

Luke 4.16-30 Proclaiming To Renew WWC 01.21.24

Good morning, the Lord bless you and give you peace. Our attention this morning is drawn to the first message Jesus preached in His hometown after His baptism, anointing by the Holy Spirit, and defeat of the evil one in the wilderness. Everyone has experienced the first expression of their vocation or hobby before family and friends. Think of the first recital, or the first play, or the first game you became aware that your family was watching. You want to do well, and there are some nerves in wondering what they will say when all is said and done. Here is Jesus' first message in His hometown synagogue. And it seems to have been a very eventful week for Jesus before He even preached. In John's gospel we read that there was a wedding that Jesus attended in Cana a town that was about 4 miles from Nazareth. You will remember that this is where Jesus performed the miracle of turning water into wine. It was about 60 gallons of wine that was tasted and declared to be the best wine that had been had throughout the entire event. Much can be said about this, but I simply want to highlight that the servants who were serving the wine knew that Jesus had performed this miracle, and they certainly had said something about it. Rabbinical law prohibited anyone walking more than a mile on the Sabbath, so unless these who served were friends who had come to help with the wedding, it is likely that the only thing that made it back to Nazareth was the story. By this time as well, as we can discern from John's gospel, Jesus had a couple of disciples who had been disciples of John, but it doesn't seem like they were "fulltime" so to speak. I highlight this because it is most likely that the day Jesus preached His first sermon, at least His first after His baptism and anointing, at the synagogue which He was accustomed to attend, only His family and those who grew up with Jesus would have been there. What we find in the text should shock us. The congregation who listened to Him, who were known by Him, were amazed and blessed by the gracious words that He spoke, and then took such offense at Jesus that they tried to kill Him in one of the most horrible ways available to them, throwing Him off a cliff. What did Christ's family experience as the mob rose up to cast Jesus down? Did they participate in the furry of the mob? How could so many be so cruel to one with whom they had grown up, or watched grow up? This is a fascinating study on the effect of conviction upon a soul.

Setting that as the background, I want to consider our text this morning through the lens of what Jesus says He was anointed to do, which is of course to proclaim. We will consider the power and primacy of proclamation, the peril of proclamation, and the principle of proclamation.

.I. The Power and Primacy of proclamation. Working back from the response we have seen, and shocked by if we really consider what is being said, the power of proclamation is seen in the fact that what Jesus was saying *did not allow neutrality, and the audience new it*. There was no, well that guy had a little too much of that wine He made, kind of response. We certainly do not see anyone reason with Him and seek to raise a case as to why Jesus should consider a different rendering of that text, which would be a way of quelling the rising storm in the congregation. The sermon Jesus taught inspired grace, and when conviction set in it inspired murderous intent. It may not display that way with us, but what have we done in the past to drown the out the convicting sound of the Word of God? We are doing the same thing, trying to deaden the sound of those things which convict. And here a theme we must see in scripture, that there are only two paths in this world, one seeking Jesus and one rejecting Him. Even as Christians we can be on the wrong side of the track with this, just think about Peter when Jesus had to turn and deride him as the devil for seeking to supplant the purpose of God in the crucifixion of Christ. Is there sin in your life which is driving you to quite

the storm of conviction? We are too weak to wrestle with God. Let us fall on His grace quickly and there find peace.

If we consider the content of Jesus' message, which most likely was a fleshing out of the verses He had just read from Isaiah, we see that Jesus is concerned that His audience understand five ways that His proclamation had power. It had power to bring good news to the poor. It had power to liberate captives. It had power to recover the sight of the blind. It had power to liberate the oppressed. It had power to declare the year of the Lord's favor.

All of these are rescuing, grace filled experiences and it is especially seen in what Jesus left out of His reading. You see, what all those who were familiar with that passage would have seen is that Jesus did not finish reading the passage that He quoted. The passage is from Isaiah and reads like this, [Isaiah 61:1–2](#) (ESV): “¹ **The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;** ² **to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn.**” This was not a time to consider the vengeance of the Lord. The context of the passage in Isaiah magnifies the Servant of the Lord who would suffer on behalf of His people. The Servant of the Lord had much to accomplish, and the first thing was the removal of the sin of God's people. This is certainly a proclamation of the Lord's favor. The day of vengeance would come when Christ's returns to this earth to consummate His work of restoring the order that was lost in the Garden of Eden and ushering in a new heaven and a new earth, while at the same time bringing judgment upon all those who would not embrace the favor of the LORD, who is the Servant of the LORD.

We see as well from this consideration of power is that all these experiences display a power of authority and might. We are talking about proclamation. How does saying something produce elevating experiences of poverty for the poor, captives, blind, and oppressed? It directs our attention to the primary intent of proclamation, and that is to do something in the mind and heart. Proclamations are heard. They do nothing we can see with our eyes until an action is performed physically as a consequence of that proclamation. And here we see the power of might, or as it is said in the [4:14](#), the *dunamis* that Christ had because of the Spirit. If proclamation which is heard is the means through which people are elevated from their hardship, then there is a binding and oppression of the heart and mind, of the soul which is beyond our reach to fix. There needs to be a spiritual working in the heart and mind that releases it from bondage, and Jesus has the power of the Spirit. Certainly, we know that that bondage is the bondage of sin. Have you thought about that, my friends, that sin is a bondage, a slavery? We need spiritual deliverance from that. We can't earn that. We don't have the power to release ourselves by any amount of good works because the issue is not first physical, it is spiritual. And here is one of the greatest pitfalls with our cultural affixations with speaking truth to power and reordering the power structures of our day which apparently are found in all sorts of advantages that people might have, and that pitfall is this, we are still trying to fix issues of the mind and heart with tools that can't reach the inner being. Only the Word of God can touch the soul so that it is transformed!

We see the power and primacy of proclamation in the greater context of what Jesus says and does. Notice that the very first miracle Luke records after this message Jesus preached was that while Jesus was teaching

in another synagogue, He commanded an evil spirit out of a man who was there. Luke then records a series of healing that Jesus performs but culminates with the story of a man who was paralyzed. In [Luke 5:17-26](#) Jesus proclaims to him, [verse 20](#), “[Man, your sins are forgiven,](#)” and the primary reason Jesus heals that man afterwards was to show that He had the authority to forgive sins. That word authority is also translated power, but it is a different power than the power of might, it is the power of right. An example might be the authority of a judge who has the power to work within the law to execute justice. That judge proclaims the verdict and then those who serve the law fulfill that judge orders. Jesus has power of authority and power of might, and that all comes out in His proclamations. **And here is the point, that these are attributes which only belong to God, and Jesus who as the eternally begotten is equal with God, comes to the world to in power proclaim all that God commanded Him to speak ([John 12:49](#)). God is concerned about the soul and the body and is speaking to redeem them both.** This is why Jesus says to His disciples so much later that the words He speaks are spiritual and they are life.

Dear friend, Jesus’s actions and speech tell us that God is concerned about your heart and mind, your soul, which is trapped by sin. Jesus has the authority and power to deliver you to a place of peace and soundness, a place of life, eternal life. What does this world offer in comparison to that? Nothing in this world holds that kind of power.

And for the Christian consider this. After Jesus completed His redemptive work here on this earth do you remember what He said? [Matthew 28:18](#) “[All authority is given me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.](#)” Make and mature disciples through teaching, through proclamation. We function on the authority of Christ to speak the same words of deliverance that Jesus spoke and that our own hearts have been freed by. We cannot be dissuaded from the importance of this work in this world. Speaking God’s words are the primary means of life. That means that when you are looking for a church, for instance, as many of our graduating seniors will be looking for if God leads you away from here, you are looking for a church that seeks to disseminate all of God’s Word in every facet of ministry they are given to oversee. If there is no clear and consistent dissemination of the Word of God you will be robbing yourself of the primary provision God has used to succor, to aid, and to create a people of God.

The power and primacy of proclamation, the peril of proclamation.

.II. The Peril of Proclamation. This is a brief point. I simply highlight this to underscore how ready we should be. In that Jesus promises that we will make disciples He promises a positive response to the gospel. But we must also see from this text that there is a negative response to the gospel, and the more effective we are at articulating the truth of God’s powerful word to our cultural context, the more intense the rebuttals will be. Just think of the fight the Christian church has around the world right now not over doctrine, but over the clarity of gender and marriage. The Roman Catholic church is in an uproar over the pope’s decree of same sex blessings. The Methodist church has split over the issue of what the scriptures teach about sexuality, be it heterosexual or some variation of homosexual. The Church of England is in a fight over this specific issue. The RCA, and the PCUSA, and many non-denominational churches have all seen rifts over the clarity of God’s word on sexuality. And this is just one issue within what has been historically considered the Christian church in the world. But consider that Jesus didn’t back down even though He knew what the response

would be that day. We must live by faith in the power of proclamation my friends because we know that it is often perilous.

There are many other issues which affect our churches because they affect our culture. Will we be true to our calling? What about immigration? I am an immigrant to this country and am elated that God opened the door for me to be here and to naturalize. I went through the immigration process and can say that my understanding of immigration law is that those laws are not immoral. But how will the church respond to the crisis that is present? Have we considered that perhaps God is bringing the mission field to our doors, perhaps because we were not going to their doors. Here is a question, how much of the mission of the gospel, the mission of proclaiming good news to the poor of spirit, has permeated our responses to the illegal immigration that is flooding our nation now? What would happen to the world if churches across this nation urgently shared the liberating power of the gospel with those who by virtue of their context had no religious liberty? Imagine if these people, or our people affected by a love for the people they meet, went back to these nations and shared with cultural wisdom and biblical urgency the words of Jesus Christ. Elijah and Elisha in this text were immigrants to foreign lands to be preserved by God's decree, and then when they returned to serve God's people the Word of God, God's people were strengthened even in the midst of incredibly hard experiences. I am not rejecting the law or minimizing legitimate and real concerns that are present with this flood of people coming into our country without vetting. I am decrying the lack of missional purpose the Christian community seems to be expressing towards these people. The gospel is our primary concern even if they have broken the law. How much more grace should we show with the disseminating of the gospel when we who were criminals according to the Law of God were shown grace through faith?

And this leads me finally to this, the principle of proclamation.

.IV. The Principle of Proclamation. Elijah and Elisha spoke, and many believed, and many rejected. Isaiah the prophet was told that people would hear but their judgment would be that they would not listen since they had rejected so much of the word of God. Jesus preached a message and somehow God rescued Jesus from being thrown off a cliff by people He knew and grew up with. Jesus left that place and preached throughout Israel and droves of people sought Him. In [Acts 2](#) Peter preached a message and thousands come to Christ. Philip explained a gospel passage in Isaiah to an Ethiopian official and that man believed and was baptized. **God's Word always bears fruit.** It will never return empty, my friends, that is the principle. We can always trust that what we say in sharing the liberating gospel of Christ to this world will bring about what God intends with that word.

This is how this passage affected me many years ago. I was struggling with the pull of God to embrace a dedicated life towards ministry or missions, and I had gotten to a place of terrible unhappiness. I knew I was fighting God. Finally, one night I prayed to the Lord and repented of my wrestling with Him and asked Him to show me clearly what He wanted of me. I flipped around in the Word of God for a moment and just seemed to land on this text. When I read the text, it was as if an anvil landed on my head. I wanted clarity and I got it. Christ used this text that distinguished His calling, to convict me to a place of surrender to ministerial service for Him. That's one example from this text. My life is full of experiences of God's Word shaping me, rebuking me, comforting me, and strengthening me. What work is taking place in your soul as we have considered this first sermon of Christ? Amen.