

SERMON NOTES
Luke 4:14-44
“Setting Captives Free”

Intro:

- In the late 1700s, when William Wilberforce was a teenager, English traders raided the West African coast – capturing between 35,000 and 50,000 Africans a year – shipping them across the Atlantic and selling them into slavery
- *The profitable economics of slavery were so entrenched that few dared to think that anything could possibly be done about it*
- But William Wilberforce was one such man who dared to do the impossible
- William Wilberforce was elected to the British Parliament in 1780 at age 21
- *In 1785 he experienced a life-changing encounter with Jesus Christ*
- Within two years of that encounter – encouraged by John Newton – the former slave trader who wrote the famous hymn “Amazing Grace” – William Wilberforce became persuaded that God was calling him to take up the cause of abolishing slave trade
- *Powerful vested interests defeated his abolitionist bills in 1789, 1791, 1792, 1793, 1797, 1798, 1799, 1804, and 1805*
- **Finally, in 1807 – after a 20-year battle – Parliament abolished the slave trade in the British Empire by a vote of 287 – 16 – one of the turning points in the history of the world**
- This year commemorates the 200th anniversary of that momentous event – and the movie *Amazing Grace* tells the story of William Wilberforce’s commitment to the abolitionist cause
- *Unfortunately, slavery still exists in our world today – in fact, it is estimated that some 27 million people are in some kind of slavery around the world today*
- Many of these slaves are children – working in rock quarries and brick kilns – or as sex slaves
- *One of the Christian organizations committed to rescuing victims of slavery, oppression, sexual exploitation and violence is the International Justice Mission*
- Their work of combating sex trafficking in SE Asia was featured on the *Today Show* last October
- *Their commitment to setting captives free is an extension of the mission of Jesus Christ in the world today*
- **In reality, many more than 27 million people in our world today live in spiritual darkness and oppression as captives of sin and Satan**
- *It was for the purpose of setting captives free that Jesus Christ came into the world 2000 years ago*

- **In order for us to understand what it means to be a fully devoted follower of Jesus – we need to understand the mission of Jesus to which we are called to participate**
- How did Jesus understand and define his mission – the purpose of his ministry?
- ***Jesus’ own mission statement is recorded in chapter 4 of the Gospel of Luke***
- Jesus launched his public ministry in his hometown synagogue in Nazareth shortly after his baptism and his temptations in the wilderness
- *Jesus was asked to read from the scroll of the prophet Isaiah and comment on the reading*
- He turned to Isaiah 61 – read a couple of verses – and then announced: ***Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing***

Isaiah 61:1 - 2 (NIV) ¹ The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, ² to proclaim the year of the LORD’S favor

- *By selecting this passage and announcing the prophecy fulfilled – Jesus was claiming to be the promised Messiah, to be inaugurating the Messianic age or Jubilee age – and to be embarking on a mission of liberation*
- In case there is any question about what kind of liberation Jesus would be accomplishing – or what kind of captives Jesus would be setting free – *Luke purposefully places this passage between the account of Jesus being led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil – and the account immediately following of Jesus casting out an evil spirit from a synagogue worshiper in the neighboring town of Capernaum*
- ***Jesus had come to invade the kingdom of Satan and to set free his captives***
- C.S. Lewis captures the essence of Jesus’ mission in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*
- ***Aslan came to Narnia not only to sacrifice his life for Edmund – but to free all of Narnia from the White Witch’s tyranny***
- *So also Jesus came to earth not only to save individuals from their sins – but also to liberate us from Satan’s tyranny*
- ***Jesus’ coming to earth was an invasion of Satan’s kingdom for the purpose of abolishing Satan’s tyranny and setting his captives free***

Peter summarized Jesus’ mission this way:

Acts 10:38 (NIV) ³⁸ God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him.

And John with these words:

1 John 3:8 (NIV) ⁸ The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work.

- *Jesus looked at the human predicament in this fallen world the same as Aslan looked at Narnia: as captives being oppressed by the tyranny of the Evil One*
- **His mission: to abolish that tyranny and set the captives free**

I. The Arrival of Jubilee in the Messiah's Mission of Liberation

- *The year of the Lord's favor in Isaiah 61:2 refers to the Year of Jubilee described in Leviticus 25 – except the Messiah would inaugurate not just a year of Jubilee but an age of Jubilee*
- ***To proclaim the year of the Lord's favor or the Year of Jubilee is the same meaning as when Jesus announced that the Kingdom of God is at hand***
- According to the Law of Moses, the year of Jubilee was supposed to be observed every 50 years in Israel – it was a year when slaves were freed, debts were cancelled, and property that had been lost due to economic hardship was returned to the original owners
- *Jubilee was God's plan for social and economic justice – and was good news for the poor*
- Not surprisingly, since the Year of Jubilee favored the poor and oppressed and debtors and slaves over the rich and powerful and creditors and slave-owners – *and since the Year of Jubilee could be implemented only with the cooperation of the rich and powerful and creditors and slave-owners – the Year of Jubilee never was actually implemented in Israel – those with power and wealth and land and slave labor gained at the expense of the poor had too much to lose*
- **The hope of the poor was the coming of the Messiah who would inaugurate not just a year of Jubilee – but the Reign of God and an age of freedom and justice for the poor and oppressed**
- *And of course, at the time Jesus came, much of the nation of Israel was poor and oppressed because their land was occupied by the powerful Romans*
- ***The coming of the Messiah would be the Year of the Lord's favor – a time of hope and deliverance and freedom for all those suffering under the oppressive power of the Romans***
- **So you can imagine the buzz in Nazareth when Jesus read this Messianic prophecy from the scroll of Isaiah – concluding with “To proclaim the year of the Lord's favor” -- and then announced: *Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing***

- *The Messiah had landed in Israel – to launch a major offensive – not against the tyranny of the Romans as most Jews expected – but rather against the tyranny of Satan*

II. The Power to Liberate: The Anointing of the Holy Spirit

- Jesus began his mission statement with these words from Isaiah 61: *The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor...*
- **An invisible spiritual war to release captives from spiritual bondage and oppression cannot be waged with military weapons or economic sanctions or political diplomacy**
- ***Spiritual warfare against an invisible spiritual enemy must be waged with spiritual weapons: the anointing of the Spirit // the power of the Spirit // the gifts of the Spirit***
- Peter summarized Jesus' ministry as follows: *God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him.*
- ***Healing and liberating people from the power of the devil is spiritual work that requires spiritual power***
- *If the Son of God relied upon the power of the Holy Spirit to do his ministry – how much more so do we need to rely upon the power of the Spirit today to continue his ministry of setting captives free*
- **It takes more than elbow grease and adequate funding and good facilities and good programs to set captives free from Satan's power – it takes the power of the Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit and spiritual power and spiritual authority and spiritual weapons and spiritual truth to demolish spiritual strongholds and set captives free**
- **Doing the works of Jesus Christ and setting captives free from the power of the devil is supernatural work that can be done only by the supernatural power of the Spirit**
- There are many good things that churches can do if enough dedicated people work together and give generously of their time and talents and money – *but churches that want to see lives radically transformed and set free from spiritual bondage must learn how to appropriate by faith the spiritual power of the Holy Spirit to set captives free*
- **That is one reason why strong corporate prayer and biblical teaching on the ministry and gifts of the Holy Spirit is essential to becoming a spiritually powerful church that is able to continue the mission of Jesus in the world**

III. The Means of Liberation: Preaching Good News to the Poor

- “*The Spirit of the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor*”
- **The ministry of Jesus had a special concern and focus on bringing good news and hope to the poor – and fully devoted followers of Jesus will do likewise**
- People become poor for many reasons – sometimes their own fault // sometimes through no fault of their own // often a combination of both – *but often the primary reason people stay poor is not so much because of lack of money or lack of employment opportunities but because of lack of hope*
- They are unable to see a better future
- *They feel stuck and see no way of improving their lot in life*
- *Why don't the people in New Orleans gut and rebuild their own houses?*
- You've suddenly lost all of your worldly possessions // you've lost your job because your business or workplace was washed away // you still have monthly mortgage payments to make on a place that is now unlivable // your homeowners insurance won't cover flood damage // *your entire neighborhood is virtually uninhabited // there are no more Wal-Marts or Home Depots in your neighborhood // you have no idea if you will ever get your job back // your support network of friends and neighbors and church members is now scattered all over the South and you don't know how to contact most of them //*
- *You have no reason to believe that putting forth the effort to gut your house would improve your lot in life*
- So your house just sits there – ruined // inhabited only by rats, termites and mold
- *Not only have you lost your house and your possessions and your job and your church and many friends and neighbors – but you have also lost hope*
- **The Gospel is Good News for the poor because the Gospel is a message of Hope -- “Behold, I make all things new” – says the Lord**
- *The year of the Lord's favor is at hand – the Age of Jubilee is at hand -- the Kingdom of God is at hand*
- And that is Good News for the poor because the Kingdom of God reverses the values and status of this world
- Jesus' first major sermon in Luke's Gospel is recorded in chapter 6 and begins with these words:

Luke 6:20 - 21 (NIV) ²⁰Looking at his disciples, he said: “**Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.** ²¹ **Blessed are you who hunger now, for you will be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh.**”

- *The rich have every advantage over the poor in this world – but not in the kingdom of God*
- **For the rule of the Kingdom is: God gives grace to the humble but opposes the proud**

- *It is so difficult for the rich not to look down on the poor*
- *It is so difficult for the rich to live in dependence upon grace rather than relying on their own efforts and their own skills and their own resources*
- *It is so difficult for the rich to value the world to come more highly than this present world*
- *It is so difficult for the rich to treasure God above all the pleasures and treasures of this world*
- ***How do you truly hunger and thirst after God and His kingdom and His righteousness when you are so satiated with all that this world has to offer?***
- *The rich have so much to lose in entering the kingdom of God – first and foremost being their pride in their own self-sufficiency*
- **The Number One requirement for entering the Kingdom of God is the ability to humbly and freely receive God’s undeserved mercy and unmerited grace**
- *Who are the blessed in the kingdom of heaven?*
- **The poor in spirit // those who mourn // the meek // those who hunger and thirst for a right relationship with God // those who are merciful**
- *Nothing there about being successful // Nothing there about social status or being respectable in the eyes of men // Nothing there about having your life together or being religious or being free of past failures //*
- **Just recognize your own sinfulness and humbly ask God for mercy – and you’re in**
- *Come just as you are – with all of your baggage and all of your messes and all of your failures and all of your guilt and shame and all of your rejection by others and all of your uncleanness – and seek mercy and grace at the foot of the Cross – and let Jesus’ blood wash you clean – and you’re in*
- **You become a child of God // All your sins are washed away // You receive eternal life // You receive the Life of Christ to empower you to live a new life here and now // You become part of a new family – the family of God // You receive a new purpose in life // A whole new future and destiny is set before you**
- *The Gospel is Good News for the poor and sets captives free*
- **The first and most powerful spiritual weapon by which Jesus sets captives free is the message of the Gospel itself: Every sinner who comes humbly and empty-handed to the Cross of Christ seeking God’s mercy and grace is totally accepted, fully pleasing, deeply loved, completely forgiven, and empowered to live a new life in Christ – because of the Cross and Resurrection of Jesus**
- *That is a powerfully liberating message*
- **The Gospel is a message of Hope for those who are downtrodden and messed-up and are living under the dark cloud of shame and self-condemnation and the contempt of the self-righteous**

- *Believing the Good News of the Gospel will liberate you from Satan's kingdom of darkness and bring you securely into the kingdom of Jesus the Messiah where you will be loved and forgiven and given a whole new life and whole new future*
- **The Good News of Jesus Christ is the Power of God to set captives free from bondage to sin and death and Satan**
- *Proclaiming Good News to the poor and the poor in spirit is priority number one for fully devoted followers of Jesus*

IV. The Means of Liberation: Healing and Liberating those under the Power of the Devil

- *Evangelism – preaching good news to the poor – was at the heart of Jesus' mission of liberating captives from Satan's kingdom*
- **But in the Gospels, Jesus' ministry of evangelism and teaching is joined with his ministry of healing and deliverance -- Jesus combined healing – including casting out of demons -- with communicating the Gospel**
- And when he commissions his followers to preach the Gospel – he specifies that healing and casting out of demons is to be included in their ministry as well

Luke 9:1 - 2 (NIV) ¹When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, ²and he sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick.

Luke 9:6 (NIV) ⁶So they set out and went from village to village, preaching the gospel and healing people everywhere.

Mark 6:12 - 13 (NIV) ¹²They went out and preached that people should repent. ¹³They drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them.

- *Who is Jesus – and what does it mean to be his fully devoted follower?*
- *The Gospels teach that Jesus is not only Savior and Evangelist and Teacher – but also Healer and Liberator and Deliverer – and that following Jesus means setting captives free by bringing the Gospel and healing and deliverance to those who are suffering and in bondage under the power of the devil*
- *The mission statement in Isaiah 61 and Luke 4 speaks not only of preaching good news to the poor – but also of healing the broken-hearted and proclaiming freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind and liberating the oppressed*
- **Peter summed up Jesus' mission in Acts 10:38 by saying that Jesus was anointed with the Holy Spirit and power and went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil**

- *So as we look at the types of ministry spelled out in Jesus' mission statement – we keep in mind that all of this ministry falls under the category of healing and liberating people who are under the power of the devil*

(1) Healing the Broken-hearted

- *The Cross is not only a place of forgiveness and cleansing for sinners – but also a place of healing for the broken-hearted and sinned-against*
- ***You see, not only can our own sins lead us into slavery and bondage – but also our unhealed wounds from the sins of others against us can lead us into captivity and bondage***
- ***Many of you in this room have been deeply wounded by the sins of others – perhaps you were molested as a child // perhaps you were physically or verbally abused by a parent or a spouse // perhaps you have been sexually assaulted // perhaps you have been forced or pressured into getting an abortion // perhaps you have been rejected by a fiancé or spouse // perhaps you were bullied as a child // perhaps you were abandoned by your father // perhaps you have lived with an alcoholic // perhaps your parents were unpleaseable perfectionists who could always find something to criticize no matter how hard you tried to please them***
- *These kinds of deep emotional wounds can produce these kinds of deep-seated spiritual problems: bitterness & resentment // anger at God // fear of rejection and other fears and anxieties and phobias // rebellion // feelings of inadequacy and unworthiness and self-rejection // critical spirit // depression // guilt and shame // need to control // need to please others // problems with pornography and sexual fantasies // excessive religiosity and legalism // addictions to drugs or alcohol or nicotine // distorted views of God*
- ***Jesus came to heal the broken-hearted***
- *One of the most powerful ways that Jesus heals the broken-hearted and sets them free from deep-seated emotional and spiritual problems is by giving people the strength to face the pain of their traumatic experiences and by giving people the grace to forgive those who sinned against them*

(2) Freeing prisoners / slaves of sin

- *We are all both sinners and sinned-against*
- ***When sinned-against and deeply wounded – Jesus heals our broken hearts with his love and acceptance***
- *When enslaved to our own sins and bad habits – Jesus gives us the power to overcome the deeds of the flesh in the power of the Holy Spirit*

- Two of the essential components of being freed from sin bondage are: *deep and thorough and whole-hearted brokenness and repentance – and an abundance of grace*
- Repentance not only involves a willingness to turn from sin – but also a willingness to bring to light the underlying issues that produced the habitual sin
- *When sin becomes compulsive or addictive or habitual in nature – it is often rooted in unhealed emotional wounds*
- ***Being sinned-against often precedes and precipitates falling into habitual sin***
- *It is often the broken-hearted who are most vulnerable to becoming enslaved to habitual sin – and Jesus must then heal our broken heart in order to set us free from slavery to sin*
- For example, if you have been the victim of childhood sexual abuse – *and that brokenness has not been healed by the love and grace of Jesus – and you have not yet worked through forgiveness issues related to that abuse – then those emotional wounds will likely manifest themselves in stubborn sins that you will find extremely difficult to overcome*
- ***And then the enemy will come along and exploit that weakness and accuse you of being a rotten-to-the-core person who will never overcome that sin and never make it as a fully devoted follower of Jesus***
- *And the cycle of sin and guilt and shame becomes overwhelming*
- ***First the heart-wound needs to be healed – then the will needs to turn from sin and submit to Christ’s Lordship – and then the power of the Holy Spirit needs to be appropriated to overcome the sin***

(3) Giving sight to the blind

- Jesus, of course, did literally give physical sight to the physically blind
- *But He also came to give spiritual sight to the spiritually blind*
- Those who are prisoners of sin and spiritual bondage not only need the healing grace of Jesus Christ – they also need the liberating truth of Jesus Christ – ***for the truth shall set you free***
- *This involves facing the truth of the sinfulness of your sin*
- ***It also involves replacing the Lies of the Accuser and Deceiver with the Truth of the Gospel***
- *You stupid fool // You’ll never get it right // Things always turn out wrong when you’re involved // That is unforgivable // That proves that God doesn’t love you // You can’t rely on God to be there for you // You’ll never measure up as a Christian // You’ll never be able to gain victory over that sin // God could never use you as you are in His Kingdom work*
- **Spiritual darkness – blindness to the truth – believing lies -- is the prison-house in which many of Satan’s captives are held in bondage**

- *What are spiritual strongholds that hold people in spiritual captivity?*
- **One major spiritual stronghold is this: A spiritual stronghold is a mind-set that is impregnated with hopelessness that causes a person to accept as unchangeable something in their lives even though they know it goes contrary to the will of God**
- *It is within our minds that the devil blinds us and deceives us into thinking that nothing can be done about a certain situation or sin or habit or relationship – and then we begin to act and live and make decisions based on that sense of hopelessness*
- We come to believe that the grace of God is not sufficient // the power of God that raised Jesus from the dead is not sufficient // the victory achieved by Christ through his death and resurrection is not sufficient // the cleansing power of the blood of Christ is not sufficient // the power of the indwelling Spirit is not sufficient // the care and provision of our heavenly Father is not sufficient – *and so we turn to sinful or worldly ways of meeting our deepest needs – we turn away from the Living Water of Jesus Christ to broken cisterns that can hold no water*
- **Lies are the bricks and mortar of spiritual strongholds and must be torn down and demolished with the truth of the Gospel – the truth of who Jesus is – the truth of who you are in Christ – the truth of what it means to belong to Jesus Christ and to be united with him in his death, resurrection and ascension – the truth of God’s unconditional love for you**
- *The truth that Jesus Christ came to heal all who were under the power of the devil and to set captives free – and that whatever bondage you might be enslaved to – The grace, truth and power of the living Christ is powerful enough to liberate you*
- *Spiritual strongholds are broken down by truths such as: You are totally accepted, fully pleasing, deeply loved, completely forgiven, and empowered to live a new life in Christ – because of the Cross and Resurrection of Jesus*
- *Believe the Good News and be set free!*

Next week:

(4) Liberating the Spiritually Oppressed

V. Demonstrating the Power and Authority to Set Captives Free

Prayer:

“Heavenly Father, I love you and worship you.

I confess my sins to you and I renounce Satan and all his works

Wash me clean in my Savior’s blood from all that offends you.

Take back any ground given to the enemy through my sins.

I ask you, Lord Jesus, to bring healing to my heart-wounds and to deliver me from slavery to sin bondage and to replace the lies of the devil with the truth of the Gospel.

I desire to walk in the Spirit today.

I recognize that only as the Spirit manifests the life of Christ in me will I be able to overcome the works of my flesh.

I pray that the Holy Spirit may produce His fruit within my whole being and shed abroad in my heart great love for the heavenly Father, for the Lord Jesus Christ, and for others around me.

Forgive me for the times I have grieved the Holy Spirit by my sinning and unbelief.

Grant to me the awareness of my sins that I might quickly confess them to God. Grant me the desire to obey God’s Word. Grant me discernment to know and live by the truth.

I desire that the Holy Spirit fill and control all my being with His presence and power.

Strengthen me with the power of the Spirit to obey your will.

Heavenly Father, I thank you that I am united with the Lord Jesus Christ in all of His life and work. I invite Jesus Christ to live His victory in me today.

I enter by faith into the mighty work of the crucifixion of my Lord. Thank you that there is moment-by-moment cleansing from sin, permitting me to fellowship with you.

Thank you that the work of the Cross brings Satan’s work to nothing.

I enter by faith into the full power of my Lord’s resurrection. I desire to walk in the newness of life that is mine through my Lord’s resurrection. Lead me into a deeper understanding of the power of the Resurrection.

By faith I enter into my union with the Lord Jesus Christ in his ascension. I rejoice that my Lord displayed openly His victory over all evil powers as he ascended into glory through the very realm of the prince of the power of the air. I affirm that I am now seated with Christ in the heavenlies with all evil powers subject to me in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I enter into my victory and freedom aggressively and claim my place as more than a conqueror through Him who loves me.

I declare that in Jesus Christ I am free from Satan’s tyranny.

All of this I pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Altar Call -- “I Am Free”