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Jesus' Mission and Ours

Our focus over the next 2 or 3 Sundays will be on the mission of our church. It seems like a good place to start is to see what Jesus' mission was. Since the church is supposed to look like Jesus, then if we've got a pretty good understanding of his mission, then we'll have a good idea about ours.

Let's ask the Holy Spirit to guide us as we study his Word.

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

We're going to look at some key verses in Luke 4. Jesus is describing the magna charta – the essence of his mission.

Where did Jesus return from? Well, he's just been baptized in the Jordan by John (3:21-22) and then he is tempted in the desert (4:1-13).

Now he returns to Galilee *in the power of the Spirit*. Notice how

Jesus relies on the Holy Spirit. If Jesus relied on the Holy Spirit to fill his life, it's a pretty good indication that we should rely on the Spirit – seeking to be continually filled (Ephesians 5:18).

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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.

When we think of synagogue don't think of a big building or a large number of people. Most likely it was in someone's home – the one with the biggest house. There may have been 20-30 people gathered. There wasn't always a rabbi. Sometimes they'd just take turns reading the scripture and then sharing their thought on it.

When they read the scripture, the reader would stand up. When he started talking about it he'd sit down.

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

Of course they used scrolls, so it took some time to roll the scroll to the right place. It wasn't like flipping through your Bible. Certainly not like using your PDA or computer to find the passage. You carefully ROLLED it.

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18 "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he has anointed me to bring Good News to the poor.

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He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the oppressed will be set free,

Notice that this is a holistic gospel – one that covers every area of life. Too often we focus on just one important aspect of the gospel – the forgiveness of my sins, being “born again”, and the promise of heaven. This is important but the good news is a lot more than

just that.

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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.

He's reading from Isaiah 61:1-2. This was familiar and favorite passage about the coming of the Messiah and the time when God sets everything right. It was based on the Jubilee year. This pattern in the Old Testament where after 7 sets of 7 years or 49 year, then in the Jubilee year – the 50th year, all debts were canceled. Sounds pretty good, right?

Yet the Jubilee year came to mean not just one year, but the time when the Messiah would return and set everything to rights.

What's significant is what Jesus DIDN'T read. The second half of Isaiah 61:2, and the part the crowd loved was 61:2b – “And the day of the vengeance of our God.” YES! This is when all of Israel's enemies were gonna get what was coming to them. They were thinking, these stinking Romans – who keep their foot on our necks – these pagan, filthy, Gentile Romans – where finally going to get what was coming to them.

Jesus was about to get to THIS GOOD PART but then he stopped. They were all ready to say “amen” but Jesus stops short.

He's got their attention.

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

He sits down now and begins to speak.

He basically tells them that HE is the fulfillment of this scripture.

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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?”

I would say at this point, they are conflicted. On one hand they are impressed with him, with his words. It’s like the hometown boy has made good. If it was Moline, there’d be an article about his in the Argus – Dispatch or the Quad City Times.

But at the same time, **THEY KNOW HIM.** We remember when he was just little kid tearing through the streets. Some may have thought – this was the one with the story of miraculous birth. But I’m not sure I really believe that. There might have been some scandal here.

They are impressed but
a little edgy.

If only Jesus had
stopped there!

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²³ Then he said, “You will undoubtedly quote me this proverb: ‘Physician, heal yourself’—meaning, ‘Do miracles here in your hometown like those you did in Capernaum.’”

He’s got them
impressed but then what
does he do – he begins
to pick a fight with them.

Jesus, this is the
beginning of your
ministry. **THIS IS NOT
THE WAY TO “WIN
FRIENDS AND
INFLUENCE PEOPLE”.**
We want to say, “just
stop”. We had a
moment here – and
you’re starting to ruin it.

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²⁴ But I tell you the truth, no prophet is accepted in his own hometown. ²⁵ “Certainly there were many needy widows in Israel in Elijah’s time, when the heavens were closed for three and a half years, and a severe famine devastated the land.

Then he starts to tell some Sunday School Stories.

Elijah passes up all the needy, hungry Jewish widows in Israel and goes to a pagan instead.

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²⁶ Yet Elijah was not sent to any of them. He was sent instead to a foreigner—a widow of Zarephath in the land of Sidon.

Ugh! How could he do that. Go to a disgusting, unclean, pagan foreigner instead of to God’s chosen people.

But he doesn’t stop there.

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²⁷ And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, but the only one healed was Naaman, a Syrian.”

Another Sunday School Story – this time about one of Israel’s hated enemies, Syria.

Naaman was an officer in the hated Syrian army. Israel and Syria and fighting each other. Probably one day, Namaan is fighting and takes a Jewish village. He look around and sees a pretty Jewish girl

– and as was often the case – he makes her his wife.

One problem, Naaman has leprosy. This Jewish girl has a head on her shoulders. She tells Naaman, there's a prophet in Israel who can heal you. And lo and behold, that's what happens.

Elisha has the audacity, the nerve to heal this hated, Jew-slaughtering enemy of Israel. He just goes off and heals him.

Jesus is just telling a couple of Sunday School stories and they go berserk. They lose it – they mob him and want to push him over a cliff.

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²⁸ When they heard this, the people in the synagogue were furious. ²⁹ Jumping up, they mobbed him and forced him to the edge of the hill on which the town was built. They intended to push him over the cliff,

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³⁰ but he passed
right through the
crowd and went on
his way.

But somehow – maybe
supernaturally, or maybe
with persuasive words,
or may with just the
power of his presence,
Jesus walks right
through them and is on
his way.

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So what's
going on
here?

So what's going on here?

Jesus tells a couple of Sunday School stories and the people go beserk, and want to kill him?!

He leaves out the last part of one their favorite verses, and they become irate?! He ends his scripture reading with "To proclaim the year of the Lord's favor" and forgets to add "And the day of vengeance of our God."

They are mad because Jesus is saying the Messiah is acting like he's not supposed to act!

He's supposed to settle the score with THOSE PEOPLE – those people on the outside. Those people who've got it coming to 'em. Those who ignore God and his laws. We're the ones are the good guys. The white hats. We're the ones who have been faithful and suffered.

And you're saying that God just cancels the debts, forgives and forgets all that!

You're saying that God opens his arms to some pagan foreign widow when there are so many faithful, suffering widows in Israel. Yet you go to them!

You're saying God with heal even a Jew-slaughtering pagan. One who's stolen a Jewish bride. And now God just hauls of and heals him!

"God, we're the good guys, the guys in the white hats, the one that deserve your favor – NOT THEM.

WHY DOES GOD HAVE TO BE SO

LOVING AND FORGIVING. Those who don't deserve it even "one little bit." Who can only say, "Just as I am without one plea, but that thy blood was shed for me."

Yet that's just what Jesus says, "God is willing to open his arms and forgive and embrace, even the most undeserving, the most revolting, even his enemies!"

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Jesus' mission is
to go to the
outsiders.

He goes to those who wouldn't darken the door of a church.

He goes to those who wouldn't have a clue where to turn in their Bible.

He goes to those who have rejected God – to sinners and tax collectors and prostitutes. He yells Ollie Ollie In Free. This is the Jubilee year – the year of the Lord's favor. Debts are canceled.

That's where Jesus is – seeking the outsider. Seeking out those who don't have a clue, who are in the deepest sense

of the word – LOST!

This is Jesus' Mission –
so what about ours?

**[Video clip about
church under the tree]**

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This is Jesus'
Mission. – What
about ours?

So are we willing to go to the
outsiders? – that's what Jesus did.

This morning, right now as we worship
here, within a mile radius of this church
are hundreds of families – men, women
and children – who don't know the first
thing about church. Right now they're
probably reading the paper, or eating a
late breakfast or brunch of pancakes.
They don't have a clue who God really
is – that he loves them so much he
gave his most precious gift – his son –
so that they might have new life.

They might not know what to do with a
Bible. They might not know how to act
in church. Their lives are broken and
hurting – just like yours and mine –
except they don't know there's a God
whose love will never let them go!

We see them walk through our parking
lot, and some of them don't look like us.
We can tend to look down on them.
Somehow imagine that their sins are
somehow worse than ours. We want to
compare ourselves and put ourselves
above them. Yet we're all the same –
all equally in need of a Savior.

Are you willing to start praying for your
neighbors, your co-workers, your
classmates who are outsiders. Ones
who are searching for something, and
they might not even know what it is.
They need to meet the God who loves
them with an everlasting love, and

become part of his family.

Will you bow your heads with me?