



## Sermon Notes

**Term** – Autumn 2019

**Series** – The Gospel of Luke

**Gathering & Date** – the 10, 17 November

**Title** – Luke 4:14-44 (What are you here for?)

**Preacher** – Paul Langham

### **Reading** – Luke 4:14-44

Note the conflict appearing in the gospel of Luke. Jesus is in conflict with

- The devil (last week – the temptation in the wilderness)
- Unbelief – the people of Nazareth
- Demonic possession – in the individual and the crowd
- Sickness – in the individual and the crowd

Another gospel writer, John, comments in one of his letters that

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

### **Recap – temptation (4:1-13) ... Conflict with the devil himself**

The heart of temptation is the invitation to doubt God's word ...

Jesus resolutely places himself as a man under submission to God's word

### **Conflict with unbelief: In the Synagogue at Nazareth (4:14-30)**

The mood of the people changes rapidly, from v. 15 where *everyone praised him* to v. 28 where they are now *furious* ...

Jesus won't dance to their tune, won't accept that

- The rich are rich because God has rewarded them
- The poor are poor because they're sinners
- God's blessings are reserved for the chosen race

Instead, he proclaims a coming world in which rich and poor, those who laugh and those who weep, will change places. And if it's not bad enough that Jesus fails to paint the Kingdom of God as a private health spa for the already favoured but as a riotous party where the riff-raff eat and drink their fill, he will insist that the good news of God's invitation into this Kingdom is for foreigners and aliens, those whose skin colour is different, those whose present creeds don't yet match the purity of the Hebrew faith ... (the widow of Zarephath, Naaman, the Syrian army commander)

But above all, in quoting Isaiah 61 (long accepted as a primary text about the Messiah), Jesus is saying that the whole of the Old Testament, has been pointing to him. The nation is now at a crossroads: everything will depend on how Israel responds to him ... sadly,

*They'd rather get lost among their scrolls than be found by a Messiah who favours filthy pagans (Phil Moore)*

After this, Jesus never returns to Nazareth ... from now on, his base will be Capernaum ...

### **Conflict with the demonic (4:31-37)**

Rabbis gained their 'authority' by the number of other rabbis they could quote in support of their view. Jesus never quotes anybody! Rather, his teaching often begins, 'I tell you ...' or 'I say to you'.

Note that the crowds are not in the least fazed by the presence of a demon – they'd seen this before, clearly. What surprises (amazes) them is the sudden absence of the demon in response to the command of Jesus.

When Jesus speaks to the demon, he uses the word 'phimoo' which literally means 'be muzzled.' To Jesus, the power of evil is no more than a dog to be brought to heel.

### **Conflict with sickness (4:38-41)**

Jesus heals both a named individual and then many others, continuing to drive out demons as well.

### **Conflict with ease / popularity (4:42-44)**

We can only imagine the temptation to stay where the ministry was good and easy. But Jesus is conscious of the constant call onwards and outwards – there are so many others who need to hear the good news and to see the power of the kingdom demonstrated.

Phil Moore comments:

*Note what this chapter promises us will happen whenever a person filled with God's Spirit remembers what they are here for. The Lord will empower us to speak with his own authority (v. 32) and to issue orders to demons that force them to submit and flee (v. 36). He will enable us to heal illnesses through similar commands (v. 39) and through laying our hands on people so that the Spirit can flow out of us and into them (v. 40). As we follow him as our great Example, we will discover that the partnership he began in Galilee is still active within us.*

*So ask yourself, where are you going? What are you saying and doing as you go? What on earth are you doing here?*

Is there a risk that, as at Nazareth, Jesus might simply walk right through us and on? I am not suggesting that those who've put their faith in him are at risk of losing their salvation or eternal life – simply that we get to choose what sort of church we want to be, what sort of mark, impact and legacy our lives leave behind us as we go. I think this is what St Paul is talking about when he writes:

*<sup>10</sup> By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as a wise builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should build with care. <sup>11</sup> For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. <sup>12</sup> If anyone builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, <sup>13</sup> their work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each person's work. <sup>14</sup> If what has been built survives, the builder will receive a reward. <sup>15</sup> If it is burned up, the builder will suffer loss but yet will be saved – even though only as one escaping through the flames. 1 Corinthians 3*

We can, I am sure, muddle along as a pretty good church, full of lovely people – but I can't help feeling that's not really what Jesus calls us to. From this point on in the gospel of Luke, we need to decide – are we observer or participant?

Which do you choose?