

# Blind, Deaf, and Dumb

January 22 – Luke 4:16-30

BiAY.org | Daily Reflections NT  
Day 22 – 343 Days to Go

## Today in Your Reading

Jesus returned to His hometown of Nazareth. The story began in a synagogue, a local place of worship, where Jews would gather on the sabbath day to sing, to pray, to read God’s Word, and to hear the rabbi teach. Synagogues were important in the Jewish culture in the absence of the Temple (i.e., during the Babylonian Captivity and after the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD).

On this day, Jesus was asked to read from the scroll of Isaiah. While there were no chapters and verses then, we now know that Jesus read from *Isaiah 61:1, 2a*, “The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because the Lord has anointed Me to bring good news to the afflicted. He has sent Me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to captives and freedom to prisoners, to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord...” It’s interesting to note that Jesus did not finish the sentence in *Isaiah 61:2*, proclaiming “the day of vengeance of our God,” perhaps because this statement refers to His second coming and not His first.

Jesus could’ve been given any book from the Old Testament, and He would’ve applied it to Himself, but this passage summarized the purpose of His life and ministry. He was anointed or chosen by God to preach the gospel or good news of salvation and, in the process, to heal people both physically and spiritually from the effects of sin. It was the custom to stand and read God’s Word then to sit and explain or apply it. When Jesus sat down, and everyone was listening carefully, He essentially said, “I am the fulfillment of this prophecy.”

While the people of Nazareth were nice to Jesus at first, He knew their hearts. He knew that they expected miracles and healing like He’d done in other places and that they did not and could not accept Him as the Messiah (v.22, 23). So, Jesus explained to them that He was going to do what

the prophets Elijah and Elisha did, turn from ministering to unbelieving Jews and reach out to believing Gentiles (v.25-29). The people of Nazareth did not respond well to this news and attempted to kill Jesus (v.30).

The story of Jesus in Nazareth is a microcosm of the bigger picture of His ministry and the nation of Israel. At first, the Jews responded kindly to His teaching, His healing, and His miracles, but in the end, they rejected Him and killed Him. No doubt, Satan provoked the crowd. He attempted to eliminate Jesus at the beginning of His ministry, but it was not the right time (v.30).

## Daily Reflection

Can you imagine seeing Jesus with your own eyes yet being **blind** to His identity? Can you imagine hearing Jesus with your own ears yet being **deaf** to His words? Can you imagine sitting in the very presence of God and **thinking only of yourself**? Can you imagine Jesus wanting to do a great work in your life, yet you “run Him out of town”? In what ways are we a lot like the people of Nazareth? What is it about them, and us, that we treat Jesus with such contempt?

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I once was blind but now I see. I lived with chains but now I’m free. He offered grace when I was poor and opened wide my prison door.  
**I owe Him all and so much more!**

# A Higher Calling

January 23 – Matthew 4:18-22; Mark 1:16-20

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Day 23 – 342 Days to Go

## Today in Your Reading

Jesus called four of His disciples to follow Him. We have seen Andrew, Peter, James, and John before, when they first met and followed Jesus (*Jn. 1:35-42*). Their first meeting was a curiosity to meet the Messiah (salvation), but the second time was a commitment to ministry (service).

The response to Jesus from both sets of brothers was instant. Peter and Andrew “immediately left their nets and followed Him” (*Mk. 1:18*). James and John “immediately left their father to follow Him” (*v.20*). All four left their job or livelihood to follow Jesus, and James and John left their family. Following Jesus took precedence over family and work.

Notice that Jesus transformed their occupation into opportunities for ministry. They were once just fishermen, but now they would be “fishers of men” (*v.17*). What they were doing as fishermen was important. They were working hard to provide for their families. But as followers of Christ their work became more than important. It became impactful. Their mindless and mundane days would be fulfilled with meaningful ministry. **Rather than simply working to make a living, they would be working to make a difference** in the lives of people.

Three of these men — Peter, James, and John — would soon become Jesus’ inner circle and leaders in the early church. For the rest of their lives, they would see miraculous wonders. They would hear life-changing truths, and they would experience unimaginable, breath-taking moments. In the process, these men would be radically changed, and they would be used of God in remarkable ways to change the world.

But what if, when Jesus called to them that day, they had said no? What if they would’ve stayed at their job or never left home? They would’ve missed an opportunity to live life on mission. They would’ve forfeited a higher calling.

## Daily Reflection

The truth is that Jesus calls each of us to be fishers of men. That is our full-time job, whether we are at work or not, whether we are at home or not. **We have a higher calling** to follow Jesus wherever we are. While Jesus calls some to go to foreign lands, He calls the rest to local ministry. Whether we are on the job, at home, in the marketplace, or doing a thousand other things, **we are always to be about people work.**

Some people leave work to make a difference, while others make a difference at work. Which is it for you? What are ways that you can use your occupation as opportunities to fish for men?

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What does “fishing for men” require of you?

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**Following Jesus is never boring.** A life-changing adventure awaits you, unless you say no. Jesus is always calling, but what is your answer?

# Unseen Forces

January 24 – Mark 1:21-34; Luke 4:31-41; Matthew 8:14-17

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Day 24 – 341 Days to Go

## Today in Your Reading

Jesus taught and healed people and casted out demons. All three of these aspects of Jesus' ministry were meant to reveal His identity as the Messiah. First, the people had never heard someone teach like Jesus. He taught "as one having authority" (*Lk. 4:32*). Jesus should have authority over the Scriptures because they are His words! Can you imagine what it would be like to hear God teach from His Word?

Second, Jesus healed several people in the passage, demonstrating His power over the human body. Although our bodies are threatened by multiple ailments, diseases, handicaps, and deficiencies, the Lord has power over them all. The Creator God has no problem recreating life or restoring our broken bodies. While these miracles draw attention to Him and give Jesus a platform from which to speak, His healing should remind us that one day the Lord will give us new glorified bodies, free from all human weaknesses (*Phil. 3:21*).

Third, Jesus demonstrated His power over demons. The most remarkable aspect here is the conversation He had with the evil spirits (*Lk. 4:34*). They knew who Jesus was. They recognized His power and holiness, and they were aware of His eventual mission to destroy them (*v.34; Gen. 3:15; 1 Jn. 3:8*). Although their testimony was powerful and true, Jesus silenced the demons so that He would not be viewed as associating with them. His demonstration of power over demonic forces foreshadows His ultimate defeat of Satan and his fallen angels.

This passage also gave us a glimpse of Peter's life (*Lk. 4:38, 39*). He lived in Capernaum. He was obviously married, and his mother-in-law lived with him and his wife, which indicates that she was possibly a widow. Simply put, Peter had a life and family that he put on hold to serve and travel as one of Jesus' disciples.

## Daily Reflection

The mention of demons in the story today reminds us that **the spiritual world is just as real as the physical world**, a truth that we often overlook. We live in a fallen world in which Satan and his fallen angels exert a great deal of influence in people's lives. Their goal is to disrespect and disrupt God's work on earth, particularly related to the Gospel.

Notice that a demon was in the synagogue (church) distracting others from Jesus' teaching. Other demons interrupted Jesus' healing and miracles. **Wherever God is at work, we can be assured that His enemies are busy working to oppose Him**. Many of our struggles in life stem from the fact that we live in a broken world, but it is also true that much of what happens in this world is influenced by demons (*Eph. 6:12*).

How often do you think of the spiritual forces at work in our physical world? Explain why.

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What encouragement do you find from our passage today, related to demonic forces?

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# The Calm Before the Storm

January 25 – Mark 1:35-39; Luke 4:42-44; Matthew 4:23-25

BiAY.org | Daily Reflections NT  
Day 25 – 340 Days to Go

## Today in Your Reading

Jesus traveled throughout Galilee preaching the gospel and healing as many people as possible. As a result, large crowds followed Him wherever He went. They were coming from everywhere.

The disciples asked people where they were from because Matthew recorded the locations (4:24, 25). If Jerusalem and Judea were the hub, Galilee was to the north. Included there was a region called the Decapolis, ten cities where the Romans preserved Greek culture. People also came from beyond the Jordan (east of Judea) and Syria (further north of Galilee).

It is safe to say that Jesus was the most popular attraction at the time. Word spread very quickly, and thousands flocked to see Him (Mk. 1:37). However, most people were coming to have their physical needs met when Jesus was most concerned about their spiritual needs. In fact, He said, "This is what I came for" (v.38).

Remember, the miracles were meant to point people to Jesus' message (the gospel), that of salvation from sin. The wonders were working, but were people getting the point? Jesus came to seek and save the lost, but the people were more attracted to His mobile healing clinic.

While Jesus' popularity was a good thing, the crowds also presented some challenges. Large crowds made moving from place to place very difficult. He and the disciples were constantly on the move to avoid getting bogged down in one location for too long. Also, ministering to people all day long was physically taxing. At times, we will see them sneaking away to take a break.

For example, Jesus got up very early in the morning to a secluded place to avoid the crowd in Capernaum (v.35-37). Even the disciples did not know where Jesus was, and when they found Him, they did not return to town but moved on to other locations.

## Daily Reflection

Another reason Jesus got away was to pray (v.35). Before He spent all day ministering to people, He spent time alone speaking with God the Father. Here Jesus sets another great example for us. **If He needed time alone with God, then how much more do we need it?**

Notice that Jesus awoke early. He found a secluded place, away from people and other distractions. Before Jesus faced the stormy busy-ness of the day, He made time to be quiet and calm, to hear the still small voice of God.

How are you doing with making time with God each day? What challenges do you face?

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Why should alone time with God be a priority?

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The people and problems of another day are waiting for you. **Are you prepared?**

# The Great Catch

January 26 – Luke 5:1-11

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Day 26 – 339 Days to Go

## Today in Your Reading

Jesus performed a great miracle by the Sea of Galilee. The Sea of Galilee, which was also called the Sea of Gennesaret and the Sea of Tiberias, was a large lake that people used for water, food, and business. There were several towns around the lake, so this was a good spot for Jesus to teach great crowds of people (v.1).

Evidently, on this day, there were so many people that Jesus sat in a boat and pushed away from the shore so that everyone could see and hear Him (v.2, 3). However, of the eleven verses that we read today, seven of them were about the great miracle that Jesus performed. Luke did not want us to miss the wonder and symbolism of what happened there.

After Jesus finished teaching, He told Peter to “put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch” (v.4). But professional fishermen don’t work during the day. They work at night when the conditions are favorable. Thus, Peter was tired and discouraged and immediately offered an objection, “We worked hard all night and caught nothing” (v.5). However, to Peter’s credit, he did what Jesus asked, especially since everyone was watching.

When they did what Jesus commanded, two boats with four men could barely handle their catch! Jesus overwhelmed them with fish (v.6, 7). Peter was so awe-struck that he fell at Jesus’ feet and proclaimed his unworthiness (v.8). Certainly, his flesh did not want to obey Jesus. His attitude was unpleasant, and he lacked faith in believing that anything would happen. When he realized how wrong he was, and when his eyes were opened to the presence and power of the One in his boat, he repented of his shame.

But remember, Jesus’ miracles were meant to draw attention to the fact that He was the Messiah. The disciples got the point and left everything to follow Him (v.11).

## Daily Reflection

Jesus’ miracles were often connected to His teaching, the point that He was trying to make. Miracles served as an object lesson, an illustration of deeper truths. What was the lesson? Jesus said, “From now on you will be fishers of men” (v.10).

Jesus was foreshadowing that He would use these men to lead many people to Him. They would become great fishermen of souls, bringing people to salvation. However, they would not accomplish this “great catch” in their own strength, but rather they would only be successful under His leadership and assistance.

The fulfillment of this prophecy (at least in part) — that they would be fishers of men — is found at Pentecost in Acts 2. At the time, there were people (fish) from every nation under heaven in Jerusalem” (v.5), and with the Holy Spirit’s help the disciples were able to speak to them in their language. Peter explained what was happening, shared the gospel, and thousands were saved (v.37-41). Everyone was amazed, and “the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved (v.43, 47). In other words, the net was full and overflowing!

**We, too, are called to be “fishers of men,”** but just like the disciples, we need God’s help. We may obey the Lord’s command, we may go where the fish are, and we may cast our nets, but we have no control over hearts. Fish will not leap into our boats. We must be faithful to cast our nets, and the Lord will do the rest.

What encouragement did you find in this story?

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# If You Are Willing

January 27 – Matthew 8:1-4; Mark 1:40-45; Luke 5:12-16

BiAY.org | Daily Reflections NT  
Day 27 – 338 Days to Go

## Today in Your Reading

Jesus healed a man with leprosy. Leprosy was an aggressive, highly contagious, incurable, and deadly skin disease. According to the Mosaic law, lepers were considered unclean and had to be separated or quarantined from others (*Lev. 13:11*). Thus, lepers usually lived alone on the outskirts of town or in communities with other lepers. They were outcasts of society.

The leper heard about Jesus and believed that He could heal him. When he saw the Lord, he fell to his face and pleaded with Him, saying, **“If you are willing, you can make me clean”** (*Lk. 5:12*). In that moment, the leper not only exhibited humility and submissiveness, but he also demonstrated great faith. He knew Jesus had the power to heal him, but he understood that it may not be the Lord’s will to do so. Jesus was moved by his appeal, and He cleansed the man of his leprosy (*Mk. 1:41, 42*).

Before Jesus healed the leper, He said and did something that is worth noting (*Lk. 5:13*). First, He said, “I am willing. Be cleansed.” The Lord was willing to heal the leper and did. Is He still willing and able to heal us today? Yes. The Lord is willing and able to heal us of our infirmities, but **it’s a matter of the timing of His will**. It may not be in God’s plan for us to be physically healed while on earth. He may choose to allow pain, sickness, and other human frailties for His purposes in our lives. However, we can rest assured that it is God’s plan to eradicate all human deficiencies in heaven when we receive our glorified bodies (*Phil. 3:20, 21; Rev. 21:4*). In that day, we will all be healed!

The second noteworthy aspect of this story is that Jesus “stretched out His hand and touched the leper” (*v.13*). Everyone in that day knew that touching lepers was discouraged for physical, religious, and social reasons, but Jesus touched him anyway. The Lord “crossed the

line,” defied the social norms, and exchanged His purity for the leper’s impurity (*2 Cor. 5:21*).

According to the law, for a leper to be received back into the community, he had to be declared clean by a priest (*Lev. 14*). Thus, Jesus told the man to do “as Moses commanded” (*Lk. 5:14*). The priests would’ve certainly asked the leper how this happened, which allowed him to tell the religious leaders about Jesus. Once again, they were confronted with the fact that Jesus was the Messiah, God in the flesh.

## Daily Reflection

The leper’s statement of faith is instructive for us, **“If you are willing, you can make me clean.”** He expressed his belief in the Lord’s power or ability while he submitted to the Lord’s will and timing. Is that how you pray? Do you believe that God is able to do all that He wants to do? At the same time, are you content with His will for your life and patient with His timing?

What truths, challenges, or encouragement are found in these verses?

*Matthew 6:9, 10* \_\_\_\_\_

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*Luke 22:42* \_\_\_\_\_

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*Philippians 4:11, 12* \_\_\_\_\_

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*James 4:13-15* \_\_\_\_\_

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If you are disappointed or disillusioned with God, perhaps you are “forcing” your will on Him rather than submitting to His will for you.

# The Most Important Thing

January 28 – Mark 2:1-12; Matthew 9:1-8; Luke 5:17-26

BiAY.org | Daily Reflections NT  
Day 28 – 337 Days to Go

## Today in Your Reading

Jesus healed a paralytic. After ministering to people throughout Galilee, Jesus returned to His second home in Capernaum, which served as His ministry headquarters. His popularity had grown tremendously, and people crowded around Jesus to hear Him teach.

In attendance that day were four men carrying a paralyzed friend on a mat. Because of the crowd, they could not see or get close to Jesus, but they believed that He had the power to heal their friend. Thus, they wasted no time finding another way to get to Jesus. In those days, many houses had a flat roof, so the men worked their way to the top, removed some of the tiles, and lowered their friend into the room where Jesus was teaching. Imagine the commotion!

The persistence and creativity of these men were most impressive. But the driving force behind their actions was their faith in Jesus. Recognizing their confident belief, Jesus spoke to the paralytic. However, His statement caught everyone by surprise. Rather than heal the man, Jesus told him that his sins were forgiven.

Not only was Jesus' response unexpected, but it was also problematic in the eyes of the religious leaders who were there. They knew that only God could forgive sins, so for a man to forgive sin was an offense to God. But that was the point of Jesus' statement. He was more than a man. He was God in the flesh.

To demonstrate that He was the Lord and that He had the authority to forgive sins, Jesus healed the paralytic, another act outside of man's capability. Once again, Jesus confirmed His identity as the Messiah. The Godman of whom the prophets spoke had come, and His actions and teaching gave everyone, especially the religious leaders, reason to ponder. Was He really the Chosen One? Would they put their faith in Jesus to forgive them of their sins?

## Daily Reflection

While this miracle was meant to highlight the identity and power of Jesus as the Messiah, we can't miss a subtle truth in this story. The four men who carried the paralytic to Jesus did so for the physical welfare of their friend. While that is a noble act, **Jesus revealed a greater priority — the paralytic's spiritual welfare.**

Which aspect of your life do you spend more time and effort trying to manage or improve — the physical or the spiritual? How can you tell?

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Why is the condition of one's soul more important than the condition of his body?

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Imagine if Jesus would have healed the paralytic but not forgiven his sins. The man would've had a "better" life on earth but an eternity in hell. How often do we do good things for people on earth to improve their standard of living but fail to share the good news of salvation? While we are commanded to help others, **humanitarian deeds apart from the gospel are incomplete.** By all means, let's help our neighbors, but let's help them in the name of Jesus and share with them the most important life-changing news — the forgiveness of sins and everlasting life!