

Luke 4:38-44

Sermon: **The Good News above all**

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INTRODUCTION

1. In the previous sermon we studied Isaiah 61 and what those verses, which Jesus himself read in the synagogue, meant for the Jewish people. After reading, Jesus declared that he was the one Isaiah was prophesying about. Unfortunately, the reaction of his neighbors was driven by rage—they literally wanted to throw him off a cliff. Jesus walked right through the crowd and, I believe by God's miracle, escaped certain death. After that, he returned to Capernaum. Capernaum became the headquarters of Jesus' ministry while he was on earth.

1.1. In the last sermon I shared my perspective on how we should understand Luke's words when he wrote: "He taught with authority." I believe Jesus' teaching model is urgently needed even today. Many Bible teachers do not take that kind of approach when teaching others. We also spoke about the possessed man. As I said, I don't believe we have a full picture of what that looked like in those times. I believe that with Jesus' coming, the ancient world—so full of mysticism and irrational views—ceased to exist in that form. Why? Because with Jesus' coming, God the Father reduced Satan's authority over the earth. With Jesus' arrival, the world took a new direction—a path of reasoned ideas, both religious and cultural.

MEETING THE FUTURE APOSTLES

2. (Luke 4:38–39) "And he arose and left the synagogue and entered Simon's house. Now Simon's mother-in-law was ill with a high fever, and they appealed to him on her behalf. And he stood over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her, and immediately she rose and began to serve them."

2.1. The text tells us that after the synagogue event, Jesus went into Simon's house. It's very likely that Jesus and Simon had met earlier during Jesus' teaching in Galilee. In the Gospel of John, at the very beginning, we read about the events that briefly describe how some of the apostles first encountered Jesus. We know that John and Andrew, Simon's brother, were disciples of John the

Baptist. On the day Jesus passed by them, John the Baptist saw him and said: *“Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.”* At that moment, John and Andrew decided to follow Jesus. He invited them to come with him to Galilee and see where he lived¹.

2.2. I want to point out something here. In this moment, where John the Baptist directs his disciples to Jesus, we see incredible humility on his part. He sent his own disciples to follow the one he had been preparing them for. Even though John the Baptist was as famous in his day as a modern rock star, it didn’t change him, nor did he exalt himself above others. In his heart, he knew exactly why he was there and what his role was—to prepare the way for the coming Messiah.

2.3. From this we can draw an important application: if someone is a Bible teacher and has disciples, and in time realizes he has nothing more to give them—yet knows of someone who can teach them what he himself cannot—a true Bible teacher should humble himself, overcome his pride, and tell his disciples to follow that other person because he knows more. That requires wisdom and humility—admitting to yourself that you no longer have anything to offer your disciples and that you must let them go. Sadly, our craving for recognition and control over others often keeps us from doing that.

2.4. Now back to the events. John and Andrew chose to follow Jesus. When they arrived in Galilee, Andrew invited his brother Simon to come and see the Messiah. Simon accepted the invitation and went to meet Jesus². When we put the Gospels together, we can conclude that Jesus and Simon already knew each other well before this moment when Jesus entered Simon’s house.

THE GOOD NEWS ABOVE ALL

3. We then read that Simon’s mother-in-law had a fever. They asked Jesus to heal her. He did so, just as he had healed others. The question is: was there a deeper reason why Jesus healed her, or did he simply do it because they asked? I believe that in every healing God the Father wanted to testify that Jesus was his chosen Messiah, sent into the world to bring Good News to his people. But could Jesus have healed someone simply because he preferred one over another? In this case, it was the apostles who asked him to heal Simon’s mother-in-law.

3.1. We must understand that Jesus was sent primarily for the Good News, not primarily for healing the sick. And with that understanding, I believe, he approached every situation. The text shows us that the mother-in-law lived in her son-in-law Simon’s household, meaning Simon and his wife were caring for her. Jesus knew that Simon would play one of the key roles in the mission for which he had come into the world. That meant Simon would have to make great sacrifices, and his absence would be very hard on his family—especially his wife. On top of that, she had the burden of caring for a sick mother. Leaving his wife alone to carry that weight would surely have distracted Simon during his journeys with Jesus.

3.2. I assume this is exactly why Jesus chose to heal Simon’s mother-in-law—because he didn’t want a distracted and worried apostle beside him while proclaiming the Good News. He wanted Simon fully dedicated and focused on the mission before them. In other words, Jesus deeply understood

¹ John 1:35-39

² John 1:40-42

what family responsibilities meant. And while he asked “everything” of his disciples, as their teacher and leader he surely wanted to ease their burdens where he could.

3.3. The text goes on to say that the mother-in-law got up and began serving them. I believe that must have been a beautiful sight for everyone who witnessed it.

RULES, RULES

4. (Luke 4:40) “Now when the sun was setting, all those who had any who were sick with various diseases brought them to him, and he laid his hands on every one of them and healed them.”

4.1. Luke tells us that as the sun was setting, all who had the sick brought them to Jesus. From earlier accounts, we know this was happening on the Sabbath. The question that arises is: why did the Jews wait until sunset? There’s a reason. The oral tradition that prevailed among the Jews at the time forbade anyone from walking more than a few hundred meters on the Sabbath. Likewise, until sunset it was not permitted to carry objects from one place to another. The elders of the town made sure these traditions were observed to the letter. All Sabbath rules applied until the sun went down—after that, a Jew could return to normal life.

4.2. The text says that people began coming “as” the sun was setting. That shows the people’s eagerness to reach Jesus as quickly as possible. In fact, they were not fully observing oral tradition—the Sabbath, technically speaking, was still ongoing. This surely angered the elders and Pharisees of the town. The text continues: “He laid his hands on every one of them and healed them of their diseases.” Here we see Jesus’ immense dedication, love, and mercy for his afflicted and oppressed people. Weariness was no barrier to showing compassion to each one. He laid his hand on every single person. What selflessness and patience from our Lord!

4.2. (Luke 4:41) “And demons also came out of many, crying: ‘You are the Son of God!’ But he rebuked them and would not allow them to speak, because they knew that he was the Christ.”

4.3. Luke notes here that evil spirits, as in the previous account, were persistent and determined to bring Jesus into premature trouble. Their intent was to see him killed. Their goal was to derail the fulfillment of God’s promises—in this case, to prevent Jesus from reaching the cross.

PRAYER

5. (Luke 4:42) “And when it was day, he departed and went into a desolate place. And the people sought him and came to him, and would have kept him from leaving them.”

5.1. We read that Jesus went to a solitary place. In (Mark 1:35) it says: “And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed.” Some Bible teachers use this verse to emphasize the importance of daily prayer and developing discipline in prayer. In other words: “If you claim to be a Christian, you must pray every day—we see in the Gospels that even Jesus did so,” these teachers would say.

5.2. I partly agree with them. But as always, there's a danger of misunderstanding what the biblical author intended to communicate in a given passage. Personally, I don't believe the author is saying: *"If you pray every day, your spirituality will grow,"* or *"If you pray multiple times a day, God will answer your prayers faster."* In the Gospels, we see Pharisees who prayed diligently and daily in public squares—they had prayer discipline—but for the wrong reasons. They wanted to be seen as "holier" and "more spiritual." And we can very easily fall into the same trap.

5.3. We might develop a disciplined prayer life, praying several times a day, and then in our hearts say: *"I pray more than my brother at church, therefore I am more spiritual."* Or, on the other hand, we might believe God will answer our prayers simply because we prayed more times a day. And when he doesn't grant what we asked for, we end up disappointed, discouraged, even angry at God.

5.4. To understand why Jesus so often withdrew to pray, we need to look at the bigger picture of his life and circumstances. When we do, we see that his days were full of noise, stress, fatigue, and constant demands. That created in him a "need" for prayer. He had to escape the crowds that pressed in on him daily. If he hadn't, he would have been drained—especially spiritually—and in the end, unable to fulfill his mission effectively. Yet we know he carried it out to the end.

5.5. His goal in prayer was to be renewed in God, to be filled with strength. In prayer he wrestled with his anxiety, fear, and concerns. Through prayer he sought the Father's guidance on what to do next. Through prayer he embraced what was hard to accept. And once he had gone through that process, he was ready to return to his ministry.

5.6. The same is true for believers today. In life there are seasons when we pray more intensely and seasons when we pray less. Our daily experiences—whether we feel anxious, distracted, restless, or instead stable and peaceful—influence our need for prayer and how often we "withdraw" to solitary places. But the fact that we don't always pray with the same strength or frequency does not mean we are less spiritual. Nor does praying fewer times a day mean God won't hear our prayers.

5.7. That is not the biblical perspective. God will always ensure his will is accomplished in our reality—in our lives and in the lives of others. Our prayer does not change the Father's will; we cannot alter his plan by praying more. Like Jesus, we come through prayer to the acceptance of our Father's will. The Pharisees would certainly have denied this truth—and perhaps some modern teachers as well.

GOOD NEWS OR HEALING?

6. The text continues by telling us that the people sought after him and begged him not to leave them. At this point, Jesus was becoming a very well-known figure in Israel. The people's desire to see him and touch him left him little time to be alone. Wherever he went to a solitary place, they found him.

6.1. My question is this: why were they really seeking him—was it for healing, or to hear his teaching?

6.2. I believe Jesus answers that question himself in (Luke 4:43): *“But he said to them: ‘I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well; for I was sent for this purpose.’”*

6.3. Here Jesus makes a clear statement to his people about the true reason for his coming. He recognized their desires and their motives for seeking him, and he knew that most of them wanted him for the sake of healing. So he makes a declaration that emphasizes the Good News as “more important” than their physical healing.

6.4. As Christians, we are used to viewing the Good News this way: *“Jesus was sent into the world to save us from the second death—the death that awaits every person unless they repent.”* And that is true. But for the Jew, the term “Good News” carried a much broader meaning. For all of God’s promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to be fulfilled—namely, “I will be their God, and they will be my people”—Israel had to be spiritually ready. They had to “love the Lord their God with all their heart, with all their soul, with all their strength, and with all their mind.” Yet when we study the Old Testament, we see that they never did this. Up until Jesus’ time, they remained a rebellious and disobedient nation toward Yahweh.

6.5. Jesus comes onto the scene, and through his words and deeds shows them what a true Israelite looks like—one who genuinely loves Yahweh. He says to them: *“Follow me as your example, Israel, and Yahweh will establish the kingdom you so eagerly await. If you humble yourselves before my teaching and accept it, Yahweh will fulfill the promises made to your fathers. He will free you from your oppressors, multiply you, and you will become a kingdom that rules righteously over all nations. Your wealth will be beyond measure. If enemies rise against you, Yahweh will protect you. But for this to be fulfilled, you must believe that your Messiah is now among you. You must repent and become true Israelites, like your forefathers. If you do this as a people, the kingdom of God will come to earth—here and now.”*

6.6. While this text primarily carried that meaning for the Jews of Jesus’ time, we as Christians today can also apply it and see how it speaks to us.

6.7. Let me share from my own experience how this application became real to me. In the early days of my walk with Jesus, my main thought was to find a passage in the Bible where God the Father promised me, his new child, healing if I believed in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ. In my search, I came upon this passage and this specific event. It gave me an answer to my question. The answer was not what I wanted, but it was clear: “Why did Jesus come into the world?” And the answer was—to give us and show us the way to eternal life.

6.8. Although Jesus healed many, I now realize that healing was never his primary mission. One of the reasons he healed was to draw the crowds so they could hear the Good News. Because without the miracles, he likely never would have gathered such multitudes.

6.9. We see in the text that at one point Jesus decided to leave the people and go to other towns to preach the Good News. This raises a question: were there people who were not healed? I believe there were. Did those who were healed testify to his miracles and teaching to those who never heard him personally? I believe they did. Even though Jesus did not heal every single person in Israel, the echo of his teaching certainly reached every corner—in the cities, villages, fields, royal courts, and

even religious institutions. This is why I believe Jesus primarily came for the Good News, not for healing.

6.9.1. Once I understood this and accepted that this is the biblical perspective, my life took on new meaning. I was freed from the exhausting daily desire for healing. My main focus now is to prepare for the coming kingdom of God. My focus is to proclaim the Good News to others who are willing to hear it, so they too can prepare for that kingdom. If Jesus is my way, then I want to do what he did while on earth.

6.9.2. To conclude, I want to say this: I am fully aware that God could, here and now, look upon me and heal me. But he has already given me the greatest gift a human being can receive—the blessing of eternal life. And that is far more important than healing. I believe this is exactly what Jesus wanted to emphasize to his people when he said: *“I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well, for I was sent for this purpose.”*

6.9.3. That is the truth Jesus wanted his people to understand, and the same applies to us as Christians today. Jesus says to us all: *“Listen to my teaching, learn from me, live and think as I live and think. Love my commandments. Prepare yourselves for the kingdom of God, for it is coming soon. And to enter it, you must be ready.”*