

# Called To Proclaim

Bible Background • LUKE 4

Printed Text • LUKE 4:14-22 | Devotional Reading • DEUTERONOMY 8:1-11

## Aim for Change

By the end of this lesson, we will COMPREHEND the meaning and significance of Jesus' inaugural sermon in Nazareth, SENSE the impact of Jesus' pronouncement at Nazareth, and ALIGN our faith response with Jesus' call and mission.

## In Focus

Pastor Greenborough took to the podium on Sunday morning. "I want to talk this morning about my vision for our community. I won't be so bold as to say I have a dream. But...well, I have a dream." He smiled and shuffled with his notes.

"I want us to do something about these poor folk who stand around on our street corners. I know you say, 'But Pastor if we give them money, they'll buy booze and drugs.' Let me tell you, I would buy booze too if I hadn't showered in a month, hadn't had fresh socks and underwear for two weeks, hadn't had a proper sleep in five days, and hadn't had a proper meal in two days. We must do something.

"I want us to do something about our brothers and sisters suffering from depression, PTSD, and suicidal thoughts. I know you say, 'But Pastor, faith will make those people whole. They just need to pray harder.' Let me tell you, they do pray. They pray every day that they could spare the time and money and self-respect to talk to someone trained to help them out of their dark thoughts. They pray every day that God would send them a friend. We must do something, Church."

As Pastor Greenborough went on, sister Patsy sat placidly in her pew. It was great rhetoric, she had to admit and of course she wanted to help all God's children, but still... it was all too great a task for her. What was this "something" their church was supposed to do? Would it really even help?

*How do you react to the message of Jesus and the Church's mission in the world?*

## Keep in Mind

"The Spirit of the LORD is upon me, for he has anointed me to bring Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the oppressed will be set free, and that the time of the LORD's favor has come" (Luke 4:18-19, NLT).

## Words You Should Know

**A. Bruised** (Luke 4:18) *thrauo* (Gk.)— Shattered or completely crushed

**B. Wondered** (v. 22) *thaumazo* (Gk.)—To admire, marvel, or have admiration as at a miracle

## Say It Correctly

**Shema.** shuh-MAH.

**Jairus.** JIE-russ.

## KJV

**Luke 4:14** And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee: and there went out a fame of him through all the region round about.

15 And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all.

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

17 And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written,

18 The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,

19 To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.

20 And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him.

21 And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.

22 And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. And they said, Is not this Joseph's son?

## NLT

**Luke 4:14** Then Jesus returned to Galilee, filled with the Holy Spirit's power. Reports about him spread quickly through the whole region.

15 He taught regularly in their synagogues and was praised by everyone.

16 When he came to the village of Nazareth, his boyhood home, he went as usual to the synagogue on the Sabbath and stood up to read the Scriptures.

17 The scroll of Isaiah the prophet was handed to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where this was written:

18 "The Spirit of the LORD is upon me, for he has anointed me to bring Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the oppressed will be set free,

19 and that the time of the LORD's favor has come."

20 He rolled up the scroll, handed it back to the attendant, and sat down. All eyes in the synagogue looked at him intently.

21 Then he began to speak to them. "The Scripture you've just heard has been fulfilled this very day!"

22 Everyone spoke well of him and was amazed by the gracious words that came from his lips. "How can this be?" they asked. "Isn't this Joseph's son?"

## The People, Places, and Times

**Synagogue.** After Solomon's Temple was destroyed and many of the Hebrews were sent into exile, it became necessary to develop local centers of worship and instruction in the Jewish faith. Even after their return from exile and the Jerusalem Temple was rebuilt, these local centers of worship continued. Most communities of size had at least one synagogue and some had several. Jewish sources hold that a synagogue was to be built wherever there were ten or more Jewish men. The primary meeting was held on the Sabbath (Saturday). The usual worship service consisted of the recitation of the Shema (Deuteronomy 6:4-9), prayers, Scripture readings from the Law and the Prophets, a sermon, and a benediction. Often the community appointed a ruler who cared for the building and selected those who participated in the worship service. Jairus of Capernaum (Mark 5:22), and Crispus and Sosthenes of Corinth (Acts 18) were rulers at their local synagogues. On many occasions, Jesus encountered opposition and conflict in the synagogues both for His teaching (Mark 6:1-6) and His miracles (Luke 4:31-37). As opposition grew, Jesus warned His disciples of a time in the future when they, too, would be persecuted in the synagogues (Matthew 10:17; 23:34; Mark 13:9; Luke 12:11; 21:12).

*What similarities do Jewish synagogues have with modern Christian churches?*

## Background

At the age of thirty, Jesus submitted Himself to baptism as a sign of obedience and to initiate His public ministry, even though He was without sin. Following His baptism, the Holy Ghost led Him into the wilderness, where He endured forty days and nights of fasting and isolation. This was a period of physical weakness but spiritual strength. Three times Satan tried to tempt Jesus, making Him offers that might appeal to His humanness. But in His divine nature, Jesus endured this period and refused the devil's temptations.

Luke 4:1 says that it was the Spirit that gave Jesus the victory over Satan in the wilderness and led Him to Galilee. There, He was able to teach in the synagogues and He was well received, gaining popularity among the people there. Jesus was glorified by all those around Him. The accolades Jesus received in Galilee did not represent the true glory of Jesus, which was to come. Still, Jesus' ministry began and ended with Him being glorified.

*Jesus' ministry was initiated after sacrifice and obedience. What lessons might this pattern teach us?*

### At-A-Glance

1. Returning by the Spirit (Luke 4:14–17)
2. The Spirit is Upon Me (vv. 18–19)
3. Scripture Fulfilled (vv. 20–22)

## In Depth

**1. Returning by the Spirit (Luke 4:14–17)** Here we find the opening scene of Jesus' ministry—in Galilee. From a glorious reception in Galilee, Jesus' next stop was His hometown, Nazareth. The phrase “where he had been brought up” gives the impression that Jesus had not been in Nazareth for a while before this visit (Luke 4:16). Jesus had been raised by devout Jewish parents who reared Him to participate in the tenets of His faith. Therefore, as His custom was, He went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day. It was normal and usual for Him to participate in worship.

Anyone could be invited to read the Scripture lesson for the synagogue services. Scholars are uncertain as to how the reading from the Prophets was chosen. Perhaps the particular reading was left to the discretion of the man reading. Possibly Jesus chose this passage, as indicated by the phrase, “he found the place where it was written” (v. 17).

**2. The Spirit is Upon Me (vv. 18–19)** The reading from Isaiah points back to the very nature of Jesus' ministry. His purpose was to bring the Good News to the poor, brokenhearted, captives, blind, and oppressed (bruised). The Gospel is the Good News to those whose hope lies in Almighty God to act on their behalf. Jesus identifies Himself with the social, religious, and economic outcasts of His day. Throughout the Old Testament, God is clearly on the side of the poor and oppressed (Isaiah 58:6; Psalms 103:6; 146:7; 72:12-14).

“The acceptable year of the Lord” (Luke 4:19) to which Jesus referred to was likely the jubilee year described in Leviticus 25. The Year of Jubilee was a time when the economic and social inequities accumulated through the years were to be crossed off and all God's people would begin again at the same point. Jubilee meant that slaves were to be set free, and people who were in servitude because of debts they couldn't pay were given back their ancestral lands and set free to return to their families.

**3. Scripture Fulfilled (vv. 20–22)** After His reading, the congregation was still. All eyes were fastened on Him, expecting this budding rabbi to offer a sermon on this prophetic text. Jesus broke through the silence with a

simple, yet powerful declaration, “This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears” (v. 21). There He was, in their midst. Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah of God’s promise. The acceptable year of the Lord had been launched in the person and ministry of Jesus. Jesus was ushering in a new age of salvation. The Good News of the kingdom was indeed the fulfillment of the Old Testament Messianic hope.

Initially, those who heard His words responded favorably. They wondered at the gracious words He had just spoken. Still, they were confused about His identity. They could not move beyond the fact that He was Joseph’s son. How could a carpenter’s son declare Himself to be the Son of God?

*Think of a time a speaker has unexpectedly blown you away with their message. What was surprising about the message?*

### **Search the Scriptures**

1. What did Jesus do once He arrived at Nazareth (Luke 4:16)?
2. What responsibilities had Jesus been given because the Spirit of the Lord was upon Him (vv. 18-19)?

### **Discuss the Meaning**

1. Jesus often fulfilled prophecy in one way during His earthly ministry, but will also fulfill the same prophesy even more fully when His Kingdom comes. How is it the day of the Lord’s favor today? How much more of the prophecy do we still await?
2. What did Isaiah’s prophecy mean to its original audience?

### **Liberating Lesson**

We are not redeemed simply to console ourselves in the Spirit, but to be a hand extended to the unchurched and the hurting. People today are looking for peace in their lives. As believers in Christ, we know that Jesus is the answer. But it is of no consequence if we do not get the message to people who really need to hear it. The African American and the global African population is disproportionately influenced by poverty and imprisonment. Make plans to implement one practical way that the class can be a Christ-like influence in your community by doing each of these in the following weeks:

1. Preaching the Gospel to the poor
2. Preaching deliverance to prisoners
3. Helping the blind see
4. Setting the oppressed free

### **Application for Activation**

Isaiah refers to Jubilee in the context of a restoration of Israel after the nation’s enemies had humbled her (Isaiah 61:2). Jesus referred regarding the new day He would bring. This week use your Bible and Bible reference tools to do some research on the year of Jubilee (Leviticus 25:8–55). Spend time meditating on how the deliverance Jesus brings compares and contrasts with the freedom of the Jubilee year. Share your thoughts with the group next week.

### **Follow the Spirit**

What God wants me to do:

---

---

---

---

## Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned:

---

---

---

---

## More Light on the Text

**Luke 4:14-22** Jesus has been baptized (Luke 3:21) and led into the wilderness by the Spirit where the devil tempted Him for forty days (4:1-13). Having overcome all the temptations of the devil and being filled with the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus returns to the region of Galilee, where He officially begins His ministry (cf. Matthew 4:12; Mark 1:14). He is now about thirty years old (Luke 3:23). According to Jewish law, this is the age priests begin their duties (Numbers 4:23; 1 Chronicles 23:3). From the context, Jesus has been teaching in other cities in this region (e.g., Capernaum; see Luke 4:23), especially in their synagogues, before He goes to His hometown of Nazareth. His fame has spread all over the place because of the miracles and the authority with which he taught them (Luke 4:14-15; Mark 1:21-28; 3:32ff).

**14 And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee: and there went out a fame of him through all the region round about. Jesus' ministry was filled with the power of the Holy Spirit and His leading.**

We first hear of the Holy Spirit descending upon Jesus at His baptism. Next, the Spirit led Him into the wilderness to be tempted. Now, we read that He returned “in the power of the Spirit.” Later in His ministry, Gospel-writers link Jesus’ power of the Spirit with His authoritative teaching and His miracles. Either or both of these would certainly make the “fame of him” spread throughout the region.

The region of Galilee was surrounded by Gentile (non-Jewish) nations. Because of this, the people were exposed to a variety of ideas, which made them very open in their attitudes. According to the Jewish historian Josephus, they were a very courageous people, many of whom became leaders of rebellions. It was also a very fertile region, so it was able to support many people, probably as many as three million. This was the region where Jesus grew up. God planted His Son in an area in which people would at least be open to hearing Him.

**15 And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all.**

During the exile, when the Temple had been destroyed and people lived far from their home in Israel, the Jews began meeting for worship in synagogues—a town could have a synagogue if there were at least ten adult Jewish men. There were no sacrifices in the synagogues, but the worship services on the Sabbath days had a fairly consistent routine.

Worship began with prayer, which was followed by the reading of Scripture. Seven people from the congregation read from different parts of the Old Testament. Since few were able to understand the original Hebrew, the reading was followed by a translation into either Greek or Aramaic. After the Scripture reading, there was a sermon or teaching. There was no professional minister, but each synagogue had an administrator. This administrator might invite a distinguished person to speak on the Scripture. This would be followed by discussion and questions.

In this context, Jesus may have begun by asking the synagogue administrator for the opportunity to read the Scripture and comment on it. This was not the first time Jesus had spoken in a synagogue, but it was at the beginning of His ministry and His clear, authoritative messages were like a breath of fresh air to the people. “Glorified” is the normal translation of the Greek word used here (*doxazo*, *doke-SOD-zo*) and usually refers to honoring God. In this context though, it more likely has the meaning of celebrating someone or holding them with honor. The people praised Jesus and His sermons; no opposition had yet begun.

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

Continuing His itinerary in the Galilee region, Jesus comes to Nazareth, His hometown. Nazareth was a town in the southern part of Galilee where Jesus spent His boyhood (Matthew 2:23). Nazareth was a small, but beautifully secluded town nestled in the southernmost hills of the Lebanon mountain range. Although it was near major roads, Nazareth itself, though, was isolated from nearby traffic because of the area's hills. This apparent isolation contributed to the fact that Nazareth was regarded as a less important part of the national and religious life of Israel. Coupled with its seclusion, Nazareth had a bad reputation both morally and religiously. It is also believed that Nazareth had a certain crude dialect in the Galilean region. All this seems to make Nazareth notorious and probably prompted Nathanael, when he first learned of Jesus of Nazareth, to ask, "Can anything good come from Nazareth?" (John 1:46, NLT).

At Nazareth, Jesus went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, a habit He had formed from childhood (Luke 2:41–50). He grew up in the city and the synagogue. Therefore He was a familiar face. He also was familiar with the worship rituals. It was customary during a synagogue service on the Sabbath for seven people to read from the Scriptures: a priest, a Levite, and five ordinary Jews. Therefore, it was not strange that Jesus is handed the Scripture to read.

**17 And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written,**

As we have already noted, the reading of Scripture formed an integral part of synagogue worship. Indeed, Scripture reading remains the most important part of worship in the Jewish religion even today. Before and during Jesus' time, the Jewish people read the Scripture systematically. Readings from the Law and the Prophets followed a schedule of 155 specific lessons, which were designed to allow completion of the entire Pentateuch in three years. In both Palestine and Babylon, the verses were read from the Hebrew text. This was followed by an Aramaic translation, the familiar language of the Middle East.

Jesus is then handed the book of the prophet Isaiah (KJV: Esaias). Even though the word "book" (Gk. biblion, bee-BLEE-on) is used, we should not imagine a codex with stacked pages bound in a spine, like modern books. The Hebrew Scriptures were written on scrolls, as were most writings until the 4th century AD. In the Hebrew Bible scrolls, the prophetic books were in single volumes (except the twelve minor prophets, which were written collectively on one scroll). Isaiah is the longest of the prophetic books, and the scroll could have been almost two feet thick when rolled up. Jesus unrolls the scroll to the prophetic passage which summarizes His earthly mission. Whether Jesus looked for a passage He wished to read, He just opened the book and His eye fell upon that particular passage, or it was the passage assigned for that Sabbath day, we do not know.

**18 The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised. 19 To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.**

Jesus reads from Isaiah 61:1-2 and includes a single phrase from 58:6. He probably read in Hebrew and translated into Aramaic, the commonly spoken language at the time. He reads, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me," which means that He is filled with the power of the Holy Spirit. As we see in verse 21, Jesus identifies Himself as the subject of Isaiah's prophecy. Here, He says that He has the Holy Spirit for a specific ministry. Christ promised the Holy Spirit to His disciples before He ascended, and its power is demonstrated repeatedly in the Gospels. We should note that He has the Holy Spirit because He has been "anointed." This seems to indicate that the filling or the possession of the Holy Spirit is consequent to the anointing. The word "anointed" here is translated as the Greek word chrio (KHREE-oh), which means to consecrate, ordain, or set apart a person for a particular service. It is the same word from which we get "Christ," the Anointed One. In the Old Testament, people or things were anointed, as symbolized by the pouring of oil to signify holiness and

separation unto God— like the tabernacle and its furniture (Exodus 30:22ff), priests (Exodus 28:41), kings (Judges 9:8; 2 Samuel 2:4; 1 Kings 1:34), and prophets (1 Kings 19:16). The anointing also symbolized authority, appointment, and equipping for a special function or service to God. It was usually associated with the outpouring of the Spirit of God (1 Samuel 10:1, 9; 16:13). The anointing was always regarded as an act of God, and it was sometimes used to mean the bestowal of divine favor (Psalm 23:5; 92:10). The same idea is also carried over into the New Testament (Acts 10:38; 1 John 2:20, 27) and generally refers to the anointing of the Holy Spirit. The “Gospel” did not originate in the New Testament but had its beginning in Old Testament prophetic literature. The Old Testament prophets talked about God ushering in a new era of justice, righteousness, and peace. During a time of great wickedness, injustice, and oppression, the prophet wrote, “Let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream” (Amos 5:24). It is clear from the Gospels that Jesus understood His mission as being the fulfillment of this Old Testament hope. When He gave His inaugural address in the synagogue, He used as His Scripture text Isaiah 61:1-2, which spoke of preaching the Good News to the poor and afflicted, binding up the brokenhearted, proclaiming liberty to the captives, and opening the prison to those who are bound.

Here the writer declares that Jesus has been consecrated, as evidenced by the power of the Holy Spirit for a twofold ministry—to preach and to heal. He is called “to preach the gospel” (Gk. euaggelizo, yew-ang-gell-EED-zo), that is, to announce good news, or glad tidings, to the “poor.” This probably includes the physically and spiritually poor. He is called to preach “deliverance to the captives”—those who were bound and imprisoned in sin, sickness, and death (Acts 10:38; Ephesians 4:8-10; Hebrews 2:14-15). He is also sent “to preach [proclaim to all] the acceptable year of the Lord.” The “acceptable year of the Lord” is a day of salvation, and that day is now (2 Corinthians 6:2, quoting Isaiah 49:8), a time of receiving inheritance and comforting those who mourn (Isaiah 61:2). However, it is also a time of vengeance for the Lord. It is speaking of the end times, but they begin now. This understanding of Christ’s role is called “inaugurated eschatology.” Christ inaugurated the reign of God’s kingdom in His life and ministry. The blessings—and the work—begin now, but will be consummated at the Second Coming. The atonement of Christ is fully embraced when the poor, sick, sinful, and helpless are restored to prosperity, health, holiness, power, and dominion over Satan and receive membership and communion in the family of God.

The second function of the anointing is for healing, both spiritually and physically. Jesus is sent “to heal the brokenhearted.” This includes those who are broken in mind and soul (Luke 7:44-50). He will bring comfort and hope to the destitute in heart. The anointing is also for the “recovering of sight to the blind”—body, spirit, and soul—for those in darkness (Matthew 4:16; Acts 26:18). Jesus healed many people who were physically blind, but also often spoke of spiritual blindness (John 9). Jesus is also sent to liberate those “that are bruised” (Gk. thrauo, THROU-oh, shattered or completely crushed, broken into many pieces). This speaks of the oppressed and broken (Isaiah 58:6-14). Although this passage refers to the immediate situation of Israel’s captivity, the reality is to be fulfilled in the future by Christ’s ministry.

It is important to remember that while there are spiritual interpretations of poverty, blindness, and oppression, there is also the physical reality. Many people in the world today worry about where their next meal will come from—if it comes today at all—or worry about where they will sleep tonight, or if they can make rent this month. They are too occupied with these worries to think about spiritual matters. As Christ’s hands and feet, Christians must work to help meet people’s immediate physical needs and fight systems of oppression with justice, while also helping meet people’s spiritual need for hope and salvation. Jesus inaugurated this work and showed us how to do it by His ministry. He then anointed us with the Holy Spirit so that we can continue today and work till Jesus comes.

**20 And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. 21 And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.**

Luke now resumes his narrative. After reading the lesson for the day, Jesus handed the scroll back to the minister, sat down, and was about to start a sermon. Sitting was the usual position for those giving a sermon in the synagogue. As He sat down to preach, all the people in the synagogue focused their attention on Him. Jesus

explained to them the Scripture. We do not have the full content of Jesus' teaching, but only a summary of the main theme of Christ's words: "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." Luke indicates that this is just a summary by saying Jesus "began" to say.

Jesus declares to them that the words which He has read to them have finally been fulfilled in their presence; in essence He says that He, Jesus, is the One anointed by God, endowed with the Holy Spirit, spoken of in the Old Testament to proclaim the Good News of salvation and deliverance and to heal all manner of diseases. He was sent to proclaim the "acceptable year of the Lord" (v. 19)—the Messianic age and the year of Jubilee. This is an age ushered in by His presence, a period in which God has planned to grant salvation to all types of people. With this, Jesus takes on Himself to fulfill all the prophecies of the Suffering Servant (Isaiah 42:1-4; 49:1-6; 50:4-7; 52:13-53:12), claiming publicly to be the Messiah.

**22 And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. And they said, Is not this Joseph's son?**

At first, the people's reaction was that of wonder and excitement. All have a positive connotation. "Wondered" (Gk. *thaumazo*, thou-MOD-zoh) means to admire, marvel, or to have admiration. Jesus spoke with such grace and authority that the people marveled as they would at a miracle. His words and His claim were so startling and amazing to them that they began to question within themselves, "Is not this Joseph's son?" Although they had known Him, they had never heard such words from Him in the 30 years He had lived among them. Moreover, they reflected on Jesus' background and family—He was only the son of Joseph, an ordinary person. How could He make such a claim? This was the turning point. They changed from an attitude of awe and wonder to doubt, skepticism, and prejudice. They must have thought, "How can Jesus, whose father Joseph is poor, be the One anointed to preach to the poor?" Jesus endured such prejudice repeatedly as recorded in the Scriptures (cf. Mark 6:3; John 1:46; 7:52). Although they are simply amazed and incredulous now, soon some would be filled with indignation and anger at Jesus' words. As Jesus finishes this very sermon, the people of Nazareth drag Him out to throw Him off a cliff (vv. 28-30).



# Daily Bible Readings

## **MONDAY**

Live By God's Word  
(Deuteronomy 8:1–11)

## **TUESDAY**

Jubilee, Year of God's Favor  
(Leviticus 25:8–17)

## **WEDNESDAY**

Miracle of the Meal and Oil  
(1 Kings 17:8–16)

## **THURSDAY**

Naaman's Leprosy Healed in Jordan River  
(2 Kings 5:1–14)

## **FRIDAY**

Jesus Overcomes the Devil's Temptations  
(Luke 4:1–13)

## **SATURDAY**

Jesus Driven out of Nazareth  
(Luke 4:23–30)

## **SUNDAY**

Jesus' Mandate for Ministry Announced  
(Luke 4:14–22)