

03/16/25 - Luke 4:14-30 - "Jesus the Mascot, or Master?"

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[0 : 00] If you can please turn with me to Luke chapter 4. We'll be in verses 14 all the way to 30.

And verse 14 says, And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and a report about him went out through all the surrounding country.

And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all. And 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.

And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found a place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim the good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives, and recovering of the sight to the blind, to set a liberty to those who are oppressed, and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

[1 : 09] And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. All the eyes in the synagogue were fixed on him. And he began to say to them, Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.

And all spoke well of him and marveled at the gracious words that were coming from his mouth. And he said, Is this not Joseph's son? And he said to them, Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, Physician, heal yourself.

What we have heard you did at Capernaum, do here in your hometown as well. And he said, Truly I say to you, no prophet is acceptable in his hometown. But in truth I tell you, there were many widows in Israel in the months of Elijah.

And the heavens were shut up three years and six months. A great famine came over all the land. And Elijah was sent to none of them, but 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 the prophet Elijah. None of them was cleansed, but only Naaman, the Syrian. And when they heard these things, all in the synagogue were filled with wrath.

[2 : 25] And they rose up and drove him out of the town and brought him down, brought him to the brow of the hill in which their town was built, so that they could throw him down the cliff. But passing through their midst, he went away.

This is God's word. Thanks be to God. This is, things got pretty dicey in the passage.

Jesus Christ's identity was just recently affirmed from the angel. He was affirmed through his baptism. His identity was tested by Satan.

And here we see Jesus' ministry beginning. And we got to ask a question because the beginning of this passage starts with fairly good news.

Things seem pretty good. But then, within just a handful of verses, the last two verses, they're trying to throw Jesus off a cliff.

[3 : 35] What could possibly have been said by Jesus that could cause a crowd to go from such reception to rejection?

In verse 14, you see, a report about him went out throughout the surrounding country. You better believe that that was a good report. Verse 15, he taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all. But then, look at the end. Verse 28, when they heard these things, all in the synagogue were filled with wrath.

Furthermore, in verse 29, they brought him to the cliff to throw him off. Jesus, what'd you do?

And what we see today is that it wasn't just about what Jesus said that stirred the wrath of his listeners, but it's rather how he applied that which was said to his listeners.

[4 : 45] Application is sometimes dicey. Application steps on our toes. Application is the thing that as I study, meditate upon Scripture, prepare hours and hours for the next passage on the next coming week and times that by 52 throughout the year.

We see that this application is the very thing that was stepping on their toes. It's application that often causes the most friction among a congregation.

Right? As a pastor, sometimes my inbox, sometimes my text messages, sometimes a phone call occasionally, occasionally receive vehement opposition to what was spoken about in the sermon. And it's not necessarily what was just read. They're not going after Lou in the reading. Hi, Lou. They're going after me in how it's applying.

I just got a bunch of volunteers to stand up and read next week, right? They're like, oh, it's on that guy. And now maybe vehement opposition is maybe an exaggeration, but I think you get the point.

[6 : 00] You know, a pastor's job is never to make everyone happy. Only an ice cream salesman has that supernatural power. And it's not given to pastors. Instead, the preaching of God's Word, not just the reading, but the preaching, the reflection of the Word and how it applies, not just to them in their day and age, but how it applies through the window of time to today.

And it confronts its intended audience, exposing both the truth of Scripture and the heart of man. And today, we will see a drastic example, not an exaggerated example, a drastic real-life example of what happens when God's Word exposes spiritual pride, leading to hardened hearts, not to repentance, but to rage.

The main point we'll see unfold in these two sections I have today is that grace offends the entitled, but frees the humble.

And so what we'll do is call this sermon Jesus, the mascot, or master. Again, we'll have two sections, and I believe it would be helpful to keep your Bible open as we go through this and not to take my word for it.

The first section that we have is the announcement of liberation. Jesus returns, we just bred, to His hometown, Galilee, and we could say that He was quite the city's celebrity.

[7 : 57] I mean, everyone knew Jesus. Word was spreading, but on this particular day during the Jewish custom of Sabbath reading, He stood up to read, just like any other Sabbath day.

And now, there's like a regulative principle within Jewish worship. Steel Valley Church has a regulative principle. Some seeker-friendly, false-teaching church around the area, they have a regulative principle.

Everyone has a regulative principle. Ours is through, like, adoration. We start with adoration, we then go to confession, leading to thanksgiving and supplication, but we also have the central focus of a sermon within all of that.

And in Jewish culture, the regulative principle included singing from Psalms 145 to 150. It went on from there to reciting the Shema from Deuteronomy 6, Numbers 15, Hear, O Israel, the Lord, our God, the Lord is one.

You've heard it. And then it goes into 18 benedictions of the Tefillah, and then to the Torah reading, followed by blessings from the prophets, readings from the prophets, from the Haftarah, and then a sermon.

[9 : 22] After all of that reading, it went into a sermon, a proclaimed application, translation, including the closing of their service with the Aaronic blessing of Numbers 6.

It was just an ordinary day. They're going to church, and here's Jesus, the city celeb. On this day, Jesus stands to read, and the scroll of Isaiah was handed to him, and he chose to read from Isaiah 61, as it's referred to in our numbered system.

It wasn't like that in his. He didn't go to 60, 61, 63. They didn't have numbers, but what we have is Isaiah 61.

That puts us right in where Jesus unfolds prophecy relating to a historic time period in history, but also to what is being fulfilled in himself.

In verse 18, as we read this morning, it says, the Spirit of the Lord is upon me. This statement, real quick, is affirming everything that we've just unpacked over the past couple weeks.

[10 : 42] The Spirit of the Lord has. It's true. It happened. The Spirit of the Lord is upon me and is now unfolding in the life of Jesus, but this is Isaiah from long ago.

He says, because He has anointed me to proclaim the good news to the poor, He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering the sight of the blind, healing the blind, and to set at liberty those who are oppressed.

Then Rick's favorite, verse 19, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. Hmm, that's good. This prophecy liberated four classes of people, good news to the poor, liberty to the captives, healing to the blind, liberty to the oppressed.

Yeah! This is good. This is great news. By ending on the to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor kind of emphasizes, actually, the prophecy of Isaiah continues, and he stops a little bit short to emphasize to emphasize the year of the Lord's favor.

It's like the year of Jubilee. And every 50 years, the complete, all the debt, all slave trade was all reset.

[12:12] It was like a nationwide reset in Leviticus 25. This is when debts were canceled, slaves were freed, and the land was restored.

Lord, that's a great message. Social reform, activism, Jesus gets us. Oh!

I'm going to close in prayer. Oh, boy. Oh, boy. But you see, what could have possibly started with fame that led to this rejection?

To lining Jesus up, cornering him on the side of a hill. Looking into the context of Isaiah 61, this has a historic implication.

implication. This has past tense implications for the people of Judah as Isaiah wrote to. And the entire nation at large, the entire nation of Israel, it looked forward to the returning of exiles where many Israelites were poor, many of them were oppressed, many of them were mourning and longing for renewal.

[13:38] people. This was past tense. They were praising Jesus. Amen. But then he stopped.

He rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the text says, as Lou read, and the eyes of all the synagogue were fixed on him.

And he began to say to them, today, this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.

Not hundreds of years before. Today, in Jesus Christ. did you catch that?

The context of Isaiah 61 was perceivably in the past. Something written in their history books. Past tense. As if the nation have recovered.

[14:45] The nation has been rebuilt from their lowly estates. They have been fully restored in their eyes. Hey, they even got a new temple. Things are going well.

And now the temple is serving all of these means of good news and oppression and healing and provision to orphans and widows.

you see, Jesus applies the subject of Isaiah 61 not to a temple and actually not to anything that occurred back in the exile, but the exile and the return within history was a mark of the pattern of what God was going to do through Jesus Christ.

Jesus applies the subject of Isaiah 61 to himself and the direct object of the subject, all you English scholars, are the beneficiaries of liberation being those who believe they've actually already been liberated and so they're scratching their heads.

What are you talking about, Jesus? Everything's good. What does Jesus mean by liberty anyhow?

[16:09] What does He mean by that? I mean, that's in the Pledge of Allegiance, right? Liberty and justice for all. I remember standing and saying that. I said it in David's wedding reception for some odd reason.

I thought I was in some dream or nightmare. I don't know what that was all about, probably an inside joke. And I try not to say inside jokes from the pulpit, so my sincere apologies.

But back on track, those were inside thoughts that came out. And so, what does He mean by liberty here? This is important. What does Leviticus 25, the year of Jubilee, have to say about liberty that it said it 15 times?

And looking to Luke, not only in the gospel of Luke, but also to Acts, who says liberty, this word, over a dozen times. Here's the thing, and I'm going to prove it to you.

Every single time liberty is mentioned within these cross-reference passages, it is translated as forgiveness.

[17:24] Let's take a look at that. all of these little highlights here. In Matthew 26, Mark 1, Mark 3, Luke 1, Luke 3, 24, 2, Acts 2, Acts 5, Acts 10, Acts 13, Acts 26, Ephesians 1, Colossians 1, Hebrews 9, Hebrews 10.

All of these words for liberty are translated as forgiveness of sins. Forgiveness of sins. Forgiveness of sin. Everything is, you got forgiveness and sin is the close neighbor. Well, what's the year of Jubilee?

What's Leviticus 25 have to say? I'm sorry for the people in the back. This is small writing even for me right here. But what I want you to see is all those highlighted marks that you can see. These are all references of the same word even back in Leviticus, obviously in Hebrew, for forgiveness.

[18:30] Liberty. So people can see my beautiful face on the live stream, I'll switch it back. If we aren't careful, church, we can fall for the lie that Jesus was simply sent as a social activist oppressed, like that of a woke and a liberal gospel mission.

As if Jesus came to liberate the poor and the oppressed and to empower women to rise up. We cannot make Scripture further our own agenda.

Scripture has its agenda. It does a really good job at serving its own agenda. It doesn't need our help. Amen. This social justice gospel waters down this profound biblical gospel turning sin into a systemic issue that Jesus Christ somehow liberates, rather than a heart issue that Jesus Christ transforms.

The social justice gospel is a false gospel. It is popular in our day today. This type of teaching must be confronted, it must be corrected, it must be rebuked.

I'd like to commend a book to you even if you want to read on it a little bit more after the sermon. There's a book called Christianity and Wokeness, How the Social Justice Movement is Hijacking the Gospel and a Way to Stop It by Owen Straughn.

[20:07] Straughn critiques the modern woke movement including its approach to racism, feminism, and justice and he argues that woke Christianity replaces biblical reconciliation with social activism and conflates the gospel with identity politics.

This is our day today, every day, Super Bowl commercials. Here in the passage, Jesus is saying something offensive to those who already feel as if they have been liberated.

He's saying you are liberated through not your temple actions, not your activism or anything, it's through the cancellation of sin, of debt.

That is the liberation. The gospel doesn't reform a fallen society. It transforms fallen sinners and if the society follows with the transformed sinners, so be it.

If not, we should expect opposition to throw us off a cliff, to join the thousands who lost their lives in Syria. This is why this is an important message that needs to be embraced today, which is why the secular and even Christian culture today, secular and Christian culture today, resembles this pondering crowd in this synagogue, saying, what the heck is this guy saying?

[21:41] And look with me in verse 22 in the second section, the unexpected confrontation. It says in verse 22, and all spoke well of him, marveled at the gracious words that were coming from his mouth.

And now they're saying, is this, is not this Joseph's son? So a little mixed response, some were impressed, some were, how dare you, you are authorized to speak like that, to do the scriptures fulfilled in your hearing.

Ha! What? No, it's already done, Jesus. You can imagine the confusion. Who do you think you are? A prophet? You grew up in that little poor city, in the middle of nowhere.

You had the nobody, Mary, nobody, Joseph, your carpenter's son. You might be a popular city celeb, we've heard the stories all throughout the region, but your fame has clearly gotten to your head, Jesus.

And Jesus kind of gets ahead of their rebuttals. He says to them in verse 23, Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, Physician, heal yourself. What we have heard you do at Capernaum, do here in your hometown as well.

[23:09] Prove it, Jesus. He said, Truly I say to you, no prophet is acceptable in his hometown. Jesus knows the heart of man.

They wanted affirmation. They wanted the amens, not confrontation. What does Jesus do?

Well, He doubles down. He drives the application. He does some sermon illustrations. See, sermon illustrations are helpful sometimes, especially when they're done from the Son of God.

He drives the application deeper than they were already unwilling to accept, which intensifies the situation drastically. He turns to some references in 1 and 2 Kings.

First, He takes a stop with Elijah and a widow in Zarephath in 1 Kings 17. This was during a severe famine. Many widows were suffering in Israel.

[24 : 11] Get that. Many widows in Israel were suffering. Yet, God did not send Elijah to help an Israelite widow.

Instead, God sent Elijah to a Gentile widow in Sidon. He's like, oh, alright, well I might as well just put the icing on the cake.

He goes to 2 Kings 5, or chapter 5 with Elijah and Naaman, the Syrian. When lepers existed all in Israel in Elijah's time, but none were healed.

Instead, Naaman, a Gentile commander of the enemy Syrian army, was the one that God sent to receive healing.

entitlement is as much a barrier to God as sin is.

[25 : 23] The widow and the leper humbled themselves. Where was faith found? Outside of the people of God.

They had faith. They were the ones restored by their faith. All the while the Israelites remained in unbelief.

Both widow and leper were liberated by faith and nothing else. You see, not only is Jesus saying you are liberated through the cancellation of sin's debt, not only is it that, but that's half the story. Here, He reinforces, but it's accomplished through faith in Jesus Christ. Not activism, not social service.

In our politically polarized culture today, not legislation through the Supreme Court. You see now, church, after diving into the context just a little bit, we can go on and on.

[26 : 27] I would love to unpack 1 Kings and 2 Kings for you, but I know you guys have Bob Evans reservations, and so I'm not going to do that right now. We can see clearly how Jesus Christ can go from a city celebrity to a city criminal, and how people can go from marveling to malice.

Isn't it fascinating that it was through the exposition of God's Word that would expose their bankrupt spiritual state, regardless of their social activism, political, cultural status.

The gospel truly is proclaimed words. Actions do matter, but it is not the gospel. Here we find true freedom is not ever found in politics.

True freedom is found in forgiveness. Amen. Just as Israel rejected prophets in the past, they reject Jesus.

Now, and to say the least, they believe that they were God's chosen, were entitled to the blessings, God's blessings exclusively. But the exposition of God's Word exposed their spiritual pride.

[27 : 49] They wanted miracles, not a message of repentance. They wanted Jesus as a mascot, not a master. When they heard these things in verse 28, all the synagogue were filled with wrath.

They rose up and drove him out of the town and brought him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built so that they could throw him down the cliff.

Just like that, he passed through their midst and he went away. No, I don't think that he had a divine invisibility cloak, you Harry Potter freaks.

The Lord clearly protected him. His mission was not fully accomplished yet. The world doesn't need a watered down, relatable Jesus like that of a He Gets Us campaign on a Super Bowl commercial or any other fluffy portrayals that exist in our day.

See, the real Jesus is not a social activist that modern critical theories love, critical race theory, critical gender theory, critical everything packed in their theory.

[29 : 15] He is the Savior who demands repentance and faith. Nazareth wanted a Messiah who fit their expectations.

They wanted a mascot, a miracle worker for their benefit, not a Lord who calls for repentance.

repentance. The message of the gospel of Jesus is about sin, about our repentance, and salvation.

Why does our modern culture reject this true Jesus too? Well, it's because the true Jesus challenges their soft, politically palatable version that they've created Him to be, their own personal Jesus.

And Luke 4 turns this whole liberation theology completely on its head, which today says that Jesus came to liberate the oppressed from political and economic injustice, which therefore frames the gospel as a revolutionary movement against systemic opposition and oppression.

False gospel. Liberation theology will welcome Jesus to fight economic and social systems, but they will not allow Him to fight sin and spiritual bondage within their hearts.

[30 : 48] And it's here in Luke 4. It's in history, and it's here in many pulpits and universities. False gospel.

gospel. Do we accept Jesus as He is or only who we want Him to be? Do we seek salvation from sin or just a Jesus who affirms our social plans and causes and agendas?

Do we want Jesus as a mascot but not a master? If I can quote Thomas Watson, the gospel, he says, is a reproving doctrine.

It tells men of their sins. The gospel is to some as medicine. They love the pleasant taste of the promise, but they hate the bitter taste of repentance.

sins. They will not take Christ as He is. They will not part with their sins. When God's Word confronts our entitlements, we can either turn to Jesus in humility or try to push Him off a cliff.

[32 : 15] You see, grace offends the entitled but frees the humble. we have to crush the toxin of this individualism of our culture today.

We have to crush this entitlement that points to everything else as the problem except for us. So I have for you five reminders for this week.

Number one, we need to recognize that we deserve nothing but judgments. sins. The Bible says, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God in Romans 3.23.

And the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord, Romans 6.23. And so your action this week is to remember that, to remind yourself that salvation is a gift.

gift. It's not a right. It is experienced personally, not through your works, but through your faith. Yeah.

[33 : 25] Second, develop a heart of gratitude. 1 Thessalonians 5.18 says, give thanks in all circumstances for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

Maybe this week you should start writing down God's blessing. in your life to remember them, both big and small. Third, humble yourself before God.

Remembering James 4 where he says, God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. Or humble yourselves before the Lord and He will exalt you. Maybe this week, pray regularly for humility and ask God to reveal pride in your own hearts, entitlements in your own hearts.

Fourth, serve others instead of expecting to be served. Mark 10.45 says, the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.

Maybe instead of complaining about how other people need to serve you, maybe find ways to serve your church, your family, in your community, especially in ways that go completely unnoticed.

[34 : 46] And lastly, number five, accept that God's plans are bigger than your preferences. Isaiah 55.8 says, for my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are my ways, declares the Lord your ways.

Surrender this week your expectations to God in prayer. Trust Him, even when life doesn't seem like it's going as planned, because we remember the main point of this passage, that grace offends the entitled, but frees the humble.

Let's pray.