Jesus' Mission on Earth
Matt 4:14-21
SS Lesson for 05/11/2014

Devotional Scripture: Luke 19:10

OUTLINE

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OVERVIEW AND APPROACH TO LESSON

Key Verse: Luke 4:21

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From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

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Introduction

Overview and Approach to Lesson

The lesson examines Jesus’ Mission on Earth. The study’s aim is to show that Jesus is the Messiah and that He carried out His mission according to biblical prophecy and under the power of the Holy Spirit. The study’s application is to show that since Jesus clearly identified His mission as Israel’s Messiah, we are responsible for the way we respond to Him (From the Bible Expositor and Illuminator).

Key Verse: Luke 4:21

21 And He began to say to them, “Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”

Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary

Jesus initially was a popular Teacher, so when He went back to His hometown, it was natural for Him to teach in synagogues. It was the custom in the synagogue for a man to stand while he was reading the Scriptures but then to sit while explaining the portion he had read. The portion of Scripture Jesus read was Isaiah 61:1-2, a messianic passage. He concluded His reading with the words, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor—stopping in the middle of the verse without reading the next line in Isaiah 61:2 about God’s vengeance. When Jesus added, Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing, the implication was clear. Jesus was claiming to be the Messiah who could bring the kingdom of God which had been promised for so long—but His First Advent was not His time for judgment. The crowd was fascinated at His teaching—The eyes of everyone... were fastened on Him (Luke 4:20). Jesus’ words plainly stated that the offer of the favorable year of the Lord (i.e., the kingdom time) was being made to them through Him (v. 21). The people were amazed (ethaumazon, “wondered, marveled”; cf. comments on 2:18) at His gracious words (lit., “words of grace”), but they immediately began to question the authority with which He could say these things. How could Joseph’s Son—the Boy they saw grow up in their town—be the Messiah? Jesus, sensing their opposition (4:23-24), noted two instances in which God’s prophets ministered miraculous acts of grace to Gentiles while Israel was in unbelief—Elijah and the widow of Zarephath (vv. 25-26; cf. 1 Kings 17:8-16), and Elisha and Naaman the Syrian leper (Luke 4:27; cf. 2 Kings 5:1-19). Jesus’ mention of Gentiles rather than Jews having God’s blessing caused the people to be furious (Luke 4:28). They attempted to kill Him, but He walked right through the crowd (v. 30). Luke no doubt described a miraculous escape from the angry crowd. This pattern is seen throughout the rest of Jesus’ ministry: Jesus went to the Jews; they rejected Him; He told of Gentile participation in the kingdom; some Jews wanted to kill Him. But He was not killed until the proper time, when He chose to die (23:46; cf. John 10:15, 17-18).

Approach to the Major Outlines in Lesson

The outline of the lesson came from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary and from the points revealed by the study of the Scriptural text.

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Lesson Introduction and Background

From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

The twentieth century saw Christians from various traditions engaged in debate regarding what the church's primary focus should be. Should we concentrate first on people's souls and then address their material needs after they convert? Or should we act to meet their physical needs first in hopes that they will appreciate our generosity and will be drawn to our salvation message about Jesus as a result? And what should we do if people only pretend to listen to our spiritual teaching because they want to keep receiving material blessings from us? Such debates continue into the twenty-first century. A central issue in the debate is whether Jesus focused on one or the other during his earthly ministry. Today's Scriptures help us wrestle with this issue by exploring the biblical story line in this regard, a story line that spans the Old and New Testaments. It begins with God's teaching of Israel through Moses, it continues with the prophecy of Isaiah, and it finds its ultimate expression in Jesus. Behind today's passages stands Leviticus 25:8-55, which discusses the year of jubilee concept. Since Isaiah and Luke's discussion of the year of the Lord is best understood in this light, this invites us to review the passage from Leviticus in its own context. A primary reason that people of the ancient world did not flourish was that most of the world's power and resources were concentrated in the hands of a few wealthy persons, who often used their power oppressively. This was the Israelites' experience as slaves in Egypt. So when God freed them from Egypt, he taught them his ways and formed them into a people who would exhibit his justice. Even before God brought the Israelites into the promised land, he knew that some people would fall into hardship in that "land flowing with milk and honey." To keep that from happening, he established a procedure that, if followed, would prevent the land and people from falling under the permanent control of a few. That procedure was the concept of a year of jubilee. Every fiftieth year—the jubilee year—the poor who had had to serve as hired hands as indentured servants were to be released to return home (Leviticus 25:13, 39-43, 54), and land was to revert to ancestral ownership (25:28, 31). That year, when the Israelites' physical and economic freedoms were reset, is the backdrop of "the year of the Lord's favor"—the year prophesied by Isaiah and then announced by Jesus. This understanding allows us to appreciate fully the good news that was proclaimed by the prophet and fulfilled by the Messiah.

Major Theme Analysis

(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)


14 Then Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and news of Him went out through all the surrounding region. 15 And He taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all.

The Holy Spirit works in those who are anointed (14)

*The Holy Spirit works in the anointed to help them speak the words of God (John 3:34)*

34 For the one whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God gives the Spirit without limit.

*The Holy Spirit works in the anointed to empower (Acts 1:8)*

8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

*The Holy Spirit works in the anointed to testify about being God's child (Rom 8:15-16)*

15 For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." 16 The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.
The Holy Spirit works in the anointed to administer gifts (1 Cor 12:11)
11 All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines.

The Holy Spirit works in the anointed for the common good (1 Cor 12:7)
7 Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.

The Holy Spirit works in the anointed to renew and cleanse (Titus 3:5)
5 he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit,

God is glorified when His Word is taught (15)

God is glorified when we give glory to Jesus (John 17:9-10)
9 I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours. 10 All I have is yours, and all you have is mine. And glory has come to me through them.

As a believer, God should be glorified in us (2 Thess 1:10)
10 on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed. This includes you, because you believed our testimony to you.

God is glorified when we are in unity with the Holy Spirit and follow the example of Jesus (Rom 15:5-6)
5 May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, 6 so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

God is glorified when we live a good life before others (1 Peter 2:12)
12 Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.

16 So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read.
17 And He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written:
18 "The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me To preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives And recovery of sight to the blind, To set a t liberty those who are oppressed;
19 To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD."

Learn of caring through worship and Scripture (16-17)

Through unity in worship (1 Cor 11:18-22)
18 In the first place, I hear that when you come together as a church, there are divisions among you, and to some extent I believe it. 19 No doubt there have to be differences among you to show which of you have God's approval. 20 When you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper you eat, 21 for as you eat, each of you goes ahead without waiting for anybody else. One remains hungry, another gets drunk. 22 Don't you have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you for this? Certainly not!
Through the strengthening of the Church (1 Cor 14:26)

26 What then shall we say, brothers? When you come together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. All of these must be done for the strengthening of the church.

Through respecting one another (1 Cor 11:33-34)

33 So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for each other. 34 If anyone is hungry, he should eat at home, so that when you meet together it may not result in judgment.

Through living in harmony with one another (1 Peter 3:8)

8 Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble.

Power of caring through the Holy Spirit (18)

Through the power to follow Jesus (Rom 15:5)

5 May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus,

Through the power to pray for one another (Rom 15:30)

30 I urge you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to join me in my struggle by praying to God for me.

Through the power of being baptized into one Spirit (1 Cor 12:13)

13 For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.

Through the power to keep the peace with one another (Eph 4:2-4)

2 Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. 3 Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. 4 There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope when you were called-

Through the power to forgive one another (Eph 4:29-32)

30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31 Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. 32 Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

Caring is always acceptable to God (19)

Acceptable because God is pleased with supplying the needs of others (Phil 4:16-19)

16 for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid again and again when I was in need. 17 Not that I am looking for a gift, but I am looking for what may be credited to your account. 18 I have received full payment and even more; I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God. 19 And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.

Acceptable because praying for everyone is pleasing to God (1 Tim 2:1-3)

2:1 I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone—2 for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. 3 This is good, and pleases God our Savior,
Acceptable because of obedience (1 John 3:21-23)

21 Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God 22 and receive from him anything we ask, because we obey his commands and do what pleases him. 23 And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us.

Acceptable because of helping one another (Heb 13:1-3)

13:1 Keep on loving each other as brothers. 2 Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it. 3 Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering.

Acceptable because of loving one another (1 John 4:10-12)

11 Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. 12 No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.

Divine Caring Fulfilled (Luke 4:20-21)

20 Then He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on Him.
21 And He began to say to them, “Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

Divine care is fulfilled by fixing our eyes on Jesus (20)

Because fixing our eyes on Jesus perfects our faith (Heb 12:2)

2 Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Because fixing our eyes on Jesus keeps us convinced of God's faithfulness (2 Tim 1:12-13)

I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day. 13 What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus.

Because fixing our eyes on Jesus leads to purity (Ps 119:9-10)

How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word. 10 I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands.

Because fixing our eyes on Jesus strengthens us (Isa 45:5-6)

5 I am the LORD, and there is no other; apart from me there is no God. I will strengthen you, though you have not acknowledged me, 6 so that from the rising of the sun to the place of its setting men may know there is none besides me. I am the LORD, and there is no other.

Because fixing our eyes on Jesus allows Him to supply our needs (Matt 6:33)

33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

Divine care is fulfilled through the words of Jesus (21)

Because the words of Jesus lead to a healthy spiritual life (Prov 4:20-22)

20 My son, pay attention to what I say; listen closely to my words. 21 Do not let them out of your sight, keep them within your heart; 22 for they are life to those who find them and health to a man's whole body.
Because the words of Jesus are eternal life (John 6:67-69)

67 "You do not want to leave too, do you?" Jesus asked the Twelve. 68 Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. 69 We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God."

Because the words of Jesus bring peace (John 14:27)

27 Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

Because the words of Jesus heal (Ps 107:20-21)

20 He sent forth his word and healed them; he rescued them from the grave. 21 Let them give thanks to the LORD for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for men.

Because the words of Jesus have total authority (Mark 1:27)

27 The people were all so amazed that they asked each other, "What is this? A new teaching-and with authority! He even gives orders to evil spirits and they obey him."

Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Concluding Thoughts From Bob Deffinbaugh


I believe that this incident in the life of our Lord has widespread implications for our own lives. Allow me to conclude by distilling several vital principles from our text and from the Word of God more generally.

Principle One:

God’s Prophets are Never Popular. Our Lord said this very clearly: “Truly I say to you, no prophet is welcome in his home town” (Luke 4:24). Later, Stephen would say to his Jewish brethren: “Which one of the prophets did your father not persecute?” (Acts 7:52).

The inference of Stephen’s words is that there was never a prophet in the history of Israel who was popular among his own people. One need only study the life of the prophet Jeremiah for an illustration of this principle.

The Lord Jesus refused the popularity of His peers because He knew full well that popularity could not be based upon a clear grasp of what His ministry and messiahship was all about. He also knew that popularity would not take Him to the cross of Calvary. Jesus refused popularity because, as the greatest prophet of all, men could not and would not take pleasure in Him.

Principle Two:

All Christians have all been given a Prophetic Task. It is not hard to conceive of our Lord as falling into the category of a prophet, but it may be a little more difficult to think of ourselves as prophets. Nevertheless, I believe that it is true to say that every Christian has a prophetic calling, a prophetic ministry, and a prophetic message. The church, as the body of Christ, is to continue to do and to teach that which our Lord began in His earthly ministry. The Great Commission, given to the church, is a prophetic commission. The message which we are to take to the world centers around the themes of sin, righteousness, and judgment, to which the Holy Spirit will bear witness (John 16:7-11).

As prophets, Christians can expect to be persecuted. Early in His earthly ministry our Lord addressed the issue of the suffering of the saints, linking their suffering with that of the prophets before them:

“Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when men revile you, and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely, on account of Me.
Rejoice, and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you” (Matt. 5:10-12).

Jesus frequently spoke to His disciples about the persecution they would experience as a result of being His followers (cf. John 15:17-20).

The apostle Paul also spoke of the suffering of the saints because of their prophetic calling:

And after they had preached to gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, “Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:21-22).

The consistent teaching of the New Testament is that Christians will suffer for their faith (cf. 2 Tim. 3:8-13), and this is, I believe, because of the prophetic nature of Christian life and ministry. Just how Christian life and ministry is prophetic can be seen in the next principles.

**Principle Three:**

**Prophets are not Popular because of Whom they Identify With.** Prophets must identify with God, rather than with their sinful fellow men. John the Baptist (not unlike Elijah and Elisha) lived apart from his culture, even from his family. He was not unaware of what his culture was doing, but he was not a part of it. He stood apart from the world. So, too, the Christian is to stand apart, and thus will suffer persecution:

For the time already past is sufficient for you to have carried out the desire of the Gentiles, having pursued a course of sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousals, drinking parties and abominable idolatries. And in all this, they are surprised that you do not run with them into the same excess of dissipation, and they malign you (1 Peter 4:3-4).

And do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them (Eph. 5:11).

Thus, by refusing to live according to our former lifestyle, the ways of the world, we condemn sin, convict sinners, and become very unpopular.

In our identification with Christ as our Savior, we are also required to identify with the needy, the poor, the oppressed, and the captives. The Nazarethites wanted Jesus to identify with them, but they refused to identify themselves with sinful Gentiles in their need for salvation and forgiveness. Yet the Old Testament prophets had consistently spoken of the Israelites in Gentile terminology (e.g. “not My people”), likening their sins to those of the heathen, Sodom and Gomorrah, Egypt, and so on. The Gospel forbids that we should shun anyone due to their race or to their social status, as Paul’s stinging rebuke of Peter (Gal. 2:11ff.) and James’ warning to the church (Jas. 2:1ff.) make very clear. Christ’s identification will fallen humanity (Phil. 2:3ff.) requires that the church also identify and associate with the humble (Rom. 12:16). This does not mean that we shun the rich, as the rich, but only that we do not favor the rich because they are rich.

Jesus associated with the poor, the sick, and “sinners” and thus almost immediately offended the self-righteous (Mark 2:15ff.). As we identify with Christ, we must also identify with those with whom He associated and identified, namely those who were in need and acknowledged it, and sought His grace. Those who would come to God for grace must stand in line with sinners, with the unclean, with the lepers, and with the harlots and tax gatherers. Those who refuse to identify with such will not want grace at all, nor will they want the source of grace, Jesus Christ.

**Principle Four:**

**Prophets are not Popular because of their Message.** I am reminded of the Old Testament prophet, Micaiah. When Jehoshaphat was deliberating as to whether or not he should go to war with Ahab, the king of Israel, the false prophets of Israel all gave the green light. Jehoshaphat was not convinced, however, and wanted to be sure that a true prophet had been consulted. He therefore asked, “Is there not yet a prophet of the LORD here that we may inquire of him?” (2 Chron. 18:6).
To this, Ahab responded, “There is yet one man by whom we may inquire of the LORD, but I hate him, for he never prophesies good concerning me but always evil. He is Micaiah, son of Imla” (2 Chron. 18:7).

From the perspective of wicked Ahab, Micaiah never told him what he wanted to hear. From the perspective of God, Ahab never wanted to hear what God had to say. Ahab only wanted God to confirm and affirm His sinful actions. Prophets are not popular with disobedient people, for they do not want to do God’s will—it is an offense to the natural or sinful man, who is at odds with God.

So it is with the Christian. Our words of counsel and exhortation may be welcomed by a fellow-believer, who seeks to do the will of God. But our words of warning and admonition are going to be rejected by anyone who is intent upon doing evil. Prophets are not popular because they tell men what the need to hear, rather than what they want to hear.

**Principle Five:**

**One of the Greatest Hindrances to our Prophetic Ministry is our Desire to be Popular with the World, and to have its Approval.** If I were to be completely honest about my sinful failures to witness to my faith, I would have to confess that me fear of rejection, my fear of losing popularity with my peers, is my number one enemy. If we are more intent upon winning man’s approval than God’s, we either keep silent about the gospel, which will very often offend people (“You mean that if I don’t believe in Jesus Christ, God will send me to hell?”), or we modify the gospel to make it more appealing, and thus dulling its most cutting edge (sin, righteousness, judgment).

The life of our Lord is a constant testimony to His desire to please the Father, more than anyone else. Thus, His actions and His words are always governed by the will of the Father. Once we have settled the question as to whom we would serve, whom we would please, we have come to grips with the most fundamental issue of the task of the prophet. God put it this way to Jeremiah:

“Do not say, ‘I am a youth,’ Because everywhere I send you, you shall go, And all that I command you, you shall speak. Do not be afraid of them, For I am with you to deliver you,” declares the LORD (Jer. 1:7b-8).

*From URL: https://bible.org/seriespage/prophets-and-popularity-luke-414-30*

**Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary**

This lesson began by rehearsing the debate about whether salvation is concerned first with spiritual matters or with bodily matters. Sometimes the debate is framed in terms of how Jesus was concerned with religion or with politics and social justice. It is true that Jesus did not pursue politics and/or social justice the way certain Jews wanted him to in the first century. He did not overthrow the Roman Empire and establish a new earthly kingdom with himself on the throne instead of Caesar. Yet Jesus was indeed concerned with social justice and political practices as he came to liberate people spiritually from the worldly powers that had bound them for centuries. True liberation is won not by beating the system at its own game but by pioneering a new system that is not subject to the limitations of the old one. To this end, Jesus began incorporating people into a kingdom that is not limited by geography or ethnicity. Jesus was freeing people from primary allegiance to worldly nationhood and economic systems for incorporation into the church, of which he is head. The church should be the place that models where true justice is rendered and where no spiritual or physical need goes unaddressed. To the world, this system is not the wave of the future. But we know that the jubilee we have begun to experience will come in full when Jesus returns in glory. That’s when Jesus’ enemies are fully subdued, when God and his kingdom stand alone.

**Practical Points from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator**

1. An encouraging and supporting church is a blessing to all (Luke 4:14-16)
2. Because God often directs us through His Word, we should always be open to what He is telling us as we read the Bible (vs. 17)
3. Christ’s message of salvation provides comfort and encouragement no matter what we are facing in life (vs. 18)
4. The good news of Christ endures because it is timeless (vs. 19)
5. Others can see how we live and speak for Christ even though we may be unaware that they are observing us (vs. 20)
6. Personal arrogance has no part in our witness for Christ (vs. 21)