

SERMON NOTES
Luke 4
“Liberating Prisoners of War”

Intro:

- If you ask 20 people: *Why did Jesus come to this earth?* – you’ll probably get 25 different answers
- If you ask a group of Baptists that question, the most common response might be something like: *He came to save us from our sins – We are all sinners and Jesus came to die on the Cross to forgive us our sins and to make us right with God*
- Which is all true – but is not the whole truth – *there is more to the good news of the Kingdom of God than the forgiveness of sins*

- *When God sent His Son to earth – what was His mission? How does God view the human predicament? How did Jesus view his mission on earth?*
- *We find answers to these questions in Luke 4*

I. THE CONTEXT FOR JESUS’ MISSION

- *When God looks at our world – He sees behind the scenes of human and social and economic and international problems – to the invisible spiritual realities that most Americans don’t see*
- *God sees this world – created by Him to be ruled by humans made in His image – now suffering in misery under the dominion of Satan and his invisible evil spirits*

Ephesians 6:12 ¹²For we are not fighting against people made of flesh and blood, but against the evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against those mighty powers of darkness who rule this world, and against wicked spirits in the heavenly realms.

- *When God sent His Son to earth, God looked at planet earth much the same as C.S. Lewis described Narnia under the rule of the wicked White Witch – a land where it was always winter and never Christmas*
- *Not just a land full of sinners in need of forgiveness – but a land of captives in need of freedom*

- *The message of the Gospels is clear: The Kingdom of God is invading the Kingdom of Satan in the Person of Jesus of Nazareth for the purpose of overthrowing the reign of Satan and setting captives free*

- This cosmic conflict between the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Satan is evident from the beginning of the Gospels: *Jesus – led and empowered by the Spirit – confronts and defeats Satan in the desert as the Second Adam who repels Satan’s temptations – then Jesus announces his mission in the synagogue – a mission which is the fulfillment of the Messiah’s mission as prophesied in Isaiah 61 – a mission of setting captives free and liberating prisoners of war -- and then he begins attacking Satan’s kingdom and setting captives free by casting out demons and healing all who were being oppressed by the power of the devil*
- This is what Jesus meant when he announced at the beginning of his ministry: ***“The time has come. The Kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!”***
- *(Aslan has arrived to liberate Narnia from the cruel tyranny of the White Witch)*
- ***The Son of God has come to vanquish the kingdom of Satan and to destroy the works of the devil and to set people free from Satan’s power***
- *That is the good news of the Kingdom of God that Jesus proclaimed*

II. THE POWER SOURCE FOR JESUS’ MISSION

- As the Son of God, Jesus is fully divine as well as being fully human
- *When Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary in Bethlehem – **the Son of God became fully human while remaining fully God***
- *All the fullness of Deity dwells in the human body of Jesus of Nazareth*
- And John’s Gospel makes clear that the miracles Jesus performed testify to him being the Son of God
- Yet a case can be made that the NT as a whole – and especially Luke – attribute the miracles of Jesus to the power of the Holy Spirit filling Jesus more than to Jesus exercising his own divine power
- ***Jesus is the Son of God – but he performed his miracles as the Spirit-filled Son of Adam***
- **Jesus was led and empowered by the Spirit throughout his ministry**

Luke 4:1-2 ¹Then Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan River. He was led by the Spirit to go out into the wilderness, ²where the Devil tempted him for forty days.

Jesus, son of Adam, defeated Satan in the wilderness by obeying the Word of God, and thus he went forth in the fullness of the Spirit’s power to do his ministry

Luke 4:14 ¹⁴Then Jesus returned to Galilee, full of the Holy Spirit’s power.

- *Jesus received spiritual power to do ministry and miracles from the anointing of the Holy Spirit*
- *Jesus Himself said so at the beginning of his mission statement, quoting from Isaiah's prophecy of the coming Messiah:*

Luke 4:18 (NIV) ¹⁸ “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor.”

- The word for “anointed” is the same Greek word from which we get “Christ” and “christen”
- **Jesus is the Spirit-anointed Messiah who was empowered by the Spirit in his mission of preaching, healing and deliverance**
- *This is also Peter's understanding of Jesus' ministry:*

Acts 10:38 ³⁸ God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. Then Jesus went around doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the Devil, for God was with him.

- *Why does the NT place so much emphasis on Jesus relying on the Spirit for the power to do his ministry?*
- To counteract our natural tendency – and disbelief – that we could ever do the same works that Jesus did
- *After all – Jesus is the divine Son of God – we mere mortals could never do the same works that Jesus did*
- But what if – in great measure at least – the works that Jesus did were done in the power of the Holy Spirit – spiritual power that was released in and through him because he lived a God-reliant life in obedience to the will of his Father?
- ***And what if this same spiritual power is available to us if we will live a life of humble dependence and obedience and full surrender to God?***
- Of course, this is exactly what we see in the book of Acts
- **And the same Spirit that empowered Jesus' ministry 2000 years ago can empower our ministry today**
- *How else could Jesus have promised us:*

John 14:12 ¹² The person who trusts me will not only do what I'm doing but even greater things, because I, on my way to the Father, am giving you the same work to do that I've been doing. You can count on it.

- *If we want to do the works of Jesus – then we must allow the Spirit to have free reign in our lives and in our church*

III. THE OBJECTS OF JESUS' MISSION

Luke 4:18 (Amplified): The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the good news to the poor; He has sent Me to announce release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind; to send forth delivered those who are oppressed – who are downtrodden, bruised, crushed and broken down by calamity.

- *Now, of course, God loves everyone, and Jesus came to offer His salvation to everyone*
- But this Scripture specifies that the Messiah's mission will be focused on people who are suffering most severely the miseries of this fallen world
- ***The poor***
- The Good News of the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation for everyone who believes – *but throughout history it has been the poor who have been more receptive to that Good News*
- The materially successful tend to be more self-reliant and self-sufficient and self-righteous – *but God gives grace to the humble but opposes the proud*
- Jesus' Sermon on the Mount begins with these words:

Matthew 5:3 (NIV) ³ **“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”**

- The affluent strive for financial security and independence by accumulating material possessions and financial assets – while looking down on those who are needy and dependent upon others for their daily bread
- ***But we enter the kingdom of God by becoming as children – trusting, dependent, acknowledging our neediness and our inability to make it on our own***
- **Churches that want to grow in Christ-likeness will focus their evangelism and outreach on the poor and needy**
- ***Prisoners of war***

- There are many different kinds of prisoners or captives – but the Greek word in Luke 4:18 specifically means “*prisoners of war*”
- **Prisoners of what war?**
- The context makes it clear: *the invisible war between the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Satan*
- This clip from “The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe” illustrates what it is like to be a prisoner-of-war under the dominion of a wicked ruler
- **DVD “Narnia” (1:03:00 to 1:04:40, 1:05:39 to 1:05:50)** (Witch, Edmund, Faun)
- *Perhaps one reason why Jesus was so compassionate and merciful and friendly toward sinners and outcasts is that he didn’t see them merely as bad people or losers – as dirty, rotten, immoral sinners – but rather he saw them as prisoners of war – held captive by Satan – and his mission was not only to forgive them but also to liberate them and breathe new life into them*
- **Show DVD clip “Narnia” (1:58:18 to 1:59:24)** (Aslan freeing Faun)
- *How might our view of lost people change if we viewed them as prisoners of war in need of the liberating and life-giving power of Jesus?*
- ***The blind / those living in spiritual darkness***
- The Greek text in Luke 4:18 speaks of recovery sight for the blind – *and Jesus did literally give sight to the physically blind during his ministry*
- But the Hebrew text in Isaiah 61 speaks of bringing people out of the darkness – perhaps the darkness of prison – *or perhaps spiritual darkness*

2 Corinthians 4:4 ⁴Satan, the god of this evil world, has blinded the minds of those who don’t believe, so they are unable to see the glorious light of the Good News that is shining upon them. They don’t understand the message we preach about the glory of Christ, who is the exact likeness of God.

- *All of us know people – some quite intelligent – who are held captive in a dark, satanic prison-house of deception and false beliefs – and are spiritually blind and unable to understand or believe the Gospel message*
- **They need to be delivered from the darkness and brought into the Kingdom of Light**
- ***The oppressed / downtrodden / bruised / crushed / broken-hearted***

- *Jesus came for the broken – for the physically broken // emotionally damaged // for the sinned-against and abused // for the wounded and broken-hearted*
- ***For it is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick***
- *Speaking of the coming Messiah, Isaiah prophesied:*

Isaiah 42:3 (NIV) ³ A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out. In faithfulness he will bring forth justice;

- *That is our Jesus – gentle / tender-hearted / compassionate / with a special concern for the bruised and battered and broken of the world – and with a commitment to bring their oppressors to justice*
- *We all know some people who are bruised reeds and smoldering wicks – who need the healing love and life-giving hope that only Jesus can give*

IV. THE ACTION VERBS OF JESUS' MISSION STATEMENT

- How did Jesus understand his mission on earth?
- *After his baptism and his wilderness temptations – Jesus went to a synagogue service in his hometown of Nazareth as was his custom on the Sabbath*
- He was asked to read from and comment on a Scripture passage from the OT prophet Isaiah
- **Whether divine providence – or Jesus' own selection – this is the passage of Scripture that gives us God's description of the Messiah's mission – and becomes Jesus' mission statement in his own words: “Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing”**

Luke 4:18-19 **“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me; he has appointed me to preach Good News to the poor; he has sent me to heal the brokenhearted and to announce that captives shall be released and the blind shall see, that the downtrodden shall be freed from their oppressors, and that God is ready to give blessings to all who come to him.”**

- *Preaching good news to the poor*
- *Heralding liberation for prisoners of war*
- *Recovery of sight for the blind*
- *Releasing from the darkness*
- *Bandaging the wounded and healing the broken-hearted*
- *Setting at liberty the oppressed and downtrodden*

- **Preaching / proclaiming / releasing / healing / liberating / setting free – these are the verbs of Jesus’ mission statement that describe what he will be doing during the course of his ministry on earth**
- *Preaching good news is one word in Greek – it is the word from which we get evangelism and evangelical*
- *The word for release is an interesting word – it can refer either to the release of captives or to the forgiveness of sins*
- *The double meaning is appropriate as applied to the work of Christ on the Cross – because it is by means of the forgiveness of our sins through his shed blood that we are released from Satan’s captivity*

Colossians 1:13-14 ¹³For he has rescued us out of the darkness and gloom of Satan’s kingdom and brought us into the Kingdom of his dear Son, ¹⁴who bought our freedom with his blood and forgave us all our sins.

- *Jesus purchased not only the forgiveness of our sins but also our freedom from Satan’s tyranny with the blood of his sacrificial death on the Cross*
- **This is why the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ is such a powerful spiritual weapon to use against Satan and his evil spirits in spiritual warfare**
- *At the heart of Jesus’ mission was the liberation of prisoners of war*
- *The ultimate deliverance would be accomplished by his death and resurrection*
- *But the assault on Satan’s kingdom would begin immediately with a threefold ministry of preaching, healing and deliverance*

V. THE ACTUAL DEEDS OF JESUS’ MISSION

- *The best way to interpret the words of Jesus is by the deeds of Jesus*
- **In verses 18-19, Jesus says: This is my mission assignment – this is what my ministry will look like – it will be a mission of liberating prisoners of war by means of preaching, healing and deliverance**
- *If that be the case – on the assumption that Jesus will do what he said he would do – we would then expect the Gospel record to show Jesus attacking Satan’s kingdom by engaging in a threefold ministry of preaching, healing and deliverance in order to set captives free*
- So what do we find as read on in Luke 4?

- *After escaping the hostile crowd in the Nazareth synagogue – what is the first thing that Jesus does?*

Luke 4:33-36 -- *Jesus launches his offensive against Satan's prisoner-of-war camp – and he liberates one of Satan's captives by casting out a demon from a man in the synagogue in Capernaum*

Matthew 12:28 (NIV) ²⁸But if I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

- *When Jesus came to earth, His coming was an invasion of enemy-held territory for the purpose of claiming for the Kingdom of God what had been lost to the enemy through the Fall of Adam & Eve in the Garden of Eden*
- *Jesus' deliverance ministry was central to the Gospel of the Kingdom*
- *If I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the Kingdom of God has come upon you.*
- *The exorcism in the Capernaum synagogue was followed by the healing of Simon Peter's mother-in-law*

Luke 4:39 (NIV) ³⁹So he bent over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her. She got up at once and began to wait on them.

- *He rebuked the fever, and it left her.*
- *Interesting word choice.*
- *Almost as if Jesus was evicting an alien force and commanding it to leave*
- *This exorcism and healing were followed by many more healings and exorcisms*

Luke 4:40 - 41 (NIV) ⁴⁰When the sun was setting, the people brought to Jesus all who had various kinds of sickness, and laying his hands on each one, he healed them.

⁴¹Moreover, demons came out of many people, shouting, "You are the Son of God!" But he rebuked them and would not allow them to speak, because they knew he was the Christ.

- **This is what the coming of the Kingdom of God means: healing people / setting people free from the scourges of the enemy / driving out evil spirits / binding the strong man, Satan, in order to liberate his prisoners of war**
- *Jesus preached the good news of the Kingdom of God and then demonstrated the meaning and power of the Kingdom by healing all who were oppressed by the Devil*

VI. SETTING CAPTIVES FREE TODAY WITH TRUTH, LOVE AND SPIRITUAL POWER

- Is it possible for Christians and churches today to continue that ministry of Jesus?
- **Not only possible – but expected – and needed**

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.

- *That same authority to overcome all the power of the enemy was later given to the unnamed 72 disciples for their mission trip*
- **Paul wrote the Ephesians that the same power that raised Jesus from the dead and seated him at God's right hand is available to all who believe**
- *And this same spiritual power and authority are being practiced all over the world today wherever the kingdom of God is advancing against the kingdom of Satan -- the Kingdom of God is advancing by preaching the Gospel to the poor // by healing the sick & broken-hearted // and by delivering captives from Satan's grip*
- *In many parts of the world, the most important question that many seekers will ask a missionary is: **What do we do about evil spirits? Is there a power in Christianity that is stronger than the power of the evil spirits that we fear?***
- Even in the US, increasing numbers of people are experimenting with New Age and Eastern Religious practices that bring them into bondage and spiritual darkness
- **They need to be set free**
- And there are captives inside the church as well
- *People who are saved but are not free*
- Christians living in bondage to crippling emotional disorders or to habitual sin or addictions or to unforgiveness or anger or resentment or deep feelings of rejection
- In conformity with our Western worldview, we regard such issues as merely human problems that can be treated with counseling or medication
- *Rarely do we see them as spiritual or demonic problems as well*
- **Apparently Western Christians wrestle only with the flesh and not with spiritual forces of evil**

- We are not horrified by the thought of Christians being addicted to pornography, *but we are horrified by the thought of demons being attached to lust or anger or bitterness or fear or shame like rats attracted to garbage*
- A significant number of Christians in the church – and a significant percentage of Christians who have dropped out of church – *are saved – but they are not free*
- **Some of you here today are saved, but not free**
- **Jesus did not shed his blood merely to forgive us of sins that we would continue committing over and over again – Jesus came to set us free from the controlling power of sin – Jesus came to liberate us from Satan’s prisoner-of-war camps – Jesus came to empower us to get rid of the garbage and the rats inhabiting the garbage**
- But some Christians would rather make peace with their sin than declare war on the enemy
- If we are to live as the body of Christ in the world – *then we need to demonstrate to the world the liberating power of Jesus as well as the forgiveness message of the Cross*
- As the incarnation of Christ in the world today, we need to continue Jesus’ ministry of setting captives free – *we need to continue Jesus’ ministry of proclaiming the Good News and healing the sick and broken-hearted and releasing captives from Satan’s grip*
- ***We need to be strong in the Word // strong in the Spirit // strong in spiritual warfare // and strong in compassionate ministry to hurting and broken people***
- **To be the body of Christ in the world – we need to practice a full-orbed three-dimensional Christianity to set captives free**
- Those three dimensions are: *Love, Truth and Spiritual Power* – the three dimensions that Erika, Jill and Emily shared in their testimonies earlier

(1) Love

- Spiritual problems are often emotional problems rooted in relational problems
- *Trace sinful patterns of behavior back far enough – and you will often find damaged emotions or a broken heart or some kind of abuse or trauma or grief that has deeply wounded the inner core of a person*
- Many of our compulsive sins are unhealthy coping mechanisms attempting to deal with pain of damaged emotions and wounded hearts and broken relationships

- *The love of God – conveyed through the compassionate love of a Christian – is a powerful healing force*
- *Sin often loses its power – and Satan loses his foothold – when the love of God penetrates deeply enough to heal the wounded and empty places of our heart*
- *There is tremendous healing and liberating power in the people of a church body showing unconditional love and mercy to hurting and broken people*
- **One of the most powerful ways of bringing people out of darkness into the light is by extending Christ’s love to them in ways that meet their practical and emotional needs**

(2) *Truth*

- *One of Satan’s favorite and most effective tactics is to attach a lie to an emotional wound*
- *The lie continues to keep us in bondage long after the hurtful event that caused the wound*
- *It could be a lie about us // or a lie about God // or a lie about a family member // or a lie about the church // or a lie about the Bible*
- *And the lie gains power over us because it has been attached to a painful wound*
- **The wound needs to be healed by love – and the lie needs to be replaced with truth**

John 8:31-32 ³¹Jesus said to the people who believed in him, **“You are truly my disciples if you keep obeying my teachings. ³²And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”**

- *This is not just intellectual knowledge of truthful information – this is experiential knowledge of truth that comes by living and thinking and obeying it*
- *Most satanic footholds or strongholds in our lives are rooted in some kind of lie or deception or false belief*
- **Our culture is riddled with values and beliefs that are contrary to God’s Word and are influenced by the Deceiver who leads the whole world astray**
- *One of our most powerful spiritual weapons to set people free from Satan’s power is biblical truth*
- *As Jesus said: God’s Word is Truth – Truth liberates // Truth sanctifies // Truth protects us from Satan’s schemes // Truth demolishes demonic strongholds*

2 Corinthians 10:3 - 5 (NIV) ³For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. ⁴The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. ⁵We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

- *The Greek word for “take captive” is the same word used in Luke 4:18 for “prisoners of war”*
- **When Satan tries to take us captive by filling our heads with his lies – we fight back by taking captive every thought to make it obedient to the truth of Christ**
- *To be able to do this effectively – it is essential that we be continually growing in a true knowledge of God and sound doctrine according to His Word*
- **Truth in combination with love is a powerful healing and liberating force to set captives free**
- *But there is a third dimension that is needed in many cases – and it is this third dimension that is missing in many American churches*

(3) Spiritual Power

- The Bible teaches that Jesus worked in the power of the Spirit to heal, deliver and set captives free
- *The Bible teaches that He passed this power and authority on to His followers*
- But little of this power is seen in many Western churches today
- *It is true that some Christians today misuse spiritual power or do so in excess to the neglect of teaching sound biblical truth*
- But shunning God-given spiritual power is not the answer to that problem
- ***Some people will never be brought to complete healing and freedom in Christ apart from the proper exercise of spiritual power and authority***
- ***Christ has given us his authority over all the power of the enemy – we need to be good stewards of that authority and use it to set captives free***
- **God has given us the spiritual gifts and power of the Holy Spirit to continue the ministry of Jesus – we need to be good stewards of those gifts and that power and use them to set captives free**

- When we look at the spiritual gifts listed in the NT – *we see that some gifts are useful and needed for preaching and teaching // some for healing the sick and comforting the broken-hearted // some for ministering to the poor and needy // some for spiritual warfare – everything needed for continuing Jesus’ ministry of preaching, healing and deliverance*
- Some gifts are useful and needed for expressing love in practical ways and for showing mercy to the hurting and broken // *some are useful and needed for teaching and applying the truth //*
- And some are useful and needed for works of healing and deliverance and winning spiritual battles – *everything needed to be strong in love // strong in truth // and strong in spiritual power*
- **I believe that Cornerstone is becoming a church body that is growing in love // growing in truth // and growing in spiritual power**
- *May that continue to be the case so that Jesus can work through us in the power of the Spirit to continue his ministry of preaching good news to the poor // of healing the broken-hearted // of liberating prisoners-of-war // of rescuing people from the kingdom of darkness and bringing them into the Kingdom of Christ // and of setting at liberty those who are oppressed and downtrodden*
- Prayer
- Altar Call // *“Come, Just As You Are”*
- *“We Declare That The Kingdom of God Is Here”*