

God's Son Saves the World
March-April Sermon Series
Kenwood Baptist Church
Pastor David Palmer
March 14, 2021

TEXT: Luke 4:14-30



Good morning, beloved. This morning we turn to the gospel proclaimed and practiced. We turn our attention to the ministry of Jesus. Last Sunday, we looked at the dominant idea of Jesus' preaching. I hope you all know this better than your own self. I hope that you can give a reflex answer without hesitation. If anyone asked you what Jesus' teaching was about, what His preaching was about, you can immediately say, "It was that the kingdom of God is at hand." God's kingdom has come down and is changing this world. The stone cut without human hands has landed. It's rising up, and even if it doesn't look like it from where you stand, it is rising up and becoming a mountain that is filling the earth. Amen? That is what's really happening, and that's what we talked about last Sunday.

This morning, I want us to look at what Jesus *does* in addition to what He says. The proclamation, the preaching of the kingdom, also brings a certain praxis to it. What you say translates into what you do and how you live. We want to look at and survey the ministry of Jesus. I want to invite you to walk with me, back to the time when Jesus walked the earth, and imagine that we are not only listening to His preaching but also watching what He does. Luke, the physician, is going to be our guide. One of the distinctives of Luke's Gospel is that Luke tells the story of Jesus' ministry often through the eyes of individual people with whom Jesus interacts, and this in itself is instructive for us. In Luke 4:14, we read:

“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.”

Jesus went to the synagogue to worship and to hear the Scriptures read and applied. On this particular day, the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to Him, and He was selected to be the Scripture reader. The custom in antiquity is to read through the Torah in a yearly cycle. About six chapters of the Torah are read in a given week. It's the Torah portion. Those who prepare in Judaism for a Bar Mitzvah or Bat Mitzvah prepare to read a Torah portion or a selection from it publicly. It often takes months to prepare to do that. The Torah scroll doesn't have vowels in it. The biblical Hebrew is often a foreign language, even to modern Hebrew speakers. Because it is an ancient culture, Judaism has not absorbed the cultural myth of our day that says that when you become a teenager, you rebel against your parents and do all kinds of terrible things. In the biblical culture, when you become a teenager, that means you are old enough to understand God's Word and start to learn it and help others to understand it and apply it. The Bible's view of teenage years is that this is a transition toward adulthood. That's exciting. These were my favorite years in our home. I loved the teenage years with our children.

The Torah portion, six chapters a week, or selections of them, were read. But then there was an accompanying portion from the prophets called the *haftarah*, a portion of the prophets that was thematically related. So, for example, the opening portion of the Torah describes the creation of the world, and the prophetic portion that goes with it celebrates the new creation. That is what's going on here. The scroll of the prophets is handed to Jesus, and He unrolls the scroll and begins to read in Isaiah 61:1:

“The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because the Lord has anointed Me to bring good news to the poor; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor....”

These are stunning words from Isaiah 61. The servant of the Lord is speaking. The Spirit is upon Him, and the Spirit then anoints Him, designates Him. This is the language where we get “Messiah.” He has “Messiahed” Him, if you will, to do a number of things. He has anointed Him; He has designated Him as the Messianic King to evangelize. We talked about this last week: the gospel is not just a noun, but it's a verb. It's good news, but it is also “good newsed.” It's proclaimed, and it's a gospel. It is an evangelization to the poor. It is good news of liberty or a release to those who are captive. It's a recovery of sight to the blind. It is a freedom for those who are oppressed, and it is an announcement of the year of Jubilee, the year of God's favor to those who are crushed with an unpayable debt.

I want you to notice that in this reading from Isaiah 61 all of these groups share one thing: all of these groups are hurting. The good news of the gospel brings hope to people who are hurting. That's what I want you to know from God's Word. That's what God's Word has challenged in me up front. This week I've been stirred not only by this passage, but also by the gospel narrative that the gospel is good news that brings hope for people who are hurting. Maybe you're like me in this. For some reason that I can't completely explain, I tend not to notice the people who are hurting. Are you like that? Do you sometimes see the person who is hurting and think, "I need to step away from that." Do you sometimes see a situation that you don't understand the origin of, but you see the results of, and it makes you back away from it? In Isaiah 61, the Messianic King, the Servant of the Lord, comes with good news, and it is good news for people who are hurting. In the wider context of Isaiah 61, there is good news to the poor, there is binding up the brokenhearted. There is a release to those who are in captivity and a freeing of those who are imprisoned. It is a proclamation of debt release and forgiveness.

In Isaiah 61, there is a great reversal of a devastating situation. In Isaiah 61, when the Lord comes to preach the gospel, He will give a beautiful garment instead of ashes. He will give the oil of gladness instead of mourning and a garment of praise instead of a faint spirit. Ancient ruins are built up. Cities are restored. The devastation of many generations is overturned. Instead of shame, you get a double portion. Instead of dishonor, there is rejoicing. The Lord says that their offspring will be known among the nations, and all who see them will acknowledge that they are blessed. Jesus reads Isaiah 61: good news, hope for the hurting. He rolls up the scroll, and He hands it back to the synagogue attendant. He looks out at everyone in His hometown, gathered for worship, and He says the most remarkable thing. He looks out at everyone, and He says: "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." Jesus' proclamation of the arrival of the Kingdom of God means that there is hope for the hurting. It means that there is hope for the hurting around us.

Let's watch Jesus. He went down to Capernaum. He was teaching on the Sabbath, and people were astonished at His teaching. In the synagogue, there was a man who had the spirit of an unclean demon, and the demon began to cry out and said, "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us?" And let me tell you, the answer to the demon's question is, "Yes." Have you come to destroy demonic power that afflicts and harasses and torments people? And the answer to that question is, "Yes." That's great. That's exciting, isn't it? It's exciting that Jesus shows up, and the demons say, "Whoa, I'm afflicting this man. Has He come to destroy me?" Jesus' presence and practice is, "Yes, actually." And He commands the demon to be quiet and come out of the man, and everyone was amazed.

Jesus then goes to house of Simon's house, and his mother-in-law is ill. You may have a complex

relationship with your mother-in-law, and I don't want to judge that. I love mine. Simon's mother-in-law was sick, and Jesus came and spoke to the fever, and it left her. As the sun was setting, the people brought to Jesus all who were sick. Jesus didn't back away from them; rather, He put His hands on them and healed them. In Luke 4:43, He said:

"I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well; for I was sent for this purpose."

What have we seen so far? We have seen that the proclamation of Jesus is the arrival of the kingdom and the praxis of the kingdom, the demonstration of its reality, is to bring hope for those who are hurting. Here is where it starts to get a little dangerous. It's tempting for us to think, "Okay, that's good. It's Jesus. Jesus destroys demonic power. Jesus heals people. Amen, go Jesus." But it gets dangerous. Jesus actually is interested in calling other people to follow Him and do exactly the same thing.

In Luke 5, He sees Simon next to the Lake of Gennesaret. I love that Luke, who loves to travel, loves the Mediterranean Sea, just can't bring himself to call the Sea of Galilee, a sea. It's just a small body of water. The other gospel writers think of it as a big sea, but it's a lake. He sees men and calls them to follow Him. But Simon Peter asked Him to leave because he feels his unworthiness. If you're honest, you might feel the same way: "I have problems. I'm no perfect person. I can't actually do what Jesus is doing. He should just leave me to my family business. Maybe I'll send a check to support the ministry." But Jesus tells him in Luke 5:10:

"Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men."

Jesus says, "From now on your focus is going to be on bringing hope to the hurting." The men left everything they had and started to follow Him. As they followed him, what did they see? They saw a man full of leprosy, someone who was on the margins of society, someone whose disease seemed highly contagious. He came up to Jesus and said, "Can you make me clean? Can you do something about my situation?" Jesus reached out His hand and touched him. The men must have been astonished because the leprosy left him. People heard about this and brought their friends to Jesus. I love that. Have you brought a friend to Jesus? That's one of the simplest things you can do. If you don't know what to do, and you're not sure how to help, just carry your friend to Jesus.

That's what a group of people do. They come in with a friend who is paralyzed. They can't get close to Jesus, so they have the "common courtesy" of ripping out a hole in the house and lowering him down. These are good friends. Have you ever had a friend come to your house and say, "You know what, I would like to open up a skylight in your house." They rip out a section of the roof and lower this man down, and Jesus says, "Your sins are forgiven," which is striking. It is striking because Jesus has not addressed his illness. He has spoken to something

deeper. When we see people who are hurting, and if we are honest, we get this idea – even though we don't even know where it comes from – that they must have really messed up. They must have done something wrong, and that's why they're in this situation. That's too bad. Jesus speaks into this, and He announces that this man's sins are forgiven. It causes a bit of a stir. The Pharisees around Him ask, "Who can forgive sins but God alone?" Jesus challenges them: "What's easier to say, 'Your sins are forgiven' or 'Rise up and walk'"? It's actually easier to say, "Your sins are forgiven," because that can't be immediately verified. You might be bluffing. But if you say, "Rise and walk" and nothing happens, you're shown to be an imposter. And Jesus says in Luke 5:24:

"But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"-- He said to the man who was paralyzed—"I say to you, rise, pick up your bed and go home."

And the man rises and goes home. We might be inclined in that moment to say, "Wow, Jesus, that is awesome." The people who were there said, "We have seen extraordinary things today, haven't we?" That's not the kind of thing that happens every day. They glorified God; they were filled with awe.

Then Jesus continues this relentless pursuit of raising up other people to follow Him and do the same. He called His disciples. He picked twelve and He named them apostles, which is such a dangerous word. It's an unsettling word. No one has this on a business card. This is not something you put on your resume to open doors of opportunity. This is a very dangerous title to be given by Jesus, because "apostle" means "sent." "I'm sending you" – that's why He called them this. This is also what was in Isaiah 61. Do you hear that? "He has 'Messiahed' Me; He has anointed Me to proclaim good news; and He has sent Me." Jesus is the original "sent One," and now He's doing the alarming thing of sending us out. He actually thinks that if we follow Him, then we will proclaim the arrival of the kingdom and bring hope for the hurting. If we keep following Jesus, we see that His scope of ministry gets even wider. In Luke 6, He comes down with them. A great crowd of the disciples were there, and a large multitude of people from all Judea and Jerusalem, a large geographic area, and the coast of Tyre and Sidon. People from other countries are coming in and trying to get close to Jesus, because they've heard that Jesus' preaching means the arrival of the kingdom and that Jesus' preaching brings with it hope for people who are hurting. Foreigners came a long way to Jesus, and they were trying to touch Him.

In Luke 7, Jesus continues to teach and preach the arrival of the kingdom. Not only people from foreign nations come, but also a Roman centurion comes. It's difficult for us to appreciate the social dynamic of this cultural line. The Romans were there, not as invited guests, but as a hostile force. They were there to control the movement of people. They were there to plunder

goods and wealth. When Pilate arrived as the governor, one of the first things he did was put up Roman standards in the courts of the Jerusalem temple that were offensive to the religious sense of the people. He took money from the Jerusalem Temple to pay for public works. People were so distressed by his effrontery and lack of sensitivity to the religion and customs of the people that they rushed to the governor's house in Caesarea. He responded by saying that if you have a problem with that, I'll kill you. So they all just lay down and bared their necks, and they said, "We would rather you kill all of us than defile our holy things." And Pilate finally backed down.

A centurion, who represented Roman power, had heard about Jesus but was afraid to go to Him directly. So he called for Jewish elders and said, "Could you go to Jesus and ask Him to heal my servant." (Some translations say "my son.") The elders go to Jesus and plead with Him that this man is worthy to have Jesus do this for him. "He's a good guy," they say. "Not all Romans are the same. This guy actually supported us. He loves our nation. He's built our synagogue. You should do something for him." And Jesus came to the centurion, who said to Him, "I'm not worthy." I love that. The elders are trying to convince Jesus of his worthiness, and he said, "I'm not worthy, but I'm hurting. Just say the word, and my servant will be healed. I'm a man under authority. I tell a soldier, 'Go,' and he goes, or tell another, 'Come,' and he comes." For many parents, this is the most exciting passage in the New Testament. You just say, "Go," and people go? You tell your kids, "Stay here, be quiet," and they do? For some of us, that would be like the arrival of the kingdom. Jesus heard him and said, "I haven't seen faith like this in all of Israel," and He healed the servant with a word.

Jesus went from there to Nain and came to a widow's house. Her only son had died, and when Jesus saw that she was hurting, He had compassion for her and said, "Do not weep." Jesus came and touched the man and said, "Young man, I say to you, arise." The dead man got up and began to speak. A report about Jesus spread throughout the whole of Judea and the surrounding country.

The arrival of the kingdom of God brings hope for the hurting. We see this in Luke 7. A woman with a troubled past comes to Jesus at the house of a religious leader, bringing with her an alabaster flask of ointment. Standing behind Him at His feet, weeping, she wet His feet with her tears and wiped them. The religious man was scandalized by this and wondered if this actually reflected poorly on Jesus. He thought that, if Jesus were a prophet, He would know this woman's troubled past. Jesus inserts this explosive short parable: "He, who is forgiven much, loves much." We will talk about Jesus' parables next week. Jesus announces that her sins are forgiven, and the people are astonished.

The good news of the kingdom brings hope for the hurting. I want us to see this. I want us to see this this morning because you yourself might be really hurting, and I want you to know that Jesus, the Messianic King, has good news for you. I also want you to know, as followers of Jesus, that He intends for His followers to follow Him in announcing the arrival of the kingdom and to bring hope for the hurting. In Luke 8, we read that He went through cities and villages, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom. The good news of the kingdom is not just a message about conversion, although it is that. The good news of the kingdom is really touching lives. The good news of the kingdom is bringing healing to those who are in pain, comfort for those who are mourning, seeing for those who are invisible, advocating for those who have no advocacy, and touching for those from whom others would look away.

As Jesus proclaims the kingdom, the people who follow Him continue to grow. The twelve were with Him, and Luke tells us that were there were also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and diseases: Mary Magdalene and Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's household manager. I love that. She is one of the elite women, whose husband is in the household service, helping run Herod Antipas' house – incredible. The household manager's wife becomes a follower of Jesus. Did you notice that? The man about whom Jesus said, "I know that fox," the man who will cloak Jesus with purple and mock Him at His trial has a "director of operations" for his household, and his wife becomes a follower of Jesus. In Acts 13, we read that one of his best friends growing up becomes a leader of the church in Antioch.

Jesus heals a man tormented by demons in the country of the Gerasenes. He heals a 12-year-old girl, the daughter of Jairus, the ruler of the synagogue. In the midst of that healing, a woman, who had been sick for twelve years and spent everything she had on her medical bills, pushed in to try to touch Jesus. She knew, as others are discovering, that the good news of the kingdom brings hope for the hurting. She presses in and touches Him and is healed.

Jesus, in response to this visible public ministry, then actually empowers us. It feels risky to be called someone who is sent out. It feels a little dangerous to think He is adding people to do this. There are twelve of us who are different in other ways, but He is calling us to follow Him and actually do this. He is attracting people from all social levels of society, and they are participating in the extension of His kingdom, bringing hope for the hurting, and then Jesus says something really scary in Luke 9. He calls the twelve together and He gives them power. Jesus gives His power and His authority to His followers. He authorizes those who follow Him to bring hope for the hurting, and He sends them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal.

If you are a follower of Jesus, then Jesus, out of His superabundant authority, gives it to you. He has it all – all authority in heaven and on earth. He has no shortage of authority and power. But

He gives that to His followers to go and do the same. So it's not really you. It's not really me. It's not our skill, our strength, our ability to persuade. It's the power and authority of Jesus. That authorizes you to step into any situation, to touch any person who is really hurting, and say, "I have good news for you. There is a God in heaven who has heard your cry and come down to save. There is One upon whom the Spirit of God abides, and He brings good news for those who are hurting. He is not absent. He is here, and I want to give you hope in His name." You can do that. Jesus sent them out to proclaim the kingdom. The kingdom is at hand. Then he authorizes us to heal, and we wonder how we can do that. That's a lot of power, isn't it? That's a lot of power to be given, and Luke does not conceal the fact that we practice this imperfectly. Luke 9 reveals how we regularly do not understand this power. Look at this: We get the power, we get the authority, and we go out the next day, and we totally fail. The first person we encounter has a demonic spirit seizing him, and we try to cast it out, and nothing happens. We are like someone in a residency, trying to do their first surgery, and the patient is about to bleed to death, and the attending physician says, "Okay, let me just walk you through this one more time." Jesus comes and says, "You're faithless." Ouch. So we sometimes don't trust Jesus, and we are ineffective. Then Jesus says to them that the Son of Man is about to go to Jerusalem and be delivered into the hands of men and that part of following Jesus means suffering. We don't understand that. Luke says we were afraid to ask Him any questions. Then Luke says we got into an argument. Instead of embracing Jesus' vision of the suffering Savior, we get into an argument with each other about which one of us is really important. Isn't that funny? Do you think we still do that? It gets a little worse: we divide. We say, "Master, we saw somebody casting out demons in Your name, and we tried to stop him because he doesn't go to our church." And Jesus says, "Don't stop him. The one who is not against you is for you."

There are 2500 churches in Cincinnati, and I praise God for all the faithful ministry that's happening in this city this morning. We fail, we lack faith, we don't understand Jesus' ministry, we are ambitious, we are divisive, and to cap it all off, we tend to be judgmental. Messengers were sent out ahead of Jesus to go into a village of the Samaritans, again crossing an ethnic cultural line. The people didn't receive Him, and when James and John heard about that, they came up alongside Jesus and said, "Jesus, do You want us to call down fire on these folks?" And Jesus rebuked them. The ministry of Jesus is the arrival of the kingdom of God. I want you to know this so clearly, and then I want you to know that the arrival of the kingdom of God brings hope for the hurting.

In Luke 10, we finish our journey here for this morning, that the Lord appointed 72 others and sent them on ahead, two by two, to every town and place where He was about to go. Jesus just keeps doing this. He calls people to follow Him. He designates the twelve apostles. He gathers an increasing number, sends out 72, tells them to enter a home and speak a word of peace.

“Start with a greeting of peace if you follow Me.” Then He says, “Heal the sick, and then say, ‘The kingdom of God is come.’” He flips the order: you preach and you practice; you say and you do; you bring hope for the hurting; and sometimes you just do and then say.

The public ministry of Jesus calls us to action in two ways:

Number one: *Announce that Jesus’ coming brings hope for the hurting.* If you are hurting this morning – I mean really hurting – I want to tell you that Jesus Christ came for you. If you are discouraged or depressed or sick or troubled or in despair or in debt or have a complex family dynamic that you can't get out of or a cycle of destruction that you can't seem to break, I want to tell you that there is a Savior named Jesus Christ. If you feel like you're trapped by your own sin or sin that has been committed against you, and you can't break that cycle, I want to tell you this morning from the gospel that the kingdom of God is come and that Jesus Christ is the Savior for the hurting. There is no hurting that is outside the scope of His power. You may have been led back to church with all the events of recent days and months, and you're here and you're just not sure where to start. That's where to start: just say, “Jesus, I need Your help; I’ve lost hope; and I’m hurting. I’ve sinned; others have sinned against me. Would You forgive me; break the cycle; and give me hope? You can start that journey of following Him today. If you're hurting, come to Jesus.

Number two: *Those who follow Jesus should do the same.* For those of us who have already made that commitment and that decision, then the second call to action is simple but profound. Jesus expects those who follow Him to do the same. That’s it. It’s not complicated. It's difficult, but it’s not complicated. He expects those who follow Him to do the same. I want to open this just ever so slightly before we close. I want to ask you to immerse yourself in the gospel. Some of you are fasting during the Lenten season from news and social media. I have been doing that, and I have to tell you, it’s been wonderful. I have some mental space that I'm not eager to give away again. I'm just letting the Gospels wash over me, and I'm just trying to be attentive to what Jesus is actually saying and doing. So I'm letting the Gospels re-create in me new life, new concerns, and new cares. I want to challenge you to take the risk of asking the Lord to give you sight, to give you a burden for either an individual person or a particular situation in our city or country that you just have not seen before. Ask Him to do that. Say, “Jesus, I know there are hurting people around me. Would you cause them to cross my path?” Maybe that's just a hurting person in your family system that others are shunning, and you are supposed to be the kingdom-of-God person to step into it. Maybe that's a classmate or a coworker who is on the margins, and you are the kingdom-of-God person to step into that. If we all did that, the kingdom of God in our community would grow. Ask Jesus to give you a burden or sight for something going on around you that you just hadn't seen before. I see this

happening in our church. An unreached people group moved in fifteen minutes down the street from us, and there is a growing ministry happening there, teaching English, serving in love. There are hurting kids, five minutes from us, who struggle to learn how to read and are in danger of falling behind. Some of them were born into circumstances they have no control over. God is causing us to bring hope for the hurting. Focas Ministry downtown is reaching communities that are struggling with hopelessness, and God is sending His people there. There are people at risk around us, people without hope around us, people being trafficked around us, people longing for the hope of the kingdom. Jesus is raising up His followers to follow Him, not with their own strength or wisdom, but with His power and authority to step into that situation. And whenever we do that, the mountain of the kingdom will rise just a little bit more in our town. Let's pray.

Lord Jesus, we thank You for the good news of the kingdom that brings hope for the hurting, forgiveness of sins, reconciliation, release from debt, freedom from demonic power. We thank you, Lord, that the good news of the kingdom reverses generational patterns and brings hope. We thank You, Lord God, that You sent Your beloved Son. You didn't send a message; You sent a Person. Lord, You didn't issue a mailing; You sent Your beloved Son. We thank You, Lord Jesus, that You proclaim the arrival of the kingdom and You show it and You touch lives and You enter into places of pain and hurting and You bring healing and comfort. Oh, Lord Jesus, would You give to us of Your power and authority, not so that we would be great or famous or well-known, but so we could extend Your reach. I pray for every single one of us this week that You would direct across our path someone who is hurting that we didn't see before, that as we see them right in front of us, we'd say, "Lord, You're alive and You brought this person to me and I want to come toward them in Your name. Give me the power and authority to speak hope, to proclaim forgiveness. Lord Jesus, You have not treated us as our sins deserve. You have called us as a people to follow You. You have breathed life into us, and You have invited us to join You in extending Your kingdom across social and ethnic lines. Oh, Lord, this is where the living is to be had. Breathe upon us, Lord, confer Your authority and send us out.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.