

Luke 4:14-21

"The Year of the Lord's Favor"

May 19, 2024

1. Intro

- a. If you were to look closely at the Church today...
 - i. Maybe, more importantly, if you were to LISTEN closely to the Church today...
 1. You would discover very quickly that there is MUCH confusion and misunderstanding about what the "Good News" of Jesus Christ really is
 - a. Are we proclaiming the "Good News" of Jesus by simply standing on the street corner, holding up a sign that says "Jesus Loves You!" while we smile and wave at all the cars going by?
 - b. Are we proclaiming the "Good News" of Jesus by saying that Jesus is a loving Savior, who would never judge anyone or condemn them for their lifestyle choices, so just come on into the Church and ignore all that talk about repentance or hell or the wrath of God?
 - c. Are we proclaiming the "Good News" of Jesus by telling everyone that if they would just place their faith in Jesus, he promises to heal all your sicknesses, fill your bank account to overflowing, and make the rest of your life prosperous and free from suffering?
 - d. Are we proclaiming the "Good News" of Jesus by telling people, "If you'll just come forward and accept Christ into your heart, then you can be eternally forgiven for all your sin... just by making this ONE decision...?"
 2. If you listen closely to churches across the globe, or even just churches across the Tulsa area, you will get ALL SORTS OF ideas about what the "Good News" of Jesus Christ really is
 - a. And, in all of our efforts to repackage the Gospel in an effort to reach the lost within OUR time and place, we have failed to remember THE most basic and important question:
 - i. What does THE BIBLE say the "Good News" of Jesus Christ is?
 1. If the Gospel of the Good News of Jesus Christ is the ONLY message that has the power of salvation, as Paul tells us in Romans 1:16,
 - a. Then it is of utmost importance that we get the Good News RIGHT
 2. Thankfully, in spite of all the many ways we have messed up the message we have been entrusted with, God's Word remains faithful
 - i. And if we would just return to the Scriptures, we will return to solid footing upon which we can stand
 1. And we will see in our passage this morning that Jesus himself gives us GREAT help when it comes to proclaiming the BEST of news
 - b. But, before we get to his actual message, the first sermon that Luke records for us in his Gospel, we need to unpack some context and some potential problem areas
 - i. First, let's go back to the verses we finished with last week, Luke 4:14-15

2. Luke 4:14-15

- a. ¹⁴And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and a report about him went out through all the surrounding country. ¹⁵And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all.
- i. So, we saw last week Satan's temptations of Jesus in the wilderness
 1. If you remember, we talked about the fact that Jesus was INTENTIONALLY led BY THE SPIRIT to go out into the wilderness to be tempted by the Devil
 2. And in his forty GRUELING days of battle against Satan, Jesus was FULLY victorious against his enemy, in contrast to the 10 spies who came back from their 40 days in the Promised Land... discouraged, disheartened, and defeated
 - a. This was a NECESSARY battle that Jesus had to engage in
 - i. For, in facing all the temptations known to man... from his forty days in the wilderness, to his death upon the cross... Jesus walked through every temptation we would ever experience
 1. And he did so without sinning even once
 - a. Therefore, he is now not only our High Priest who lives to intercede to his Father on our behalf
 - b. But he is also a SYMPATHETIC High Priest, who understands every single one of our weaknesses
 - ii. Jesus is not some aloof and distant deity who is far beyond our reach
 1. He took on OUR flesh, and he walked through OUR trials and troubles and temptations
 - a. And because of HIS victory, we can approach the throne of grace with absolute confidence, knowing that HE is the one who stands in OUR place
 - ii. So Jesus returned from the wilderness, in the power of the Spirit
 1. And he went into the region of Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and being glorified by all
 - iii. We talked a few weeks ago about the idea of "harmonizing" the Gospels
 1. This is a way of studying the 4 Gospels in the New Testament by attempting to overlap them on top of each other, using one Gospel to help fill in the gaps of another Gospel
 - a. As we talked about then, we need to be careful in trying to harmonize the Gospels, because we do not want to lose the unique messages that each individual author is trying to convey
 - i. But, if we approach this method carefully, it can be very helpful for us
 1. ESPECIALLY when it comes to trying to figure out a timeline for all of the events of the Gospels
 - a. And it actually becomes pretty fascinating when you start to see these things come together
 - iv. So if we were to simply read the Gospel of Luke by itself, we would get the impression that Jesus was tempted by Satan in the wilderness, and then he immediately went back to Galilee, and very quickly ended up back in his hometown of Nazareth...
 1. Where he was very quickly, and very harshly, rejected by his own neighbors
 - a. But ACTUALLY, if we were to lay all the Gospels on top of each other, we would find a VERY different picture
 - i. Now, there is some disagreement among scholars when it comes to the timeline of the Gospels
 1. But the generally accepted view is that, before Jesus returned to Galilee, he actually had a fairly substantial season of ministry in Judea

- b. On some timelines, you would see this referred to as Jesus' FIRST Judean Ministry
 - i. And just listen to all of the things that most scholars believe happened during this first Judean ministry...
 - 1. Jesus calls Peter and Andrew, and then Philip and Nathanael to follow after him
 - 2. Jesus changes the water into wine at the wedding in Cana
 - 3. Jesus goes to Jerusalem for his first Passover after beginning his ministry
 - a. And this is when he clears the Temple, the first time
 - 4. Jesus has his conversation with Nicodemus, an influential Pharisee who ALREADY sees Jesus as a well-respected rabbi
 - 5. Jesus' disciples and John the Baptist are baptizing people TOGETHER in the Judean countryside
 - 6. Herod puts John the Baptist in prison
 - 7. And then Jesus leaves for Galilee
 - a. Where he stops in Samaria along the way and has his interaction with the Samaritan woman at the well
 - ii. Almost all of these things are given to us in John's Gospel
 - 1. And there are some scholars who believe that all of these things encompassed almost an entire YEAR of Jesus' ministry!
 - v. This is helpful for us to know as we read Luke's Gospel
 - 1. This explains why Luke would say that "a report about Jesus" had already gone out throughout Galilee by this time
 - a. Jesus had already been stirring up the waters in Judea and in Jerusalem
 - i. He had already began teaching and preaching in the synagogues, and even in the Temple
 - 1. He had already begun showing miraculous signs to show that he was the Son of God
 - b. And so, as he made his way through Galilee, back to Nazareth, Luke says that Jesus was being glorified by all
3. So then, in Luke 4:16, we read...
- a. ¹⁶And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read.
 - i. Here we find Jesus returning back to his hometown, the place where he had lived and grown up for almost his entire childhood, and into his adult life
 - 1. Now, just think about it for a moment...
 - a. If our timeline is correct, its been close to a year since Jesus had left Nazareth to come to be baptized by John in the Jordan River
 - b. So who was Jesus a year earlier?
 - i. Well, he was simply the son of Joseph
 - 1. Most likely, Jesus had followed in the footsteps of his earthly dad, and had become a carpenter
 - a. He was not a rabbi... or a Pharisee... or a Sadducee
 - i. He was simply Jesus, the carpenter
 - ii. Possibly even Jesus, the son of Mary, who had gotten pregnant with him before she was even married... carrying that stigma around with them for three decades now

- c. But in this year that Jesus had been gone, rumors were possibly beginning to drift back to the people in Nazareth
 - i. Did you hear what Jesus has been teaching and preaching?
 - ii. Did you hear what Jesus did to all the moneychangers, AT THE TEMPLE?
 - iii. Have you heard what people are saying about OUR Jesus, the carpenter? The son of Joseph???
 - 2. You can understand why there must have been a buzz of both excitement and skepticism as Jesus arrived back at his home
 - a. And so, on the Sabbath day, as was Jesus' custom, he went into the synagogue in Nazareth
 - b. And Luke tells us that he stood up to read...
4. Luke 4:17-21 tells us what Jesus read...
 - a. *¹⁷And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written, ¹⁸"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, ¹⁹to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." ²⁰And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. ²¹And he began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."*
 - i. One of the first things that needs to be pointed out about this passage is what IS NOT said
 - 1. In these synagogues, part of the service that the people took part in was the reading of the Old Testament Scriptures
 - a. These readings were typically done in order throughout the year
 - i. So each Sabbath Day would have a very specific passage that was to be read on that day
 - 1. So when Jesus stood up to read, he wasn't just shuffling through the scrolls to pick out a verse that he could apply to himself
 - 2. This passage in Isaiah was the passage that God had PROVIDENTIALLY arranged to be read by Jesus
 - a. At this very synagogue
 - b. On this very day
 - c. In front of this very people
 - 3. God's timing is ABOSLUTELY perfect!!
 - 2. So they give Jesus the scroll, and he reads from Isaiah 61, verses 1 and 2
 - a. Now, if we are going to be good students of the Scripture, we would go back to Isaiah 61:1-2 to look at the context of what Isaiah was writing about during HIS days
 - i. And if we were to do that, we would very quickly end up scratching our heads in confusion!
 - 1. For the verses that Jesus quotes in Luke 4 don't exactly line up with what Isaiah says in Isaiah 61
 - a. So what's going on here?
 - i. Certainly Jesus didn't make a mistake...
 - ii. Is it possible that Luke messed up his record of what Jesus said?
 - b. Well, many critics of the Bible would say that is exactly what's going on here...

- i. They would say that Luke not only messed up here...
- ii. But he also INTENTIONALLY twisted Jesus' words for his own purposes
- iii. And therefore this is yet another example of how the Scriptures are NOT 100% reliable

3. Well, these critics would be wrong in their assumption, for they fail to acknowledge the context in Jesus' day

a. If you think back to some of our earliest sermons in Luke's Gospel, you'll remember that, after the conquest of Alexander the Great, much of Europe and the Middle East had adopted the customs and language of Greece

i. This was a process known as Hellenization

1. And one of the effects of the Hellenization that happened in the following centuries after Alexander was that many of the Jewish people drifted away from the Hebrew language

2. And they adopted the Greek language, just like everyone else

ii. So when many of the Jews began to be more comfortable with the Greek language than the Hebrew, they decided that the Scriptures needed to be translated into the Greek

1. Out of this belief came the Greek Old Testament, which is often referred to as the Septuagint

2. In your Bible notes, you might sometimes see a reference to a capital "LXX", which is the Roman Numeral for "seventy"

3. This means they are referring to the Greek translation of the Old Testament

b. And this is likely the translation that Luke would have known as he recorded his Gospel account for Theophilus

i. For when we look to Isaiah 61 in the Septuagint, we see that it is MUCH more similar to what Luke writes here in chapter 4

1. This is why we are called to be students of the Word, friends

2. If we don't dig deeply into these things, then when the world confronts us and tells us that our Bibles are not reliable, we will have no answer to give them

ii. Be DILIGENT in reading and studying the Word of God, even the parts that might initially be confusing!

1. But now we must turn to the words that Jesus preached

a. And in these words, we find MUCH Good News!!

5. The first thing that we see that Jesus claims for himself is that he has been anointed by the Holy Spirit

a. Now we know from the Scriptures that ALL Christians are indwelt by the Holy Spirit

i. It is the Spirit who convicts us of our sin and unrighteousness before a Holy God

ii. It is the Spirit who regenerates our hearts, and brings life to our dry bones

iii. It is the Spirit who has been given to ALL believers as a seal, a guarantee BY GOD that we will receive our inheritance in Christ

b. So ALL Christians are indwelt by the Holy Spirit

i. But the Bible ALSO speaks of an ANNOINTING of the Spirit, in much the same way that many people in the Old Testament were anointed by God

1. In Leviticus 8:12, Moses anoints Aaron to serve as priest before the Lord

2. In 1 Samuel 10:1, Samuel anoints Saul to be prince over all of God's people

3. In 1 Kings 19:15-16, Elijah is told to anoint Hazeal to be king over Syria, and Jehu to be king over Israel
 - a. And then he is told to anoint Elisha to become the new prophet in his place
 - ii. These men, and many others, were anointed BY GOD to fulfill specific roles in His Kingdom
 1. Paul shows us in 2 Corinthians 1:21-22 that this practice continues under the New Covenant, as he wrote these words...
 - a. ²¹*And it is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us, ²²and who has also put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.*
 - i. So yes, Paul and Silvanus and Timothy had been given the Spirit as a seal and a guarantee, just like every other believer
 - ii. But they ALSO had a special ANNOINTING to serve their specific role in expanding the Kingdom of God
 - iii. And so it was for Jesus...
 1. As Acts 10:38 tells us, *“God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.”*
 - iv. So, for what purpose was Jesus anointed by his Father?
 1. In this passage we see that he was anointed for four proclamations
 - a. To proclaim good news for the poor
 - b. To proclaim liberty for the captives and the oppressed
 - c. To proclaim the recovery of sight for the blind
 - d. And to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor
6. So first, Jesus was anointed to proclaim good news for the poor
- a. So, does this mean that the Good News of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is ONLY for the financially poor?
 - i. Well, if that’s all it means, then we are in BIG trouble
 1. Just the fact that we all got dressed in our nice clothes this morning, drove to church in our nice cars, and are now sitting in a comfortably airconditioned building tells us that...
 - a. Compared to the vast majority of the rest of the world, we are ABUNDANTLY rich!
 - b. We will see in the Gospel of Luke that Jesus certainly has A LOT to say about wealth, and how being rich can be a MASSIVE obstacle in surrendering our lives to him
 - i. So there is definitely an element of being poor financially in this verse
 - ii. But if we go back to the original Hebrew of Isaiah 61, we find that this goes much deeper than just the state of our bank accounts
 1. In Isaiah 61:1, when Jesus says, “The Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor,” the word used for “poor” is the word *anav*
 - a. And, rather than being a term of economic status, this word *anav* refers to a condition of THE HEART
 - i. It is those who are afflicted and needy
 - ii. Those who are humble and lowly
 - iii. Those who are meek
 2. My friends, the Good News of Jesus Christ is NOT for the powerful
 - a. The Good News is NOT for the prideful and the arrogant
 - b. The Good News is NOT for anyone who is not willing to let go of their own ego and their own self-centered ways

3. Jesus has come to proclaim the good news to those who are humble and afflicted and meek
 - a. He tells us this in his Beatitudes, doesn't he?
 - i. Blessed are the poor in spirit...
 1. WHY? What could possibly be the good news for those who are poor in spirit?
 - a. Jesus tells them, "For THEIRS is the Kingdom of Heaven"
 2. Friends, forget about the riches and prosperity of the kingdoms of this world...
 3. Forget about the trinkets and the treasures of the American Dream...
 4. Forget about the things that thieves can steal, or that moths can eat, or that rust can destroy...
 - a. If you are poor in spirit – broken and contrite before God and before His Son – then the Kingdom of Heaven is YOURS!!
 - ii. And Jesus reiterates this two verses later when he says "Blessed are the meek..."
 1. In this world that prides itself on ambition and climbing the ladder and making a name for yourself, what could possibly be the good news for the MEEK and the LOWLY?
 - a. Jesus tells them, "For THEY shall inherit the earth!"
 - iii. This is GREAT news for the poor in heart, isn't it?!
7. Second, we see that Jesus was anointed to proclaim liberty for the captives and the oppressed
 - a. Now, for the people of Israel in those days, this was something that was very much on the forefront of their minds
 - i. For, as we've noted before, Israel was occupied territory in the first century, wasn't it?
 1. The land of Judea and Galilee and all the surrounding territories were FIRMLY under the rule and reign of the Roman Empire
 - a. God's people were captives in their own land
 - b. They were oppressed on all sides
 2. So they LONGED for the Anointed One of the Old Testament to come
 - a. They LONGED for a King to come and deliver them from their enemies
 - b. Yes, they longed for a Messiah...
 - i. But they wanted their Messiah to come wielding a sword and an army that would deliver them from the hands of Rome
 1. But that was NOT the liberty that Jesus had been anointed to proclaim, was it?
 - a. In fact, Jesus would be hung on a cross by the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate
 - b. And Jerusalem itself would be destroyed not even four decades later
 - ii. Jesus was anointed to proclaim liberty for the captives and for the oppressed... but he didn't come to topple human governments
 1. No... as we heard a few minutes ago in Acts 10:38...
 - a. ³⁸God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed BY THE DEVIL, for God was with him.

- iii. My friends, this is the GOOD NEWS of Jesus Christ, that he has come to set us free from our slavery under Satan's yoke
 - 1. In Ephesians 2:1-2, Paul tells the Christians that they were DEAD in their trespasses and sins
 - a. They had all been children of wrath, just like the rest of mankind, because they all were followers of the prince of the power of the air...
 - i. They were ALL slaves to Satan
 - 1. BUT GOD, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us ALIVE together with Christ!
 - iv. The Good News of Jesus Christ is that God so loved the world that He sent His only begotten Son to bring FREEDOM to those who were held captive by Satan and who were oppressed under his wicked rule!
 - 1. In John chapter 12, as Jesus is nearing the hour of his crucifixion, he tells his disciples that his soul is troubled
 - a. But with firm resolution, he says to them, *"What shall I say? Father save me from this hour???* But FOR THIS PURPOSE I have come to this hour... Now is the judgment of this world; NOW will the ruler of this world be cast out!"
 - i. Jesus has been anointed to proclaim the good news that he has bound the strong man
 - ii. And we can now find FREEDOM from our captivity and oppression!!
8. Third, we see that Jesus was anointed to proclaim the recovery of sight for the blind
- a. Again, we need to ask the question, "Is this a LITERAL recovery of sight for those who are PHYSICALLY blind?"
 - i. Well, if you're familiar with the Scriptures, then you know that it absolutely can be a literal healing of physical blindness
 - 1. In Matthew 9:27-30, Jesus heals two blind men by touching their eyes
 - 2. In Mark 8:22-25, Jesus heals the blind man at Bethsaida by spitting on the man's eyes and laying his hands upon his eyes
 - 3. In John 9:1-7, Jesus heals the man who was blind from birth by anointing the man's eyes with mud, and then telling him to wash in the pool of Siloam
 - a. So yes, Jesus certainly proclaimed the recovery of sight for those who were physically blind
 - b. But is that the extent of the Good News?
 - i. What about Louis Braille, who was blinded in an accident at the age of three, and who later became a very devout follower of Jesus, as well as inventing the Braille language that blind people use to read today all over the world?
 - 1. He didn't receive his recovery of sight, did he?
 - ii. Or what about Fanny Crosby, who became blind at the age of six weeks old due to a mistreated eye infection, yet eventually went on to become one of the greatest Christian hymn writers of recent history?
 - 1. She didn't receive her recovery of sight, did she?
 - ii. No, friends, the good news of the recovery of sight for the blind is not a promise that every physical blindness will be healed
 - 1. It is a promise that the eyes of our hearts and the eyes of our minds will be opened to see the glorious face of Jesus Christ!
 - a. In 2 Corinthians 4:3-6, Paul makes this truth abundantly clear:

i. ³And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing.
⁴In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. ⁵For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. ⁶For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

2. Friends, it is in the face of Jesus Christ that we see the glory of God
 - a. Through Jesus, the veil has been lifted
 - b. Through Jesus, the blindness that Satan has placed upon our eyes is removed
 - c. Through Jesus, God shines His light into the darkest recesses of our hearts
 - i. And we who were once blind, now can see!

iii. This is the Good News of the Gospel of Jesus Christ!!

9. And finally, we see from this passage, that Jesus was anointed to proclaim the Year of the Lord's Favor
 - a. Church, this was not a single year that came and went while Jesus was ministering on this earth
 - i. Nor is it a year that awaits us on the other side of eternity
 1. Jesus didn't hand the scroll back to the attendant, and then say to everyone, "Well, this Scripture might be fulfilled in a few thousand years, give or take..."
 - a. No! He said to them,
 - i. "TODAY this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing!"
 - b. The year of the Lord's favor is NOW... TODAY!
 - i. This is what Peter reminds us of in 2 Peter 3:8-9
 1. As he's arguing against those who say that Jesus isn't coming back because nothing in the world ever seems to change, he says these words...
 - a. ³Do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. ⁹The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.
 - c. My friends, there will come a Day when the Lord will come like a thief
 - i. The heavens will pass away with a roar
 - ii. The heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved
 - iii. And all the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed
 1. God's judgment on that Day will be swift... and it will be FINAL
 - d. But UNTIL that Day comes, we are living in the year of the Lord's favor
 - i. In His great mercy, according to His incredible patience and longsuffering, He is restraining His wrath
 1. In order that more of the humble and meek might be saved
 2. In order that more captives might be set free
 3. In order that more of those who were blinded by the god of this age might see the glory of Christ
 - a. This is the year of the Lord's favor, my friends
 - i. Jesus was anointed to proclaim this Good News
 - ii. And if you are a follower of Christ, then so have YOU been anointed to proclaim this Good News

10. The Gospel is not simply that "Jesus loves you"

- a. Nor is it "Have faith in Jesus so you can be healthy and wealthy in this life"
- b. Nor is the Good News that you can simply "accept Christ" to be your Savior and you'll get your free pass into the Kingdom

- i. The Gospel is that you are a sinner before an infinitely holy God
 - 1. It is BECAUSE OF your sin and BECAUSE OF your pride and BECAUSE OF your self-worship that you stand in danger of eternal condemnation before Him
 - 2. But God, who is rich in mercy, has sent His Son to free you from the shackles of your sin
 - 3. He has shone His light in the darkness of your hearts that you might see His glory in the face of Jesus Christ
 - 4. So bring to Him the ONLY sacrifice that he has promised he will not despise...
 - a. A broken spirit
 - b. A broken and a contrite heart
 - c. A heart that humbly and meekly bows to Jesus Christ as both Savior AND Lord
- ii. This is the Year of the Lord's Favor, my friends
 - 1. May you come to Him in full surrender, while His gracious offer of eternal life yet remains