

(Luke) 15 - Beginning of Ministry

by Ed Miller

Jesus' ministry is for all mankind, and he uses the Year of Jubilee as a metaphor for spiritual freedom.

Duration: 49:04

Scripture: Isaiah 61:1-2, Luke 4:14-21

Topics: "Ministry"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker introduces Jesus as the friend of all mankind. He reads from Luke chapter 4, verses 14 and 15, which describe Jesus returning to Galilee in the power of the Spirit and teaching in the synagogues. The speaker explains that this section of Luke's gospel focuses on Jesus' ministry, which is divided into two sections: the friend of all mankind and the teacher of all mankind. The first section highlights Jesus' miracles and actions, while the second section focuses on his teachings, particularly through parables. The speaker also mentions that there is some overlap between the two sections, as Jesus both teaches and performs miracles throughout his ministry.

Transcript

Let me give you just a little bit by way of review. The Gospel of Luke, as you know, presents our Lord Jesus as the Son of all mankind. That is, he has not come just for the Jewish nation, just for Israel, but for everyone.

He's come for all mankind, and Luke's emphasis is especially the down and outer, which we will see as we come along. Since we're coming this morning to a second section of our study, I'm going to ask you please, when we first began, we handed out outlines, and if you don't have it with you, I wish you'd take one just so that we can all glance together at this. Probably most of you have that from the beginning.

But anyway, when you get that, we've come now to chapter 4 and verse 13. In other words, we have finished the first section. You notice on that page, we call the first section, The Advent and the Preparation of the Son of All Mankind.

In other words, the first four chapters talk about his coming and then how God prepared him for his ministry. He prepared him, of course, through John the Baptizer, and he prepared him, his final preparation was that great temptation in the wilderness. And so we finish those first four chapters up to verse 12.

Now if you'll glance there, you'll notice Roman numeral 2, the ministry of the Son of All Mankind. And we've divided that ministry into two sections, actually, from chapter 4 now and verse 14, all the way to chapter 19, is the great bulk of Luke, and it deals with his ministry. But we've divided it up into two sections.

One, we call The Friend of All Mankind, because this section is basically what he did, his miracles. And so we see him as the friend, working, moving, doing. And then beginning in chapter 9, verse 51, is more his teaching ministry.

This is the section on parables and so on. And so we call him there the teacher of all mankind. But it all has to do with his Galilean ministry.

Now I'm not suggesting there's no overlapping. Certainly in the doing section, there's a lot of teaching. And in the teaching section, there's a lot of doing.

But pretty much for the sake of our analysis, this is how we'll divide it up. So this morning, I want to introduce to you our Lord Jesus as the Friend of All Mankind. I'm going to ask you to glance now at Luke chapter 4, and let me read verses 14 and 15.

I want to give you several things as background that would help you to appreciate and enter into this new section. Now Luke 4, 14, And Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit. And news about him spread through all the surrounding district, and he began teaching in their synagogues, and he was praised by all.

Now if you only had the Gospel of Luke, in other words, if you didn't have Matthew and Mark and John, just Luke, it would look like this takes place right after the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness. In other words, from the wilderness, he went right straight into Galilee. But that's not how it happened.

Notice in verse 16, it says, And he came to Nazareth. The ministry of our Lord is actually divided into three parts. If you take Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, there was the early ministry, which we call the Judean ministry.

And then there's the great bulk of his ministry, which we call the Galilean ministry. And then at the end, there's a little segment, which we call the Parian ministry of our Lord Jesus. Luke does not mention the first part, called the Judean ministry.

Notice in verse 14, it says, Jesus returned to Galilee. That's the second part of his ministry. Luke jumps over a whole year, approximately a year.

In other words, you have the temptation, then a whole year of ministry, that Luke doesn't mention. In fact, if it wasn't for the gospel of John, if it weren't for John, we would not know about his Judean ministry. But the first four chapters of John tell us about this ministry.

This is where he changed the water into wine, and where he met with Nicodemus, and the woman at the well, and so on, of Samaria. All of that Luke jumps over. And so when you are reading, and just because it says the temptation, and then Nazareth, I just wanted you to know that there was a year in between that, that John covered.

Now the whole ministry of our Lord Jesus, as you know, took three and a half years. You say, how do you know that? We know it by counting Passover. And by counting the Passover, we know how many years his ministry took.

During that year, that Luke doesn't mention, he does imply several things. During that year, Jesus began to get a reputation. Rumors spread concerning what he had done, and what he had taught.

A glance at verse 14, you see the inkling of that. It says, news about him spread through all the surrounding districts. And so, though Jesus hadn't been to his boyhood town of Nazareth for over a year, they were getting reports, and they were getting rumors, and they had heard about the Lord Jesus and some of the things he had done.

So that's the first piece of background information. The second is this. Glance if you would, at verse 28 to 31.

You notice that Jesus was rejected by Nazareth, his boyhood town. And it says, all in the synagogue were filled with rage as they heard these things. They rose up and cast him out of the city, led him to the brow of the hill on which their city had been built, in order to throw him down the cliff.

But passing through their midst, he went his way. Now, as you study the gospel record, you'll notice in Matthew 13 and in Mark 6, there is another record of Jesus being rejected by Nazareth. Some people say it's all the same story.

In other words, Luke tells it early, Matthew tells it a little later, but it's the same account. This is up for grabs, and people with wiser heads than mine disagree with me, but I think there were two occasions on which he was rejected at Nazareth. I think this is the verse, and then later on, in the middle of his ministry, he went back, and he was rejected again.

Like I say, godly men disagree with me, and I'm not dogmatic on that, but I incline to think, just like there were two cleansings, one of the temple, one at the beginning of his ministry, one at the end. I think there were two times he was rejected at Nazareth. There's only one way that it could be different than that.

I could be wrong, and that's the only possibility, but we'll just leave it for, I think there's two. Now, we're told that there were about 240 villages and small towns in Galilee at the time our Lord Jesus ministered, and out of those, 242 have become prominent. First, of course, is Nazareth, because that's his boyhood town.

That's where he spent the first 30 years of his life, in Nazareth. And the second is Capernaum. You'll hear a lot as we go through Luke about Capernaum.

In Matthew chapter 9, Capernaum was called his city, and he returned to his city. Why is that his city? And the answer is, because in his Galilean ministry, which is the bulk, it's more than two years of his three and a half year ministry, he made his headquarters in Capernaum. That was his base of operation, and so he moved in and out of Capernaum all of the time.

You can see from the map that I handed out, if everyone got one, I hope you did. You can see that Capernaum was right up there on the Sea of Galilee, right up there in the north, and so it was very convenient, and it also was on the main route to Jerusalem. There's a third observation I want to make, but let's read the text first that we'll discuss.

So if you'll follow along, please, from verse 16. And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and as was his custom, he entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, and he stood up to read. And the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him.

He opened the book and found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are downtrodden, and to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord. And he closed the book and he gave it back to the attendant, and he sat down, and the eyes of all were fixed upon him.

And he began to say to them, Today is this scripture fulfilled in your ears. And they were speaking well of him, and wondering at the gracious words which were falling from his lips. And they were saying, Is this not Joseph's son? And he said to them, No doubt you'll quote this proverb, Physician, heal yourself.

Whatever we heard was done at Capernaum, do here in your home town as well. And he said, Truly I say to you, no prophet is welcome in his home town. But I say to you in truth, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the sky was shut up for three years and six months, and a great famine came over the land.

And yet Elijah was sent to none of them, only to Zarephath in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Elijah the prophet. And none of them was cleansed, but only Nahum and the Syrians.

And all in the synagogue were filled with rage as they heard these things. And they rose up and cast him out of the city, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their city had been built, in order to throw him down the cliff. But passing through their midst, he went his way.

I pointed out many lessons ago that the theme of the Gospel of Luke is the presentation of our Lord Jesus as the Son of all mankind, the Son of everybody. He's not a Savior that belongs to the Jews only, but to everybody. Up until this time, there was such a strong Jewish bias.

It was Jews, Jews, Jews, Israel, Israel, Israel, temple, temple, temple, and everything had to do, we were the chosen people. We can tell you about circumcision. We can tell you about Abraham.

We belong to David. We are the chosen people. As you know, Luke was a Gentile.

He's the only Gentile writer of any of our New Testament books. And as he begins now the ministry of our Lord Jesus, he begins on a Jewish footing. But it doesn't take him long to get off that Jewish footing and move toward the Gentile.

I don't think it's possible to begin any more Jewish than he begins this ministry of our Lord Jesus. There are four Old Testament passages referred to in the verses that I read. Actually, if you break it down, there might even be more than that.

But at least four big bulks of Scripture. Three of them are stated and one is implied. Did you notice in verse 18 and 19, he's quoting from the Old Testament.

He's quoting from Isaiah 61. And so that's the first reference. And then he gives two illustrations.

In verse 25, one from the days of Elijah, that's 1 Kings chapter 17. And then in verse 26, from the days of Elisha, that's 2 Kings chapter 5. And so Luke says, let me tell you how Jesus began his ministry. Isaiah 61, 1 Kings 17, 2 Kings chapter 5. He's in the Old Testament.

He's very Jewish to do that. Now I said there's four references. Isaiah 61 is actually a quote, is actually a reference to another chapter in the Old Testament.

A special day in Israel's calendar. Isaiah chapter 61 is the prophetic expression of what's recorded in Leviticus 25. Before I state it, does anyone know to what I'm referring? That's exactly right.

It's called the year, the famous year of Jubilee. This is the most wonderful event. If you want to study it, it's Leviticus chapter 25.

The most wonderful event on the Jewish calendar. Basically, here's what happens. Every 50 years, that's where we get our golden jubilee, by the way.

From Leviticus chapter 25. Every 50 years, God had given a command that everybody would be free. Once every 50 years.

In fact, in Leviticus 25.10, those are the words that are on our liberty bell. They went into Leviticus and proclaimed liberty throughout all the land to all the inhabitants thereof. There was a time on the Day of Atonement, the ram's horn would sound.

You know, God had allocated the patriarchal inheritance. Everybody had their piece of land. And God's plan was that they keep that piece of land.

But sometimes, through fiscal irresponsibility or some kind of a financial decision or poverty or something, they had to sell their land. And so they'd sell the orchard or they'd sell the farmland or they'd have to get rid of it. Every 50 years, it came back to the original owner.

No matter who owned it, they had to give it back. When that ram's horn sounded, every 50 years, and that's why the 49th year was so terrible, everybody tried to get into debt. Because on the 50th year, all their debts were paid.

No matter what you owed to whoever, when that trumpet sounded on the 50th year, every debt was counted. Sometime in those days, what they had to do, if I owed a debt and I couldn't pay the debt, they would take my orchard. If that didn't pay the debt, they'd take my farm.

If that didn't pay the debt, they would take my son. And he would become a slave then and work for them. And after a while, if that didn't work, when all the kids were gone, then they would take me.

And they would take my wife. And we'd now be their slaves. Until the trumpet sounded.

Every slave was set free. That's why, by the way, as you got closer to the year jubilee, things started losing their value. If I sold you my property in the 10th year, you'd pay a good price.

Because you got it for 40 years. If I sold it in the 38th year, it'd be cheaper. Because you don't have it so long.

If I sold you my land in the 49th year, you can get it for a dollar. Because you got to give it back next year. By the way, the spiritual principle there, have you noticed, as you move closer and closer to jubilee, I'm talking about the coming of the Lord.

I'm talking about your going to heaven. How things seem to lose their value in this world. The closer you get to jubilee, the more things lose their value.

He laid down that principle. And certainly that principle is true. So tremendous was that unusual year.

So wild, I might say. So radical. Imagine that.

All the land comes back. All your debts are paid. All the slaves are set free.

So radical was that year. They never tried it. They never celebrated jubilee.

Not once. They were afraid of it. They were afraid to do it because it would have thrown everything upside down.

And so they never tried jubilee. Even though it was commanded. Even though God said, this is what I want to happen.

They never did it. And so the prophets then picked up all the teaching about the jubilee. And said, now God had promised that there would be a jubilee.

That everybody would go free. That all debts would be paid. That slaves would be set free.

And the prophets picked it up and made it messianic. And said, someday Messiah will come. And he'll have the guts to do it.

When Messiah comes, he'll be the liberator. He'll be the emancipator. He'll declare jubilee.

He'll set everybody free. And so this became a messianic hope. And everybody knew messianic prophecy.

And they loved Isaiah 61. All of that, of course, is the background of this particular passage. It became spiritual rather than physical.

And allegorical rather than literal. And that there would be a different kind of emancipation in here. In the heart.

And that he would open blind eyes in here. And he'd set the captive free in here. And he'd forgive debts in here.

And make us clean. And so on. And so my first point is that Luke is very Jewish.

He quotes Isaiah's prophecy. He quotes from Elijah. He quotes from Elisha.

He quotes the year of jubilee. And also he's very Jewish because this whole thing takes place in the synagogue. Now as far as the actual beginning of the synagogue.

How did it all start? Nobody really knows that. Good chance it started during the Babylonian captivity. But we're not dead sure on how it all started.

But we know by the time the New Testament came. There were synagogues everywhere. Now you know the temple was in Jerusalem.

But not everybody could get to Jerusalem every Sabbath day. And so they had these synagogues. We know in 70 A.D. just before Titus destroyed Jerusalem.

There were 480 synagogues listed in Jerusalem alone. The rule was if you had 10 Jews you could have a synagogue. Every 10 Jews was reasoned to have a synagogue.

And there were very few rules on how the building should look except this. The main reading room should face Jerusalem. And the roof should be higher than any house surrounding it.

And so if you were going to build a synagogue in your neighborhood. You better make sure the roof was high. If you wanted to build a house after a synagogue was built.

And you dared to put your chimney higher than the highest point on the synagogue. They would come and tear your house down. The synagogue had to be.

And so to protect themselves they would go to the highest point in the city to build their synagogue. Which was in this case rather easy then for them to take Jesus out to throw him off a cliff. Because the synagogue was way up high and that was delivered.

And so that's how they had many of the synagogues. If a child was 5 years old he was allowed to go to synagogue. If he was 14 he was almost commanded to go to synagogue.

We know our Lord Jesus according to chapter 4, 16 went to synagogue as a custom. He was always in the synagogue. The synagogue service had four parts to it.

The first was prayer. The second part was a reading from the Torah. A reading from the law.

Genesis through Deuteronomy. They divided that up into 153 sections. And so they could read through the whole Torah in 3 years.

And that was their plan. And then there was the reading of a prophet. And then that's where our story picks up because the scroll was Isaiah the prophet.

And then there was the benediction. They didn't have a preacher. They didn't have a pastor or a priest in the synagogue.

The priests they had to do with the temple. But in the synagogue they had synagogue officials. But it was very informal sort of like this.

And the synagogue official then if there were any men who were qualified. And by qualified I don't really know what qualified them. But even a stranger coming into a synagogue was allowed if he wanted to make some comments on the scripture.

Any man could do it. The women were not allowed to do it. In fact they divided the women and the men up and the women were on one side.

Veiled. Quiet. You know.

And then Paul liberated them from that. But that's another story all its own. I try to picture this then.

Now that's sort of the background. Come back to chapter 4, 16. And try to get this into your mind's eye.

He came to Nazareth where he'd been brought up. And as was his custom he entered the synagogue on the Sabbath. And he stood up to read and the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him.

And he opened the book and found the place where it was written and so on. He went back to Nazareth where he'd grown up. Everybody knew him.

He grew up there. They knew his mother. They knew his father.

They knew his family. They knew his occupation. His father was a carpenter.

He was very very famous in this particular town. And now he's been gone for about a year and they had heard rumors. They heard about his baptism.

They heard about a voice out of heaven. About a dove coming down. They heard about miracles that he had done at Capernaum.

And some of the teaching that he had done. And now according to this record he came back home. Hometown boy.

And now he comes home and he goes into the synagogue. The prayer is given. The law is read.

And it comes time to read the prophet. And he stands up. And the Bible says the eyes of all were riveted upon him.

They know. They've heard about him. They've heard rumors.

They've heard about his teaching and so on. He stands up and so the official of the synagogue hands him the scroll. It was not open.

And so the text wasn't chosen. It's not like they handed him Isaiah 61. They just handed him the scroll of Isaiah.

And he found the place. He knew what he wanted to say. And he found the place where it was written from Isaiah 61.

The spirit of the Lord is upon me for he's anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor. And he begins to read. He sent me to bind up the broken hearted and give eyes to the blind.

Set the captive free to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord. He gave the book back. He sat down.

The reason was they stood to honor the Bible. When they read, they stood. When they taught, they sat.

And so then he sat down and he began to teach. This is his inaugural address. This is the beginning now of his real ministry.

His mandate. His mission. And he said a very strange thing.

And it ended up he almost got thrown off a cliff because of it. Verse 21. And he began to say to them, Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.

Well now that was an amazing thing. He selected a very hot scripture. Hot because it was messianic.

And they knew it. Someday Messiah is going to come. And he read that and said, Now this has been fulfilled in your hearing.

And what did he read? He read the prophetic announcement of Jubilee. When Messiah comes, He's going to preach good news to the poor. Set the captives free.

Forgive everybody's debts. And he claimed then that that was his mission. In other words Jesus said, Hometown boy, I am Messiah.

And I have come to proclaim Jubilee. And he actually said that. And he said it's fulfilled.

All that Isaiah had in mind is fulfilled right now. I come to bring good news to the poor. The word poor there is not just poverty.

It's beggarly poor. To the destitute. He said I've come to bring good news to them.

To the captives. Not just those in jail. But those who are enslaved.

I don't see in Isaiah 61, Recovery of sight to the blind. He just threw that in there. He made that up.

What does it say in Isaiah? In Isaiah it says, That Messiah will come to heal. Actually to bind up the broken hearted. Luke doesn't mention the broken hearted.

In the place of the broken hearted, He brings recovery of sight to the blind. I think basically what's happening is this. Isaiah is telling you what Messiah will do.

He'll heal the broken hearted. And Luke is telling you how he'll do it. By revelation.

By giving sight to the blind. How does God heal the broken hearted? By opening their eyes. By giving sight.

You'll see this over and over again. That expression by the way in Isaiah is very precious. Bind up the broken hearted.

You see it twice in the Old Testament. Once in Isaiah and once at the end of the Psalms. I think since I've been coming with you, I have seen a lot of castes.

People with broken bones. At one time, remember we had a whole table full. Everybody had a caste at the same time.

It's one thing to bind up a broken ankle, or a broken leg, or a broken arm. Or you can even bind up a broken rib. But how do you put the heart in a sling? How do you bind a broken heart? And that's exactly what the promise was.

And it's the same kind of a word that you would use to bind up a bone. And it says that when Messiah comes, He's going to be able to bind up the broken heart. And of course, Luke tells us how He's going to

do it by opening the eyes of the blind.

Now I have no doubt some of this is literal, but I think it's mostly spiritual. And I think what He's trying to say is the acceptable year of the Lord, the year of Jubilee, we're now going to begin looking at the ministry of Christ. What is the ministry of our Lord Jesus? And the answer is, He has come to proclaim liberty to the captives.

That's the idea. That His whole ministry now is emancipator. And He's announcing it to His hometown.

Luke not only changes, by the way, what Isaiah said, moving from the broken hearted to opening the blind, but He actually adds something that Isaiah didn't say. Well, he didn't say here. He says it in chapter 58, but he didn't say it in 61.

And that is to set free those who are downtrodden, those who are oppressed. But either way, you get the idea of the message. Now I could just tell you this next point, and I know that you'd probably trust me for it, but I think it'll mean more to you if you actually look up Isaiah 61.

If you just glance at Isaiah 61, please, for a moment. Now this is what our Lord Jesus quoted. Isaiah chapter 61 and verse 2. He says, is to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord and the day of vengeance of our God.

Now I call attention to that because Luke says, and he read such and such, he read this, this, this, this, and he closed the book. Where did he close the book? If you read Isaiah 61 too, he closed the book right in the middle of a sentence. And if you have my translation, he closed the book right at a comma.

There's a comma there. And so he says, I've come to fulfill this and this and this and this and this, and he closed the book. But Isaiah didn't close the book.

Isaiah keeps going. And to proclaim the day of vengeance of our God. Why did he close the book there? And I think he's saying, my ministry is a ministry of grace.

I have come to proclaim liberty, to set the captive free, to offer forgiveness of sin. And then he closed the book. Someday he's going to open the book again and pick up at the comma and proclaim the day of vengeance of our God.

But his first ministry, his first coming, had to do with grace. He said, this is fulfilled today. Someday down the road, there'll be a continuation of my ministry, the day of judgment and so on.

Alright, if you'll turn back to Luke 4 for a moment please. Everyone knew this was a Messianic prophecy. And when the hometown boy came home and made this amazing claim, I am Messiah.

Isaiah wrote of me. I'm now proclaiming that this is fulfilled in your ears. In verse 18, Jesus said in effect, if you want to understand my life, you better interpret it this way.

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me. He has anointed me for this vocation. Don't look at me for an explanation.

It's the Spirit of God who has come upon me. And the only explanation of my life that will be adequate is that the Spirit of God is upon me. But the people of Nazareth didn't look at it that way.

In verse 22, And they were all speaking well of him and wondering at his gracious word. And they said, Is not this Joseph's son? In other words, they were not saying the explanation that how he could be Messiah and the Emancipator is the Spirit of God upon him. What they said is, No way.

This is Joseph's son. We know Mary. We know Joseph.

We saw him growing up. We saw his carpentry. We know who he is.

Now he comes back home and tries to tell us he's Messiah. We know his family. In fact, listen as Mark enlarges on this.

Mark 6, verse 2. This is a different occasion, but it's the attitude of those from Nazareth. When the Sabbath had come, he began teaching in the synagogue. And many were listening and they were astonished.

And they said, Where did this man get these things? What is the wisdom given to him? How are such miracles performed by his hands? Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James and Joseph and Judas and Simeon? Are not his sisters with us? And they took offense at him. See, that's the full record. How could he be Messiah? We're looking with these eyes.

He said, You better not do that. If you're going to understand my life, you better know the Spirit of God is upon me. He has anointed me.

If you try to understand my behavior with these eyes, you're going to be confused. In verse 23, he said, No doubt you'll quote this proverb, Physician, heal yourself. Whatever we heard was done at Capernaum.

Do here in your hometown as well. And notice how they worded it. They didn't say, Do here what you did in Capernaum.

They said, Do here what we heard you did at Capernaum. In other words, they weren't even sure of that. They had all kinds of doubts about the Lord Jesus.

But their emphasis was this. Look, Jesus, you grew up here. Why don't you distinguish your hometown by doing a few miracles here? Don't you think we have poor people here? Don't you think we have lepers here? We have sick people.

What are you doing going out there? We're your family. Do something here. Make a splash here.

We have people like that. It's at this point, right at the beginning, our Lord Jesus sort of draws the line in the sand. He said, You think you have a claim on me? You Jews think you have a claim on me because you're connected to Abraham and David.

And Nazareth, you think you have a claim on me because you know my family and you know my father and my mother and my occupation and our relatives. You think you have a claim on me? He said, Let me tell you who has a claim on me. Those who have needs have a claim on me.

And that's all who have a claim on me. I've come to preach to the poor. I've come to preach to the brokenhearted.

I've come to preach to the blind. I've come to preach to those who are in any kind of captivity. I've come to declare good news, gospel, to those who are oppressed and crushed.

They have a claim on me. And then he took their Bible. They were so Jewish.

He took their Bible. And he said, Let's talk about your prophet, Elijah. Remember Elijah, your prophet? Oh, there were bad times.

It was a famine. Three and a half years. Were there needy people in Israel? He said, There were.

Were there widows in Israel? He said, There were. But there was only one widow in that day that was seeking the Lord. And that widow was not in Israel.

That widow was way up north in Sidon in the land of Phoenicia. And what did God do? God told Elijah to leave Israel and leave all of the need. This is Old Testament.

This is you Jews, listen. And Elijah left and went to the Gentile land of Sidon in Zarephath and he helped one widow. You know why? Because she was needy and she was seeking.

They didn't like that. He said, Alright, open your Bible. Remember Elisha, 2 Kings chapter 5? Syria was not only Gentile.

Syria was the avowed foe of Israel. Enemies. Say Jews, were there any lepers in Israel at that time? Oh yeah, there were leper colonies.

Many lepers. But none of them were seeking the Lord. But there was one leper from the land of Syria from an enemy camp.

And he sought the Lord. And God said to Elisha, You go now to him. And so Elisha had to leave Israel.

In other words, he's preaching missions from their Bible. From the Old Testament. There are the Jews, Jews, Jews.

He said, Elisha didn't go to the Jews. Elisha went to the Gentiles. He said, It's all Jews.

It's us, we're the chosen people. He said, Elisha didn't go to the Jews. Elisha went to the Gentiles.

Do you know, Nazareth, why I am not doing miracles here? Because you don't want me. A prophet is not welcome in his own hometown. That's more than familiarity breeds contempt.

That's part of it. But the other part is this, and it's a very sad part. The closer we are to the means of grace, the more liable we are not to benefit from it.

We get so close to some of these things. And there's a lot of warning here. And so he quotes from their Old Testament.

And of course the answer is explosive. He's about to prove what he says. God's not out to bless Israel.

He's out to bless needy people. You can ooh and ahh about my message, Jesus. They said his words were gracious.

They liked what he said. But they didn't like the idea that it wasn't for them. And so you see the record here in verse 28 to 30.

They try to kill him for only one reason. Missions. Because God had a heart for somebody outside the fold.

Because God had a heart for needy people that were not in Israel. And they push him, and they push him, and they push him all the way to the edge of a cliff. This is so amazing, that verse 30.

All it says is, but passing through them he went his way. Was there a miracle there? You know in the Old Testament you see sometimes he blinded the enemy and then they were able to walk through. Did he blind all these people? Another occasion he paralyzed them.

And he escaped and they were all paralyzed. Did he paralyze them? Did he turn invisible? How did he do it? I was discussing this with Lillian and she says, I think it was the effect of his personal majesty. That he was just awesome and the authority.

He just turned around and said, and he just passed right through them. I don't know how it happened. I know this, the principle is always the same, that his hour hadn't come.

God didn't plan for him to die by being thrown off a precipice. He's going to die on the cross. Until your hours come, you're safe.

And he just told the truth and he was safe. And then of course, after this was over, don't forget what he's saying. He says, I'm going to the Gentiles because you don't want me.

After this is over, he sure proved his point. They had pushed him all the way to the edge of the cliff. And now they couldn't say, oh yeah, we really want you.

They didn't want him and he proved it. So this is the beginning of the ministry of our Lord Jesus. Let me just close by summarizing what I think is the main message of this chapter.

The main message of this chapter is, what claim do I have on the Lord? See, the Jews thought their claim was, we're connected biologically to Abraham or to David. He said, I'm not looking at that. Nazareth said, we've got a claim.

He belonged to us. He grew up here. We've got a claim because we know his background.

We know all about it. That's no claim. He said, I've come and your only claim is need.

If you're poor, you can know the Lord. If you're burdened, you can know the Lord. If you're in any kind of captivity, he said, I'll make myself known to you.

If you have a broken heart, if you want eyesight, if you're oppressed, if you're crushed, he said, I'll cross over every line to meet the needy, to meet the helpless, to meet the downtrodden. That's my ministry. That's my mandate.

That's my call. Now, we read, he said at the end, I have come to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord. Of course, that's a reference to the year of Jubilee.

It's not a year, 365, four days, and so on. It's not a year like that. The favorable year of the Lord is still going on.

We're in the year he came to proclaim. We're still involved in his first coming. So what we read here, the favorable year of the Lord, what is the ministry of Jesus today? He's emancipating.

He's come to proclaim Jubilee, to give good news, the gospel, to the poor and to the needy and to those who want him. That's what he does today. At the comma, it says, and the day of vengeance.

So you've got a year of grace and a day of vengeance. He doesn't like judgment. In fact, Isaiah calls it his strange work.

He does not enjoy it. He doesn't want to judge anybody. He wants to set everybody free.

There will be a day of judgment. But right now, there's a year, a favorable year of the Lord. And so, Luke now is going to get ready.

And if you don't understand this Jubilee, you're going to miss what we're going to look at. Because from now on, we're going to see him fulfilling that mandate. He's going to be going to the poor.

It doesn't matter if there's Jews or non-Jews. He's going for the needy. Who knows the Lord? Those that seek him.

Widows. Lepers. Anybody that wants him, he'll go to.

Anybody that doesn't want to and has any other claim, he dismisses their claim. You have no claim on me except need. That's the only claim from that day till this.

And those who have the greatest need know the greatest saving. And he's continually setting us free. Well, basically, that's his first visit at Nazareth.

Wasn't too pleasant on the level of earth, but that's how it all began. Comments or questions? Yes. I just find it ironic because a lot of people don't turn to religion because they say, you know, the irony is that... I had a dear friend that I invited to speak one time in my place.

I wasn't able to speak. And then I was able to be there. What I thought was going to be, I wouldn't be there.

I was. So I got to hear him speak and it was wonderful. But anyway, he got up and he said, I've been accused of using the Lord as a crutch.

And he said, I want to deny that. Because if the Lord were my crutch, I'd be trusting the Lord plus my good leg. He said, he's not a crutch.

He's a stretcher. Well, let's bow. Father, thank you so much that our Lord Jesus dared to say that he was the Messiah and he had come to proclaim what they were so afraid to enact, the year of Jubilee.

Thank you for this spiritual emancipation that you bind up broken hearts and open eyes, set the captive free and forgive our debts. Lord, we thank you so much for the ministry of our Lord Jesus. And now as we continue in our study of Luke and we see this friend of all mankind passing over every line of prejudice, reaching to the need, we pray that as never before we might appreciate such a friend of sinners.

Work it in our hearts, we pray, in Jesus' name. Amen.

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