

The Ministry of Jesus

Week 4: January 22-28 – *Mark 1, 2; Matt. 4, 8; Luke 4, 5*

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Helpful Resources

Maps of Palestine and Jerusalem (p.47, 48)

Making Sense of It All

- The Big Picture

In the previous Review, we witnessed Jesus' first miracle, sermon, gospel conversation, and cleansing of the Temple. This week, Jesus began His ministry in earnest by returning to His hometown of Nazareth. What should've been a welcome homecoming turned into a horrible nightmare. Jesus' neighbors and friends turned on Him and eventually tried to kill Him. His experience in Nazareth was a snapshot of His entire ministry, the highlights and horrors, the victories and tragedies. Let's review Jesus' time in Nazareth and see how it foreshadows the rest of His life, how He goes from hometown hero to the village villain.

- Nazareth Snapshot, *Luke 4:14-30*

1. **Synagogue on the Sabbath** (*v.16*): A synagogue is an assembly or gathering of Jewish people to worship and pray (like a church today). Eventually, the word *synagogue* came to refer to the building or location of the gathering. The Jewish custom was to gather at the synagogue on the Sabbath day (Saturday, the day of rest). Even though synagogues had appointed leaders, any man could read, speak, or pray. Throughout His ministry, Jesus visited synagogues, to speak to large sections of a community at one time (*v.15*).
2. **Fulfilling Scripture** (*v.17-21*): When Jesus volunteered to read a passage of scripture, the book or scroll of *Isaiah* was handed to Him (*v.17*). He quoted *Isaiah 61:1, 2a*, a passage that foreshadowed His ministry and purpose on earth. While Jesus could've used any Old Testament book to point to Him, this passage was particularly descriptive.

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me because He anointed Me..." (*v.17*): Jesus was anointed by the Holy Spirit at His baptism (*v. 1, 14; Matt. 3:13, 16, 17*).

"To preach the gospel to the poor" (*v.17*): Jesus came to bring salvation (forgiveness) to sinners. The word *poor* does not refer to material status but spiritual beggars (depravity).

"To proclaim release to the captives" (*v.17*): Captives refer to hostages taken by an enemy during a war. This captivity could refer to someone who is demon-possessed but also to all lost people who belong to the kingdom of darkness (*Eph. 2:1; Col. 1:13*).

"Recovery of sight to the blind" (*v.17*): Blindness can be physical or spiritual. Christ opens our eyes to recognize our need for Him and helps us "to see" again (*Acts 9:8, 18*).

"To set free those who are oppressed" (*v.17*): The word *oppressed* here is "crushed." He frees those who are suffering spiritual, intellectual, and emotional duress (*Matt. 1:28-30*).

"To proclaim the favorable year of the Lord" (*v.18*): The dawning of the era of salvation.

Note: Jesus did not read *Isaiah 61:2b*, which refers to "the day of vengeance of our God." This day of vengeance or judgment will occur, but it will not happen until Jesus returns. Therefore, it was not necessary for Him to read that part of the passage.

3. **Impressive Teaching** (v.15, 22): Everywhere Jesus taught He was received gladly, as people praised Him for His knowledge and authority of Scripture.
4. **Cut to the Heart** (v.23-28): Jesus knew people's hearts and thoughts. He regularly made comments that revealed sin, shortcomings, or unbelief, often making people angry.
5. **Jews and Gentiles** (v.25-27): Because of the Jews' hardened unbelief, Jesus extended the gift of salvation to Gentiles (non-Jews). Salvation in Him was for everyone.
6. **Murderous Mob** (v.28, 29): Throughout His ministry, people threatened to kill Him. No doubt, these people were empowered by the evil one who sought to destroy Jesus.
7. **Not His Time** (v.30): Jesus escaped multiple death threats until the time was right for His crucifixion. He kept to the Lord's timetable, despite the enemy's plots.

The events in Nazareth comprise a pattern that was repeated throughout Jesus' ministry.

- Personal Application

1. **Jesus on the Job** (*Lk. 5:1-11*): Though each of us have different jobs, we all have the same purpose, to share Christ with others through our attitudes, words, and deeds. Even in our occupation, our higher calling is the preoccupation of "fishing for men."
2. **Alone Time with God** (*Lk. 4:42*): Before the busy-ness of the day overwhelms us, we must take time to be alone with the Lord, balancing solitude with ministry.
3. **Faithful Friends** (*Lk. 5:17-26*): Four friends brought a paralyzed man to Jesus to heal. He not only healed the man but forgave His sins, demonstrating that one's spiritual status is more important than his physical status. We must not overlook this man's friends who carried him to Jesus. We all need friends, especially friends who will care for our souls.

The Bottom Line

Though Jesus had an incredible ministry, He was often rejected by those He came to save.

Questions to Consider

1. It is tempting to believe that only pastors are "in the ministry," but that is not true. God has given each of us a ministry. What ministry has God given you? Have you been faithful to fulfill your calling? If you are not sure what your ministry is, begin praying about it.
2. Like Jesus' experience, ministry has its ups and downs, its rewards and challenges. What has been your experience with ministering to people?
3. How have you shared Jesus on the job? What has been the response?
4. What are some of the ways you've "fished for men"? Share your victories and rejections.
5. Why is time alone with God every day important? When and where do you make time to spend with the Lord? What challenges have you faced? How have you overcome them?
6. Do you have friends who "carry you to Jesus" when you have concerns? Who are they? If not, begin praying and asking God to reveal to you who those friends might be.
7. Are you the kind of friend who "carries others to Jesus"? What does that require of you?