----

In God's sovereignty in past times, God's blessing and salvation has gone to non-Israelites, when Israel has rejected him.

And Jesus is saying, God's blessing and salvation is not coming to you Israelites in Nazareth either.

In fact, it'll go to the Gentiles.

Which was always God's plan, actually (**SLIDE-Isa 61.11**; Rom 11.17).

And don't we thank God that his revelation and salvation has come to us, non-Jews?---

And just like for Elijah, Elisha and the Jews, maybe we should expect God to save those we don't expect?-----

So after Jesus words in vv23-27, how do the Jews in that synagogue respond?-----

V28,v28, they are enraged, or filled with wrath.

More than that, they force him out of town, take him to the edge of a cliff, and want to throw him off.

They want to not-just-hurt but murder him.

But in amazing and miraculous power, in a Star Wars-like, (**SLIDE**) using-the-force moment, Jesus just walks on through the crowd.

He will not be killed, until he says so, and it is his time.-----

In real life – Jesus just stops them grabbing him and goes on his way.-----

Jesus is 'not accepted in his hometown', but not only intellectually but violently rejected.

Now most people today in our country don't want to kill Jesus or his followers.

But in many parts of the world, there's radical Muslims, Hindus, communists and persecutors, who want to squash and kill the name of Jesus, and all who follow him.

However, most people we know, will just not accept Jesus and the bible's truth about him.

Many think he was good, even an amazing person or teacher; but they will not accept he is the Saviour and Lord.

Sometimes people's version of Jesus is so familiar, that they can't get past this.

And don't truly respond to him in repentance and committed faith.

So my last point is, The Opportunity for us.(SLIDE)

Over the years of my pastoral ministry, too many people to count, have left the church service and said, 'nice sermon', 'good sermon', or 'what you said was so moving, thank you'.

I am grateful for encouraging feedback, and I want all glory to go to God.

But for some people, some times, I wonder if the good news of the Gospel has really changed them?

Because I haven't seen the fruit of repentance, and a life of faith which leads to obedience and good works.

I don't know people's hearts, only the Lord does.

But what I'm asking is, can you admire a sermon, or a preacher, and not be changed by the truth spoken?-----

Have you grown up in or been going-to church for years, and you still haven't yielded to Jesus as Lord, and trusted him to save your life?-----

Have you missed who Jesus really is?

Have you taken to heart yourself, the good news about Jesus?----

Are you like one of those nominal believers I mentioned earlier, who go to church and do the religious things, but your heart is far from the Lord?-----

Jesus spoke of giving sight to the blind, freedom to captives.

Have you experienced freedom from sin, and the fear of death and fear of judgement, through Jesus?-----

Jn 8.36 says(SLIDE), if the Son sets you free you will be really free.-----

Have you experienced that?-----

15 years ago in **Mozambique,(SLIDE) Jaimo** came out of his house wielding a machete – “Get away from my house! I don't need your Jesus” he shouted.

But the 'Every Home for Christ' missionaries who'd knocked on the makeshift door still left the booklet they'd come to deliver.

He screamed at the pair, “If God really cared about me, I wouldn't be this poor”.

The social outcast raged at them – “God stays in church buildings – he doesn't follow people into their homes, invading their privacy”.

The missionaries prayed and silently left.

Seven days later Jaimu's oldest child was bitten by a poisonous snake, and with no friends and no finances he was dead without hours.

He thought this was a punishment from God .

He frantically searched for the booklet left and called the number. The national director who answered heard bitter crying, and Jaimu was beside himself with terror.

Workers arrived and these total strangers who's been chased away days earlier came.

They showed him deep kindness, and ministered to the grieving family, and helped pay for a funeral. Jaimu and his family came to believe God had sent them.

Deep roots of animism, witchcraft and voodoo, bring great spiritual darkness in many areas of Africa.

But Jaimu was radically converted as he accepted Jesus, and he experienced freedom from fear, and more.-----

But it's not just in Mozambique.

We have brothers and sisters here, who know what it to have Jesus, set them free from unbelief, and false beliefs; set them free from guilt, from loneliness, from hopelessness, from addiction;

from the power of sin, particular sins; from a fear of evil, from a fear of death.----

Have you known that?-----

What has he done for you? What is he able to do for you, if you lean on him?---

Jesus was not accepted in Nazareth.

But have you accepted Jesus, accepted him as your Lord and Saviour?-----

What you do with God's word is vital.-----

If you reject it, or don't take it to heart and let it shape your life, you will miss out on the blessing, and salvation, freedom and life God offers.

Israelites in Elijah and Elisha's day, missed out.

Jews in Jesus' town, missed out.

Will you miss out?-----

Don't ignore Jesus or reject him; or think you don't need him.-----

And more than just being amazed or impressed by Jesus.

Joyfully accept him as your Lord, and Rescuer.(**SLIDE**)-----

Let's pray