

Luke 4:14-21

- 14 Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside.
- 15 He was teaching in their synagogues, and everyone praised him.
- 16 He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read,
- 17 and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:
- 18 “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free,
- 19 to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”
- 20 Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him.
- 21 He began by saying to them, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”

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- The Working Preacher writes, *“This passage follows upon the heels of the temptation narrative in which Jesus emerges the victor over Satan, at least for the time being.”*
 - In Luke, this is the opening, or the beginning of the ministry of Jesus Christ. John 2 – 5 may have preceded these verses.
 - Luke introduces themes which will be emphasized throughout the gospel: Jesus’ empowerment by the Holy Spirit (v. 14), the importance of his teaching ministry (vs. 15-30), and his miracles (vs. 31-44).

- The Holy Spirit is prominent in these first chapters of Luke. The Working Preacher writes:
“Jesus’ work is accompanied by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit in Luke leads, fills, and empowers for prophetic work. Such characters as Zechariah (Luke 1:15, 67-79), his wife, Elizabeth (1:41), Simeon (2:25-32), and John (3:16) experience the Spirit and proclaim truth through the filling of the Holy Spirit. Jesus himself is filled with the Holy Spirit (3:22) who then leads him into the wilderness for a time of fasting and testing. So, when we see Jesus being led by the Spirit (4:14), we should not be surprised to encounter guidance, empowerment, and prophetic words.”
- Notice that Jesus is in the habit of going to the synagogue, and that both he and the attendees were comfortable and familiar with him reading and speaking.
- Nazareth was an agricultural village that sat on a major trade route and was close to the Galilean capital, Sephoris, which was being rebuilt during the time that Jesus was growing up. Accompanying Joseph, a carpenter and builder, Jesus would have been familiar with many different languages and cultures.

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- The power of the Spirit... see Romans 5:13.
- The wilderness experience was, for Jesus, strikingly similar to the Pentecost experience for the disciples.
- Note that Jesus had actually been *strengthened* by the experience of his encounter with evil.

- “News” about him, pheme in Greek, is more literally translated, “a rumor of unknown origin.”
- “Everyone praised him” until he began preaching and teaching about integrity, responsibilities and imperatives!

16 *He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read,*

- He now returns to Nazareth, where he grew up, and where people are familiar with him.
- We know that Jesus was literate!
- Jesus was faithful and pious. Even though both government and faith leaders were largely corrupt, Jesus did not excuse himself from regularly worshiping God and sharing God’s word!
- Barnes notes that
“It is better to attend a place of worship which is not entirely pure, or where just such doctrines are not delivered as we would wish, than not attend at all.”

17 *and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:*

18 *“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”*

- Ellicott studied extensively the various assigned days for various readings, and concluded that:
“It was on the day of Atonement that the great Atoner thus struck what was the keynote of His whole work.”
- Verses 18-19 is a compilation of the Servant Song from Isaiah 58:6 and 61:1-2.

- To the rabbis, scribes, and Pharisees, the scheduled reading of the law was of primary importance, but Jesus quite naturally values the prophetic readings!
- Verse 18 reminds us of Christ’s baptism.
- Barnes writes, *“By the “poor” are meant all those who are destitute of the comforts of this life, and who therefore may be more readily disposed to seek treasures in heaven; all those who are sensible of their sins, or are poor in spirit (Matthew 5:3;) and all the “miserable” and the afflicted (Isaiah 58:7.)*
- Perhaps the most celebrated of Christ’s teachings are the Beatitudes from the Sermon on the Mount. These verses show that humility, compassion, forgiveness, and freedom from the shackles of sin were priority right from the start.

20 *Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him.*

- Jesus followed common practice after reading from the scroll.
- Everyone’s eyes were fixed on Jesus, waiting to hear what he would say about what he had read.

21 *He began by saying to them, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”*

- We know what the reaction was in the coming verses. When people’s expectations of conquest and power are dashed and replaced with teachings of brave self-denial and quiet generosity, hostility sets in!
- The Pulpit Commentary cuts the residents of Nazareth some slack by noting ruefully that the rejection in Nazareth was only about two months ahead of rejection by the nation.
- *“Truth embitters those whom it does not enlighten.”*