

Luke 4:17

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Preacher: Rev Howard Stone

[0 : 00] Let's go back to Luke chapter 4. Luke chapter 4, let's read at verse 17.

Jesus was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah, and when he opened the book he found a place where it was written, the spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he's anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor.

Let's pray, we pray and ask God to bless his word. Let us remain seated. Lord God, we rejoice in these prophecies that we've sung and that we read here.

A reminder to us that you are the God who rules over history. But those things that were prophesying hundreds of years before their fulfillment were absolutely true and a reflection of your, or a revelation of your plan of salvation through Jesus Christ.

Help us to understand what these things mean. Send your spirit amongst us. Lord God, I need your spirit because I cannot share your truth effectively without his help.

[1 : 30] You have this confidence, Lord God, that you are here. Do us good. Glorify your son, Jesus Christ. In his name. Amen. Amen. Look here.

It gives us the opening of the ministry of our Lord Jesus. It seems that he has been active already in Capernaum because when he's in Nazareth, he gets back to his hometown of Nazareth.

The people there say, well, let's see some of the things that you've been doing in Capernaum. Why don't you do them here as well? And Jesus quotes the proverb that presumably was relevant at the time.

Physician, heal yourself. What starts off very positively, the congregation in the synagogue except Jesus' words are really quite amazed that his teaching ends up very, I was going to say very nastily, in that they are so infuriated with this man that they want to murder him by throwing him off the cliff on which the time was situated.

That was typical in the ministry of Jesus. This is at the beginning. He's got another three and a half years before it reaches his climax with his death on the cross. But right at that time there were those who loved what he did, who loved to see his work in the power, miracles in the power of God, who flocked to hear his teaching.

[3 : 13] And yet there were others who hated him and wanted to destroy him and ended up in the purposes of God, seeing him crucified outside Jerusalem. But right at the beginning of his ministry here as it's recorded for us in Nazareth, I want to reflect on the fact that Jesus made a remarkable claim.

He made a remarkable claim. In verse 18, he's given this opportunity to read from the scroll of Isaiah. He knows the prophet well.

He finds the place in the scroll and then he reads, remember verse 18 there, the spirit of the Lord is upon me because he's anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor.

Now by saying that this prophecy is about him, Jesus is claiming to be the anointed of God.

It's remarkable actually what Luke records for us here because if you were to recount what you hear tonight to another party, somebody wasn't here, wasn't able to be here tonight, you wouldn't sum it up in one sentence, I don't suppose.

[4 : 30] But that's what Luke has done here. Jesus sits down and he begins to say to him, today the scripture is fulfilled in your hearing. We don't hear any more of what Jesus says at that point.

Luke tells us that opening statement. This is Jesus claiming that prophecy, written 700 years before, is actually about me. which is a pretty remarkable thing for a man to claim.

Especially when he appears to be nobody great. That's part of the problem that his community has with him. They say, isn't this Joseph's son?

We know this man. What's he doing taking this on himself? He's claiming that he himself is the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy.

And not only that, he's claiming more. Because he says, the spirit of the Lord is on me because he has anointed me. Now, the word that's translated for us from the Greek, anointed, is the same word from which we get Christ.

[5 : 42] Jesus was saying, I'm Christ. He didn't speak in Greek. He would have been Aramaic.

But he was saying, maybe that's it. I'm the Messiah. I'm the anointed of God. Now, if you know something of the Old Testament, you perhaps know that kings were anointed. It was God's seal of approval on a man.

David is the most obvious one. He's anointed by Samuel. And we're told the spirit of the Lord comes on him then. To empower him for the work that was before him.

Priests were anointed as well. Prophets were anointed. It was God's seal. Saying, this man is my man. I've called him. He's going to do my work.

And Jesus, by saying, the spirit of the Lord is on me. He's anointed me. He's saying, I'm the Messiah. I'm the one that Israel has been waiting for, for the last 700 years.

[6 : 45] No more than that. And the fulfillment of all these promises. Which is a remarkable statement for this man, who was nobody special in the community in Nazareth.

He'd grown up there. People knew him. He was the carpenter's son. He was a carpenter himself. Or a laborer. We don't exactly know what his employment had involved.

But he seemed to be nobody special. But now he's taking this remarkable claim on himself. Saying, I am the one that God has chosen. I am the one that the Old Testament prophets was predicting.

And along with that comes all the offices about the Messiah. He's going to be a great king. He's going to establish a kingdom that will last forever.

He's going to be the one who rules in justice. He's going to be the one who judges the world. This man, Jesus, takes all that on himself.

[7 : 56] He says, I've been given the spirit of the Lord. Now, we're familiar. Because we live in the New Testament times. We're familiar that the spirit is God himself.

God is Father, Son, and Spirit. That was not an understanding that the people of Jesus' time had. God was still in the process of revealing that truth.

For the people of Jesus' time, the spirit met power. If you read through the book of Judges, for instance. We read, often the spirit of the Lord came on Samson.

He came on Gideon. He came on Gethra. And then he did powerful works. Great things he delivered Israel from the enemy armies and such like. The Jewish understanding at that time was the spirit equaled God's power.

And here's Jesus saying, the power of God is on me. Because he's chosen me. I'm God's man. I'm the fulfillment of all that the Old Testament produced.

[9 : 07] As we'll reflect shortly. That power was not without basis. He demonstrates his power in the miracles that he wasn't able to do.

As we read that passage, you might have noticed the insights that devils had.

Unclean spirits. Fallen angels, presumably. The servants of Satan. The servants of Satan. Who had overpowered men.

Who were influencing them. They had a spiritual insight into the person of Jesus. In verse 34.

This demon shouts, let us alone. What have we to do with you, Jesus and others? Did you come to destroy us?

[10 : 10] I know who you are. The Holy One of God. That devil could see more than Jesus' own family.

At this point, Jesus' own brothers rejected him. Didn't believe in him. Friends, this is a remarkable claim this man Jesus is making.

I am the unique Messiah. There's nobody in the world who's been like me in the past.

There's going to be nobody in the future like me. I am God's man. I have the spirit of God within me. The devils knew it. Friends, do you know it?

When you hear the name Jesus. When you read about the Lord Jesus. When you hear Jesus' great view, recognize this is the Messiah.

[11 : 14] This is the Holy One of God. This is a unique human being. around whom the whole of world history revolves. Friends, what is the most significant event in the history of the world?

It is the death of Jesus of Nazareth. Because your eternal destiny and my eternal destiny and the destiny of every human being who has ever lived depends on that.

If you have a confidence that Jesus is the Messiah. He is the Messiah. He is the Messiah. He is the Savior of the world.

He is the Messiah. He is the Savior of the world. He died for you. You can have the confidence that your place is in glory. If you haven't yet come to believe this is the Holy One of God. This is the Messiah. This is the Savior of the world.

The Golden semical ethos. If you hate him woes to. Jesus we will win a much search and lock you into on the ground. Jesus was a prophet, that Jesus, now the challenge that Jesus was the Messiah for the true aus Wagner.

[12 : 23] Lewis who suggested that you cannot simply say Jesus was a good man. That doesn't fit the evidence. Either Jesus was a liar or a lunatic or he was lost.

If he was a liar he was simply making these things up and he knew very well that he went through. He was claiming I'm the Messiah I'm the Son of God I'm the Saviour of the world but he was a liar and he knew very well he wasn't.

Or he was eliminated. He was out of his mind. He was making these claims and he thought that he was truly Messiah but he was deluded. Friends as you read the scriptures as we read the story of the life of the ministry of the Lord Jesus there's nothing there to suggest that he was in any way deranged.

there's nothing in his life to suggest that anything he ever said was untrue that he was prone to lie. So he's not a liar.

He's not a lunatic. That leaves only one option. He's lost. Have you come to that conclusion?

[13 : 47] Are you confident that what Jesus says here about being the Messiah is absolutely true? He was and he is the appointed Messiah the Saviour of the world.

The second thing I wanted to reflect on is that Jesus proclaimed a time of favour. He uses this prophecy from Isaiah and he says this is about me.

This is what I've come to do to preach the gospel to the poor. God has sent me to heal the broken hearted to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind to set at liberty those who are oppressed to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.

And these words were read to a Jewish audience who well understood what Jesus was talking about.

Because the acceptable year of the Lord and the year of God's favour fitted with what God himself had ordained for Old Testament Israel. That was that there were to be seven periods of seven years.

[14 : 56] And then in the fiftieth year there was to be the year of Jubilee. And that was a wonderful year for people facing various difficulties. If you were a slave when the Jubilee came the year of Jubilee you had to go free.

That was what got unrequired. A slave went free in the year of Jubilee. If you were in debt the year of Jubilee comes and those debts are cancelled.

That's what got unrequired. You're debt free. Everything goes back to a blank bank statement.

If you'd had to sell some of your land and land was very important to the Jewish families because it was their inheritance which God had given them. If you'd had to sell some land because you had financial problems the year of Jubilee comes and it comes back to you becomes yours once more. So it was a wonderful time. And Jesus is saying that is what I've come to proclaim. The restoration of life as it should be.

[16 : 18] I've come he said on all these different aspects of it to preach good news to the poor to heal the brokenhearted to set captives free. All the difficulties burdens troubles I've come to help with it.

Now if Jesus did not go around setting slaves free he didn't heal brokenhearted people.

He healed physical physical illnesses. He didn't say in any way that that year that particular year was the year of Jubilee.

It seems that Israel had lost sight of the requirements of God for this 50th year. So what's Jesus talking about here? He's talking about something far more important than physical slavery or simply financial difficulties.

He's talking about spiritual needs. He says God has sent me God has appointed me to preach good news to the poor.

[17 : 39] What's the news that poor people need? That they can be rich that they can be provided for. And that's what Jesus is saying you can have the riches of heaven you can have spiritual riches through trust in me.

Come to heal broken mountains to put things right in your relationship with God when you have that sense of the brokenness of life that things are not the way you want them to be.

recovery of sight of the blind. That was very plainly part of Jesus' ministry. I've not added up the occasions in the New Testament where we read of Jesus healing the blind.

but I have read that that's recorded more often than any other healing miracle that Jesus performed. What Jesus meant was he was coming with spiritual riches.

Anyway we just listen to him well that doesn't apply to me. I'm not a slave. I'm not poor. I'm not oppressed. I'm not blind. So what Jesus was doing really hasn't got much relevance to me today.

[19 : 19] Friends spiritually you are blind. You are poor. You are oppressed. You are a slave. If you haven't yet believed in the Lord Jesus Christ.

That's the way I was born into the world. That's the way you were born into the world. A slave to sin. And you will never free yourself from that slavery. You know how hard it is to stop doing something you know you shouldn't.

Coming up to New Year time so often New Year people make New Year resolutions. Not going to do that anymore. Not going to behave in that way. Not going to speak like that.

Not going to lose my temple as I used to. I won't really last. Sin is a harsh task.

And he will not let you go. But here's Jesus coming with a message of hope. This is good news.

You can be set free.

[20 : 25] Jesus can set you free. you're blind. Spiritually blind. You don't know God.

You cannot see spiritual things. You don't understand what life is at birth. You don't know what lies beyond this world. It seems that people have an innate sense that there is an afterlife.

I think increasingly in our society there are people who say there is nothing beyond death. A little while ago I attended a humanist funeral. It was one of our neighbours. He himself was an atheist and that's when he wanted a humanist funeral.

It was very nice shall we say. Nice stories about him growing up. Little poems.

But absolutely without any hope. it was just suggested that there was nothing beyond death.

[21 : 38] You know there is something beyond death. Everyone does. They may hold that truth down but they know. I was reading something recently that reflected on the fact that this idea that there is nothing beyond death is actually quite a modern idea.

You'll go back to previous cultures and societies. What were the Egyptians? They buried their pharaohs with all kinds of stuff.

What was it for? It was for the afterlife. The Greeks buried them with some money to pay the boatman to take them over the river sticks.

there is this innate sense. There is something beyond death. You are in the dark as to what that is until you come to Christ.

You may have ideas but you don't know the truth. You don't know the way of salvation. You don't know the purpose of life.

[22 : 43] You don't know what God himself is like. You are blind, spiritually blind. But Jesus says I've come with good news. I'm going to make people see spiritually.

By trusting me, following me, I'll give them insight through his word into these crucially important truths.

Friends, you need to know God. You need to know what life is for. You need to know what life is on this world. You need to have hope for the future. Only Jesus could open your eyes to these things.

Let's go on from there. Jesus then demonstrated an amazing authority. An authority to get things done, to make a difference.

man. When Jesus spoke in verse 32, they were astonished at his teaching for his word was authority.

[23 : 56] When Jesus spoke, you had to sit up and take notice. This man needs business. What he's saying is not something we can just go home and forget about.

this is plainly something very important that we need to take note of. Same comes through in verse 36.

They were all amazed and spoke among themselves, saying, what a word is this? For with the authority of power he commands the unclean spirits that they come out. I remember being in school and a French teacher with whom you just did not mess.

I did get the belt a couple of times in school, but not from Mr. Dixon. He had that air of authority. When he said something, you did it.

There was no messing in his class. Jesus has this sort of authority when he speaks. even the evil spirits, they have to do what he says. They cannot say, no, I'm going to save this man.

[25 : 08] I'm going to continue to demonize this man. They have to go. A camp, one of the youth camps I was at last summer with a young man who said he could do car tricks.

not only did he say, but he then did some quite incredible tricks. Slight attacks. Just the sort of thing, he just couldn't work out how you could also make cards move or disappear.

Or choose a card that you'd actually selected. Just quite amazing. But having said it, having said that he could do these things, he then proved it.

And that's true of Jesus here as well. He comes with his authorities. Not only says, I am the Messiah, I've come to preach good news, I've come to release your friends, I've come to open the eyes of the blind, he then does it.

Here's proof that I'm not just making this up. I'm not just a lunatic who's reckoning he's far more than he really is. So in the passage that Luke records for us after his preaching in Nazareth, he then tells us here are occasions where Jesus does exactly what he said.

[26 : 44] In verse 35, Jesus rebukes the spirit saying, be quiet, come out of him, when the demon had thrown him in the midst, it came out of him and did not hurt him.

This man had been imprisoned, he was a slave, he was oppressed, he was never going to get free of this evil influence, in his own strength.

But Jesus said, I've come to set the oppressed free, and he does it. He has the authority to put into practice exactly what he says. those oppressed with sickness.

Verse 40, when the sun was setting, all those who had any who were sick of the bayous diseases, brought them to Jesus, and he laid his hands on them, on every one of them, and healed them.

Nothing was too hard for Jesus to set them free from. They were oppressed for the sickness. And Jesus says, I'm going to prove that what I say is not just empty words.

[28 : 00] A little bit further on in Luke's Gospel. This is chapter 7 verse 21. At that very hour he cured many of infirmities, afflictions, and evil spirits, and to many blind he gave sight.

And Jesus answered and said to them, this is John the Baptist disciples, go and tell John the things that you have seen and heard, that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have the Gospel, the good news, preached to them.

Here's Jesus saying, look, here's the evidence that I am the Messiah, I am the one that God has saved, that my word comes with this authority.

John accords for us that Jesus on one occasion said something very remarkable, he says, don't believe me unless I do the works of the Father.

He says, don't simply believe my words, don't take me at my word, unless I prove it by what I do.

And friends, we have ample evidence that Jesus did exactly what he said he was going to do.

[29 : 24] The evidence is there. The demons believe this was the Son of God. If you haven't come to that conclusion, if that is not your confidence, your belief, then why not?

It's not reasonable. It doesn't make sense. When Jesus not only said it, he backed it up with his power. Friends, Jesus hasn't changed, he still heals.

He still does wonderful things. It was one of our members, some years ago she was diagnosed with ovarian cancer. And she came to me and said in James chapter 5, God says if any of you are sick you should call the elders who will anoint them in the name of the Lord and pray over them.

And the prayer of faith will heal the sick. God had actually got that same text for my own thoughts, just that day in fact. We obeyed what God said we should do.

Myself and another elder, we anointed Chris and we prayed for him. Chris had to go through chemotherapy. She had surgery. But the Lord, he still heals.

[30 : 45] He still demonstrates that he is the Son of God. And Chris has been without cancer for 15 years now, close to 15 years. This is the Lord glory.

This is the Son of God. This is the Messiah. Friends, if you're rejecting that, if you haven't yet believe that this is true, that doesn't make sense.

You've got to have that let me stand on why you shouldn't believe that this is the Son of God. All the evidence is there. His claims were backed up with authority to do wonderful things.

Yes. things. One last thing to think of is that Jesus preached a good news message.

Go right on to the end of the passage, verse 43. The crowds wanted him to keep him there. They wanted him to stay in their own community.

[31 : 55] But Jesus says, no, I've got to go to other places. verses 43. I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also, because for this purpose I have been sent.

We live in a world full of bad news, don't we? Whether it's the awful terrorist attacks in Paris two or so weeks ago, or the war that's going on in Syria and Iraq and so that and so on.

Or even locally, you know, of people who are facing illness, those who are perhaps tragically killed through accidents or badly hurt in such tragedies.

We live in an absolute world where there's bad news. Most of the news you get in the newspaper or on the television or the media, it's bad news.

Things have gone wrong. People have been hurt. Businesses have come to an end. There's trouble in the government.

[33 : 11] There's trouble in the world. We live in a global village where we know what's going on in the rest of world. In Jesus' time, they wouldn't have had that.

But there would still have been plenty of bad news there. Because the world hasn't changed. It's a world that's been spoiled by soon. And God, in his justice, has had to curse this world.

So there's lots of bad news. good news. But here's Jesus saying there's good news. I've got good news. And that's my job. That's why I was sent to proclaim this good news.

Good news that the world needs to hear. And it's the good news about the kingdom of God. That God brings as king.

And when dreadful things happen, sometimes people say, where was God when these terrorists blew themselves up in Paris?

[34 : 24] Where was God when Hitler was destroying millions of Jews? Where was God in 9-11? How can Jesus proclaim a kingdom of God?

This suggested God reigns. Well, this kingdom of God is actually a fundamental truth that appears all the way through Jesus' ministry.

Because Jesus actually picks up on what John the Baptist started. John the Baptist had been appointed by God to get the people of Israel ready for the coming of Messiah.

And John the Baptist proclaimed, repent. for the kingdom of God is near. And tribes people went to him. And he confronted them with the wickedness of their lives.

And said, you must repent, you must turn around, you must change the way you live. Instead of going your own way, turn around and go God's way. sin. And then you'll enter the kingdom.

[35 : 33] The kingdom of God is near you, he said. And Jesus picks up that same message and teaches the same thing. It's a thing that appears all the way through Jesus' ministry.

He says, that's what I'm reading, the kingdom of God. As you enter that kingdom, through repentance, through turning around, through confession of your own sin before God, through acknowledging that you've done wrong, as you enter that kingdom, then you have the confidence of God's reign over your life.

That you now have a relationship with that king. That God is no longer just a God who's away somewhere, up in the clouds, up in the sky.

But he's a God who's caving for you. He's a king who's reigning over your life. A God who's working out his purposes in your life.

And those are good and loving and gracious and wonderful purposes. If you become a member of this kingdom through faith in Jesus Christ, then you become a citizen of that kingdom.

[36 : 56] and the king then has the right to say how his citizens should live. Repentance is turning right.

Acknowledge of your sin. Go on God's way. And the king has the right to say this is the way I want you to go. This is how I expect my citizens to live. it requires a willingness to submit to the king.

To say I will go your way. I will do what you have told me to do. I will seek with your help to put into practice what you have revealed as the right way to live life.

Jesus elsewhere spoke about losing your life for his sake. That's what Jesus himself did. In order to serve his father, in order to do what his father required, Jesus lost his life.

He laid down his life. As a consequence he found life. He found a much more wonderful life. He is the resurrected Lord.

[38 : 14] He's alive today. he's been living in glory for the last 2,000 years and he's going to go on living forever and ever. On the basis of that death he has brought life to billions of people.

He's going to go on bringing life to those who come to the kingdom, who enter the kingdom through repentance and for him. Losing a life for Jesus is actually finding it.

It's the best way to live. I have the privilege of all of my fellow ministers in Thurston to have access to the high school and we were talking about relationships with a second year class and we spoke about the Ten Demons, how these are God's rules and they're the best way to live life.

To seek to put them into practice in their daily lives. Not lying, not stealing from people, not coveting what other people want, not murdering, not hurting others.

These are good things that promote relationships. One of the youngsters there suggested that rules are a bad thing. It's much better to live life without rules.

[39 : 32] It's not. My colleague there suggested if you were keen on football and you joined a team and you went to play a match and once the ball came to you, you picked it up and you ran up the pitch and you shoved people out of the way and you threw it into the net.

You wouldn't be asked to play the game. You've broken all the rules. The way the game works well is by keeping the rules. Breaking rules spoils things.

that's through the kingdom as well. Jesus said this is good news. You can have God as your king.

You can be part of this kingdom. You can be part of the work of God on earth. That gives you purpose in life. Why are you alive? Why are you here? What's the purpose of your existence?

You're born, you live, you die, is that it? If you're in this kingdom, you're serving the king. That brings purpose and meaning to life.

[40 : 49] And at the end of that life, the king promises to take you into glory and to say, well done, good and faithful servant, servant of the king.

Jesus said, he had this good news. He said, I've got good news for a world that's full of bad news.

It's a message of the kingdom. You can enter the kingdom. The kingdom is near you.

It's not something you have to work hard to find. It's simply faith and repentance. Believing that Jesus is everything he claimed to be, the Messiah, the one who had been sent like God, the one who demonstrated the authority of his word by driving out evil spirits, by hearing the sick, by raising the dead, into the kingdom of no life.

Then what's your response to all this? the people of Nazareth, they were so infuriated by this man, they were full of wrath, they were absolutely mad.

How dare this man Jesus, whom we know, speak like this, to try to throw him off a cliff to kill him. Or do you believe in this man, Jesus?

[42 : 26] Do you want nothing to do with Jesus, or do you want everything to do with Jesus? Friends, Jesus still sets people free.

He still brings good news to the spiritual poor. He still opens blind eyes, spiritually blind eyes. He still heals lives that are all messed up, and makes them whole.

He's still proclaiming the kingdom of God. A little while we had a young man speaking in our congregation from Shetland, he got involved in drugs.

His life was in an absolute mess. man and he said he used to meet a Christian man.

He would very simply say to him that God loved him. Even in all his mess, even although he himself had become a supplier of drugs to others, some of whom ended up destroying themselves, this man said, God still loves you.

[43 : 41] and that was a seed that was sown in the heart of Peter, until it came, that he confessed his sin, he turned from these wicked things, he entered the kingdom, and Jesus sorted his life out.

Jesus healed, Jesus opened his eyes, Jesus set him free, when to realize you may not be messed up like Peter's was. Now we enter the kingdom.

Do you have God as your king? Do you have Jesus Christ as your savior? Some folk here hated Jesus and rejected him.

Don't be like that. He is the savior of the world. He wants you to believe in him, to follow him, to know his love today, and forever and ever and ever.

Listen.