

Gospel According to Luke

July 8, 2018

Reading: Luke 4:14-21

Sermon #12

Luke 4:14-21

Battle for Souls – Part II

Jesus' Two Phased Battle

As those in the synagogue heard Jesus read, we have also just heard the reading of God's Word this morning. In verses 18 and 19 of Luke chapter 4 Jesus read Isaiah 61, verses 1 and 2. He then sits down and looks out at the crowd of people at the synagogue and says in verse 21, **“Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”** What do you think these people thought Jesus was saying? Some might have thought Jesus was saying he was a prophet, like John the Baptist and was announcing the Messiah was soon coming. Some understood Jesus was not saying he was a prophet, but the Messiah.

In Luke chapter 7, John the Baptist is in prison and sends messengers to Jesus with a question, **“Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?”** (Luke 7:20) Jesus does not directly answer but says in verses 22 and 23, **“Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have good news preached to them. ²³ And blessed is the one who is not offended by me.”**

You see Jesus just did not look like what the people had imagined the Messiah to look like – a warrior king. So, some understood what Jesus was reading in the synagogue at Nazareth and that the Messiah had arrived.

Jesus reveals a mystery about the Messiah in his reading of Isaiah 61, verse 2.

This reading is very short for a synagogue service, but what is amazing is Jesus breaks off his reading in the middle of the verse. Jesus says at the end of verse 19

of Luke 4, “to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor” and he stops. But Isaiah says, “to proclaim the year of the LORD’s favor, and the day of vengeance of our God.” The question that comes to my mind is, “Why did Jesus not finish reading Isaiah 61:2?” I believe the answer is because of the mystery of his coming. The mystery is that his coming is in 2 phases – the 1st and the 2nd coming. The Old Testament prophets, like Isaiah, saw the coming of the Messiah as both the salvation and vengeance happening together. They did not understand that the Messiah would bring salvation and centuries later he would return a 2nd time and bring judgment and vengeance. The Old Testament prophets saw the day of salvation from sin and the judgment or vengeance of God as one event.

Jesus’ first phase was for the liberation and salvation from sin. John recorded Jesus saying, “If anyone hears my words and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. ⁴⁸ The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day.” (John 12:47-48) When Jesus says in verse 19 he came, “to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor” he means as the Christ he has entered into time and history for the salvation of mankind. As Paul wrote, “Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.” (2 Corinthians 6:2) Jesus’ purpose was to show mankind a way back to God bringing salvation for those who give their lives to him.

We live in the love and grace and patience of God for God is withholding judgment and gives full amnesty to the rebellious hearts of people when they accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior. John said it this way, “to all who did receive ~~him~~ Jesus, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, ¹³ who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.” (John 1:12-13) The world is experiencing God’s time of grace. Satan

is using this time to corrupt the world. Peter said, “scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. ⁴ They will say, ‘Where is the promise of his coming? For ... all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation.’ ” (2 Peter 3:3-4) Satan’s desire is to take as many souls to hell as possible, so he uses this time of God’s grace to lure the world to its destruction. We should be shouting to those around us “Awake!” the day of salvation will come to an end and I know not when. The Day of Salvation will end and when it does **“the day of vengeance of our God”** will arrive with swiftness. My beloved we may suffer at the hands of the world for our faith in Christ, but we gain eternity. We are called to faithfulness – faithfulness in living out the gospel and faithfulness in proclaiming the gospel. Reading from Paul’s letter to the Thessalonians, **“This is evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are also suffering—⁶ since indeed God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you,⁷ and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels⁸ in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.⁹ They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might.”** (2 Thessalonians 1:5-9) As Christians our suffering is short-term and the glory of God is forever. Unbelievers at their death or when Jesus returns **“will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might.”** In Luke we grasp that as Jesus’ ministry begins and as he reads the Scripture in the synagogue he is telling people he is the Messiah and he begins a time in history of “good news” a time of healing, a time for sins to be forgiven and for a time the day of vengeance is postponed.

The Battle Carries On

God the Father sent God the Son to the earth with the mission of salvation and the battle against evil begun by Jesus is to be continued by his church until his return. Paul made this clear, writing, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.”¹⁸ All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation;¹⁹ that is, **in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.**²⁰ **Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us.** We implore you, *the unsaved world*, on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.²¹ For our sake ~~he~~ *God the Father* made ~~him~~ *Jesus* to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” (2 Corinthians 5:17-21) If we are the children of God through Christ who has forgiven our many sins, then we are to model our lives after the life of Christ as closely as possible. This is why Jesus told his disciples, “**Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.**” (John 20:21) Jesus’ disciples were an extension of his mission and we too, as the remnant believers of Christ are also his ambassadors and are to continue the battle until he returns. We should expect to suffer as he suffered, we should expect to bless others as he blessed in his Father’s name. Jesus is the light in the world exposing evil and we are to be his light of truth, love, mercy and grace.

When we take the Lord’s Supper we symbolically take the broken body of Jesus and eat it to show we live by his sacrifice. Paul wrote that by rising from the dead Jesus defeated death and sin and the evil one. This is why God the Father “**put all things under ~~his~~ *Jesus*’ feet and gave him as head over all things to the church,**²³ **which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.**” (Ephesians 1:22-23)

The church is the body of Christ and it is to live as a sacrifice before the corrupt world. Christ gave the Holy Spirit to indwell believers, so that, his church, which is his body, will be visible to the world as it lives out the gospel of “good news.” So, church when you read of Jesus and all that he did, ask yourself a couple of questions. First, what is it Jesus does for you that you were unable to do for yourself? Second, what is the example Jesus gives you that you are now to live out as a child of God? Everything Jesus said and did was to call people to him, to believe in him and trust him and this enables you to be able to emulate him in your life. We are to meet sin, corruption and hate head-on with love, grace and mercy found in Christ. Everything Jesus did was to build your faith and call you to action. “For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps.” (1 Peter 2:21) Jesus **suffered for you** – each and every one of you. His suffering purchased your salvation. Your salvation was beyond your ability to purchase. Jesus left **you an example**. This is how we are to live – we cannot atone for sins, but we can take up our cross, enduring hardship and battle evil by the power of his grace and mercy to lead people to the one – Jesus, the only one who can atone for their sins.

The Battle Demands Engagement

I want to encourage us this morning and call ourselves to action by observing the actions and listening to the words of Christ.

It is crucial we understand the work of the Holy Spirit in Jesus’ life. In chapter 1 of Luke, the Holy Spirit conceived Jesus. In chapter 3 the Holy Spirit descends on Jesus like a dove demonstrating God the Father’s love and anointing the ministry of Jesus. As we entered chapter 4, “Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness ² for forty days, being tempted

by the devil.” (Luke 4:1-2) In the wilderness Satan wanted to pull Jesus away from his mission as the suffering servant who would die for the salvation of mankind. Jesus held fast to the Word of God and relied on the power of the Holy Spirit and left the battle in the wilderness a victor – fully God, fully man and even though tempted – sinless. We observe 2 very different sources of power. Satan offers Jesus his borrowed power as the prince of this world for a time. He offered the physically hungry Jesus food, the alone Jesus the power and glory of a ruler of the world and the fame and worship of people if they could see him leap from the temple and be lifted up by angels. Jesus knew his mission and kept his focus on the redemption of the cross. Jesus renounced Satan as the want-to-be god whose time was growing short and declares the eternal truth of the Creator God. We perceive the result of Jesus holding to his mission in verse 14, “Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee.” By battling and defeating Satan he enjoyed the power of God. To a lesser extent, since we are not gods, is not the same true for us? James instructed, “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.

⁷ Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

⁸ Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.” (James 4:6-8) Every pleasure the world entices you with that will cause you to sin will destroy your pleasure found in God and will rob you of the power God gives you by the Holy Spirit.

However, if you use the power of the Holy Spirit, as did Jesus, and resist the devil and draw near to God and even though you may give up some pleasure of this world you will gain what the world does not have. For as Jesus said, “If anyone

loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him. ... ²⁴ Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. ... ²⁵ These things I have spoken to you ...

²⁷ Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid. ...

²⁹ And now I have told you before it takes place, so that when it does take place

you may believe. ³⁰ I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming. He has no claim on me, ³¹ but I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father. Rise, let us go from here.” (John 14:23-31) We too, are to rise up and go out into the world, as Jesus did. We are to emulate Jesus as he stated his mission in verse 18 of Luke chapter 4, “**The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed.**” In the wilderness Jesus fought on the defense by the power of the Holy Spirit. In the synagogue in Nazareth Jesus takes the offense by the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus announces the battle and calls all believers in every age to climb out of the trenches to do battle by the power of the Holy Spirit. My beloved, “**Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.**” ¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual *forces* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*. ¹³ Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.” (Ephesians 6:11-13) We are to battle evil in the power of the Holy Spirit and the name of Christ. The gospel is our sword!

Key Battlefields

Today’s key battlefields are in flux as is the balance of world power. We need to develop strategies understanding the current status of the world, the political powers and population distribution, as well as the projected future. Our virtual reality is clouded by the electronic bombardment we are under every day. What is truth and what is the false truth being put forth by whatever entity has control of the media. Here is what I do know; the battle for souls is real, spiritual warfare is

being waged all around us and all over the world. We need to push back the clouds of deception Satan has laid and bring the light of the gospel to the world. That is a large task, but I know that God's plan for salvation will prevail and he gives us the honor of being warriors in his army doing battle for eternal truth. I want to quickly speak about 4 areas we should focus on as the body of Christ. Four areas of battle that Canyon Bible Church, as the body of Christ should consider.

Urban and Rural Areas

About 51% of the world's population now lives in major urban cities. As an example, Mexico City to our south has a population of over 21 million. It has a population greater than New York City of children under the age of 14. Churches in cities have a great challenge to meet the needs of the poor, the ever growing drug culture and homeless.

However, in America there is a new trend, a population shift. Young adults between the ages of 24 to 34 and the Baby Boomers over 65 are moving out of the cities into rural areas. While 35 to 55 year old professionals are living in the cities, but downsizing the places they live in in order to free up money for travel and personal pleasure.

These people movements of people overseas in the 3rd world moving into large urban cities and the decentralizing in America back out into the rural areas needs to be taken into consideration when developing our evangelism strategies.

Islam

Islam is the greatest challenge to both Christianity and the world today. With 1.8 billion followers in over 200 countries it is rapidly influencing the world. The

followers of Islam want the world to lock itself into a 7th century culture. It has an ever-increasing zeal to extend its influence throughout the world by force and violence. It is impacting the world as no other movement in history for evil. 80% of missionaries are in the nice climates of the world and in countries where there is little conflict. The few missionaries on the frontlines of the battle in Muslim countries are outnumbered but are making great inroads. Listen to the promise of God found in Isaiah, “In that day Israel will be the third with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the earth,²⁵ whom the LORD of hosts has blessed, saying, ‘Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel my inheritance.’ ” (19:24-25) God’s plan of salvation will prevail and the Middle East is important.

Materialism

The widespread influence of Christianity in many industrialized first world countries has collapsed. Christianity had a great influence in the founding of America and on its society through the 1800s. But beginning in the 20th century that was quickly gone to where now Christianity by most is considered old-dated or oppressive or the enemy. The 2/3s of the world that the church was working to reach with the gospel, these countries have watched the collapse of Christianity in the Western nations. Reestablishing the gospel in the first world countries is essential. Western nations, once the bedrock of Christianity are quickly becoming spiritual wastelands. There are now more missionaries coming into the USA than going out to other countries.

Poverty

Jesus said, “If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.” (Matthew 19:21) The

poor have always been and will always be until Jesus returns. In America there is a great shift in process; the wealthy and poor classes are increasing in size while the middle class is decreasing. This will have a great impact in the next 50 years.

In the 2/3s world countries the poor population is massive. Almost 200 million people in Africa and 550 million in Asia do not have enough to eat or are starving. We must not only take the gospel of Jesus to these people, but we must teach them to farm, help establish clean water systems, teach them how to read and write so they can sustain these systems that will bring their families and nations out of poverty.

I recently read Jonathan Edwards' sermon he preached in 1733, "The Christian Pilgrim." Here are some important excerpts preached almost 300 years ago that we need to hear today. Edwards preached, "We should desire heaven more than the comforts and enjoyments of this life ... Our hearts ought to be loose to these things, as that of a man on a journey ... these things are only lent to us for a little while, to serve a present turn; but we should set our hearts on heaven, as our inheritance forever." (Works, vol. 2, page 243) My beloved may we hear the eternal words of Jesus and the words of a great preacher and be encouraged to enter the battlefield for souls.

Closing Prayer

Oh, Lord we know our life here on earth is a short journey as compared to eternity. We are growing in our understanding that this world is a battlefield of incredible carnage as the evil one lures people into unbelief and sin. We see that people seek answers and often find the false virtual reality that brings temporary pleasure and eternal suffering, help us be different. Jesus went out among the people and fought to bring them God's truth, the only lasting truth and he suffered as he battled, help

us be like Jesus. I know that Jesus promises are always true and he promises we will suffer as he did if we engage in this spiritual battle. But he also promises if we do battle in his name we will gain the eternal blessings of heaven. Father I ask you to strengthen us through your Word and the power of your Spirit and drive us into this battle for souls and help us live on the offense as Jesus did in his ministry. May we as a church endure the battle and fight with committed hearts until Jesus returns and ends the war. Amen!