



**Luke 4:14-15, 16-30**

**“The Jesus Manifesto”**

June 9, 2103  
3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday After Pentecost

Pastor Phil Thrailkill  
Main Street UMC  
211 North Main St.  
Greenwood, SC 29646

Church Office: 864-229-7551  
Church Website with sermon manuscripts: [www.msumc1.org](http://www.msumc1.org)  
Email: [PThrailkil@aol.com](mailto:PThrailkil@aol.com)

**“Following Christ from City Center”**

LUKE 4:14-15, 16-30 "THE JESUS' MANIFESTO"

Mk. 6:1, Mt. 13:54-58, Moved Forward As Preview

4:14-15 SUMMARY PASSAGE: BRIEF MINISTRY TOUR, POSITIVE RESPONSE.

14 And Jesus returned in the power of the Holy Spirit into Galilee, 3:22, 4:1, After Wilderness Temptations
and a report (pheme = fame) concerning him went through ALL the surrounding country. ALL (5x)
15 And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified by ALL. 4:31, 5:3,17; 6:6, 13:10, 11; 19:47, 20:1, 21; 21:37, 23:5, Acts 1:1
Empower By Spirit: Preach, Exorcise, Heal, Reach New Folk
Programmatic, What Kind Of Messiah? Prophetic, 6:20, 7:22

1) v.16a JESUS' FRIENDLY ENTRANCE INTO NAZARETH. Mission/ Campaign Platform/ Vision

16 AND HE (JESUS) CAME TO NAZARETH, where he had been brought up; First Recorded Speech, < 400
Form Of Jesus' Ministry = Isaiah's Script!

2a) vv.16b-20 FIRST SCRIPTURAL SERMON: Isaiah 61, 58 (LXX). Mission, Mk. 1:15

a and he went to the synagogue, as his custom was, on the sabbath day. 2:42, Pious Adult Jew
b And he stood up to read; 4:43, Preach Kingdom -> Spirit -> Healing/Deliverance/Forgiveness
c and there was given to him the book of the prophet Isaiah. Torah, Then Prophets
d He opened the book and found the place where it was written, Scroll
e1 "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, 3:21-22, Acts 2:33, Is. 61:1-2
e2 Because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. Is. 61..
f He as sent me to proclaim release to the captives 1:77, Is. 61..
g and recovery of sight to the blind, 7:21, Is. 61..
f' 'to send forth the oppressed in release;' 3:3, Is. 58:6, 13-14
e'2 and to proclaim Demonstrated In 4:31-44, Exorcism, Heal
e'1 the acceptable year of the Lord." v.24 (Time is now! Lev. 25:8-12) Is. 61..
d' And he closed it, Lev. 25:10 On U.S. Liberty Bell!
c' and gave it back to the attendant, Prophets Lesson Followed Torah
b' and sat down. Position For Speaking, "The seat/chair of..."
a' And the eyes of ALL the synagogue were fixed upon him. Reading Ends
Salvation = Whole Person: Healing (8:36), Inclusion In God's People (8:12)

2b) v.22 TWO POSITIVE REACTIONS TO "OUR LOCAL BOY". Our Needs First!

22 a And ALL began to testify well of him, Spoke To Their Deepest Hopes Of Restoration
and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. New Temptation! 4:4
b And they said, "Is this not Joseph's son?" 3:23, Hometown Boy! Honor Our Clan First
Great Things For Our Village! Set Up Practice Here!

2'a) vv.23-29 SECOND SCRIPTURAL SERMON: I Kings 17:1, 8-16; II Kings 5:1-14.

23 And he said to them, Jesus As A Prophet Knows The Heart, Assumes 4:31-44
"Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, 'Physician, heal yourself; Proverb/Prophecy No. 1
what we have heard you did at Capernaum, do here also in your own country.'" Signs & Wonders
24 And he said, Obligated! Show Your Stuff!
"Truly, I say to you, 6 Rejections 20:9-10, Acts 3:1-4:31, 5:12-42, 13:13-52, 18:1-18
no prophet is acceptable in his own country. Names Himself As Prophet, Proverb/Prophecy No. 2
Mission Beyond His Own Country,
25 1a But in truth, I tell you, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, 2 Prophets, Miracles
when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, Desolate Widow, 1 Kgs. 17:1-24
when there came a great famine over all the land; God Shows No Partiality
26 1b and Elijah was sent to none of them but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, Example No. 1:
to a woman who was a widow. Powerless Gentile Woman
Benefits Of Jesus Beyond Israel: 4:43, 24:47, Acts 1:8
27 2a' And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha; 2 Kgs. 5:1-14, Example No. 2
2b' and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian." Leprous Gentile, Enemy Army!
2:32-35, To Use Two Gentile Outsiders Is Highly Offensive!

2b') vv.28-29 HOSTILE REACTIONS TO HIS EXPOSURE OF THEM.

28 When they heard this, ALL in the synagogue were filled with wrath. 2;34-35, //Mk. 6:1, Mt. 13:53
29 And they rose up and put him out of the city, and led him to the brow of the hill Dt. 13:5, No Acceptance
Murder on which their city was built, that they might throw him headlong. 20:15, False Prophet, Dt. 13:5-6
Resurrection Shamed Their Village = Rage, Foreshadows Acts 13:44-50, 14:19

1') vv.28-30 JESUS' HOSTILE EXIT FROM NAZARETH. Jn. 7:30, He Never Goes Back Home

30 But passing through the midst of them HE WENT AWAY. Try To Kill Him, Miracle Of Rescue/Resurrection?

**Luke 4:16-30** ..... **3**

**A. The Concentric/ Chiastic Structure Of Lk. 4:16b-20**

the synagogue stood up given him opened the book "Spirit of the Lord preach send/release sight sent/release proclaim Lord" he closed it gave it back sat down the synagogue	Luke's Gospel is: "Filled with the Spirit, Jesus announces God's near kingdom, and shows it by forgiving, healing, and delivering from bondage those who come to him in order to demonstrate God's mercy & acceptance as forecast in Isaiah' prophecy."
---	---

**B. Jesus' Quotation Of Isaiah 61:1-2a, 58:6**

Isaiah 61:1-2 (LXX) Isaiah's Ministry To Jewish Exiles	Note	Luke 4:18-19 Jesus' Ministry To Nazareth Exiles	X
"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,	✓	"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,	1
because he has anointed me;	✓	because he has anointed me	2
he has sent me to bring good news to the poor;	✓	he has sent me to bring good news to the poor.	3
<u>to bind up the brokenhearted,</u>	<b>Omitted</b> (no parallel?)	[                      ]	
to proclaim release ( <i>aphesis</i> ) to captives,	✓	to proclaim release ( <i>aphesis</i> ) to captives,	4
and recovery of sight to the blind	✓	and recovering of sight to the blind,'	5
	<b>Added(Is. 58:6)</b> (parallel)	' <u>to let the oppressed go free(en ephesi)</u> ' [ <i>gezerah shawa</i> = common word]	4'
to call a year of acceptance/welcome ( <i>dektos</i> ) on the part of the Lord."	✓	to proclaim a year of acceptance/welcome ( <i>dektos</i> ) on the part of the Lord."	3' 2' 1'
<u>and the day of vengeance of our God;</u>	<b>Omitted</b> (postponed)	[                      ]	
		21:22 later	

A Brief Treatment Of Luke 4:14-15, 16-30

With 4:16-30 the explicit parallels with John the Baptist end. This paragraph stands in parallel to 3:1-22 on John’s preaching and imprisonment: John’s preaching (3:7-18) // Jesus’ preaching (4:21-27), Isaiah quote (3:4-6) // Isaiah quote (4:18-19), Holy Spirit (3:16, 22) // Holy Spirit (4:18), Good news (3:18) // Good news (4:18), John rejected by imprisonment (3:19) // Jesus rejected by murderous mob (4:28-29), Jesus as Son of God (3:22) // Jesus as son of Joseph (4:22b). As in Jesus’ proverb (4:24), prophets are not welcome at home. The Satan who could not tempt Jesus to leap off the temple now inspires the home-folk to murder him (4:28-29). The *opportune time* (4:13b) is not delayed. That the benefits of God’s kingdom are not limited to one’s tribe but for Gentiles as well is offensive. In the end another angry group will rise up *and put him out of the city and throw him headlong* on a cross. He will die and *pass through the midst of them* in a mysterious resurrection. Jesus cannot be killed before his time. His hour has not yet come.

\_\_\_\_\_ Luke 4:14-15 recounts Jesus’ travel before arriving in Nazareth. On the way north he tours several towns and synagogues. As we later learn, he preaches the kingdom, performs cures, and is *glorified by all*. Jesus’ arrival (v.16, *and he came to Nazareth*) and departure (v.30, *he went away*) mark the open and close of the thought unit. Between the frames are two biblical sermons (2. vv.16c-20 // 2' vv.24-29), each with a response, first positive (vv.21-23), then negative (vv.24-29). Note the repeated use of *ALL* (5x).

Nazareth is *where Jesus had been brought up* (nourished). On the sabbath he is in the synagogue exercising his privilege of reading. He requests the Isaiah scroll which is delivered by the steward. He unrolls the spindles to his chosen text (our Is. 61:1-2, but remember that such divisions were not part of hand-copied scrolls). Jesus read Hebrew, and while a targumic translation into Aramaic is not included, it may be assumed. His speech (vv.16b-20) is an elaborate 13:1 concentric pattern with the phrase *recovery of sight* at the pivot. The insertion of *and to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord* in v.20 from Is. 58:6 keeps the parts in parallel. That the last phrase of Isaiah 61:2 is eliminated, *and the day of vengeance of God*, indicates an extraordinary time of welcome; judgment is postponed. From vv.16b-20 a description of Luke’s good news can be constructed. “His gospel is that Jesus (v.16a), filled with the Spirit (v.18a), announces God’s near kingdom to the poor (v.18b) and shows it by forgiving (v.18c), healing (v.18d), and delivering from bondage (v.18e) all who come to him in order to demonstrate God’s mercy & acceptance (v.19a) as forecast by Isaiah.” Jesus is both the announcer and embodiment of this offer (v.21). As he quotes, *the Spirit is upon me because he has anointed me*,” and at the end, “Today, this Scripture *has been* fulfilled (i.e. passive voice = *by God*) in your hearing (i.e. *from me*). The response is positive, but the rhetorical question, *Is this not Joseph’s son*, is open to more than one reading. It could mean *What an honor he is to his father and family!* or alternatively, *He belongs to us! Privilege is ours!*

That Jesus is a prophet is indicated by his knowledge of their selfish intent. Read corporately, the proverb *Physician, heal yourself* is a reminder that the home-boy-turned-prophet has an obligation to Nazareth, perhaps even to set up headquarters here with all the benefits that will accrue from pilgrims, “Jesus, can I have the trinket and hot-dog franchise?” Here the phrases *heal yourself... in your own county... in his own county* are in parallel. His solemn *Amen I say to you*, followed by *But in truth I tell you* are solemn reminders that Jesus takes direction from above, and that means living in the spirit of his forebears Elijah and Elisha who, in times of famine and disease, obeyed God by ministering to Gentiles rather than Israel. This is so offensive, and so deeply reveals their intent to control Jesus, they rise up as a mob to murder him as a false prophet. His escape is mysterious, but not their sin. He never returns.

---

## THE JESUS MANIFESTO

*“Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing”*

The beginning of Jesus’ biblical and kingdom preaching agenda.

L U K E 4 : 2 1

**E**very preacher remembers their first sermon at home. Mine was the spring of ‘77 after I’d completed my first year of seminary. I studied hard; my Father was so energized he invited half of Cheraw it seemed. I mounted the steps up to the high *crow’s nest* pulpit, strapped the microphone cord around my neck, scanned the face of the crowd as I’d seen great preachers do, and launched into my nine-minute message; it’s all I had. We sang a hymn; I dismounted the pulpit to walk across the divided chancel to my seat. If I remember correctly, the lavalier mike had about fifteen feet of chord. Halfway across I clothes-lined myself in front of three hundred people! My head jerked back as if I’d been punched in the jaw. A snicker rolled through the saints, and I had a lesson in humility and microphone technique. On the way out an old friend said, “How’d it feel to be hung the first time you preached?”

But the worst blow came at the meal. We stood around a table of linen and silver, fine china and crystal goblets, a picture out of *Southern Living* magazine. My father lifted his wineglass, “Today is worthy of a toast,” to which my brother Chris quickly replied, “I agree, and on the occasion of my brother Phil’s first sermon it is appropriate to feast on barbequed turkey!” Then, if I am not mistaken, he made an irreverent *gobbling* noise which only intensified my shame. I immediately consoled myself inwardly with the proverb that “no prophet is acceptable in his own country,” but it was misapplied. I was no prophet, only a green preacher with a fragile ego.

On occasion the Lord uses my girlfriend to restore proper balance. After an especially fine homiletical performance once Sunday in Georgetown I asked Lori after everyone left the sanctuary, “Sugar Babe, how many great preachers are left in Methodism?” to which she swiftly replied, “One less than you think, big boy!” Oh the trials of being a preacher among the unappreciative!

---

**Luke 4:16-30** ..... 6

The crusty old Baptist evangelist Vance Havner once said, “I’ve never yet heard a sermon I got nothing out of, but I’ve had some mighty close calls!”<sup>1</sup> A. T. Robertson, another Baptist, wrote, “One of the best proofs of the inspiration of the Bible is that it has withstood so much preaching.”<sup>2</sup>

For all the jokes we could make, it’s still true that Christianity stands or falls on its preaching and whether or not God backs it over the long haul with decisions and conversions, sometimes even signs and wonders. Someone has to pray and study and stand and speak from the sacred text and believe God is in it for the good of the hearers. God had only one Son- Jesus, and he made him a preacher, and at the end of Jesus’ first message in his home town, they sought to murder him as a false prophet because he so thoroughly exposed the worst of their prejudices. Bad preaching is dangerous because it blunts God’s sharp sword and causes people to stumble at the wrong places; good preaching is dangerous because it sends a drag line down into the dark labyrinths of the human heart and drags the stinking muck to the surface for inspection, and at this Jesus was the best. The Son of God reading the word of God in the house of God, full of the Spirit of God and love for his audience, and two thousand years later we’re still pondering what he said and did. Listening to Jesus must have been like sitting under a searchlight that exposed your entire inner world.

This is a wonderful and ugly text. It shows us how Jesus’ self-understanding was profoundly in line with Isaiah’s words and how he honored the sacred texts as their ultimate fulfillment. It shows us the depth of God’s mercy and the depth of human depravity; Jesus is the comprehensive healer, and people reject the Great Physician in favor of their illness. It shows how Satan can operate through local religious clubs that don’t want to do business with God but only preserve the institution for *people like us*. Jesus went from local hero to *public enemy number one* in about two minutes. Those who knew him best- or so they thought- now hated him most, so when you hear the word *Nazareth* from now on, think of them- one and all- as part of the same bigoted bunch who three years later finally did him in. And when you remember that Luke’s *all* includes family members, you see how ugly it is. It’s easier to kill the guy than deal with what he reveals. The cross was not just something at the end of Jesus’ life; it’s shadow was over all his work.

---

<sup>1</sup> Albert M. Wells, *Inspiring Quotations* (Nashville, TN: Nelson, 1988), 162.

<sup>2</sup> Raymond McHenry, *The Best of ‘In Other Words,’* (Houston, TX: Raymond McHenry, 1996), 197.

---

**Luke 4:16-30** ..... 7

There's nothing romantic or nostalgic about Nazareth, none of the same wonderful associations as Bethlehem with its babe in a manger and the song of the angels overhead. He is everywhere known as Jesus *of Nazareth*, but I cannot find he ever returned to his home town after this incident. It's where he was *from*, not a place he ever went back *to*. Nazareth was under judgment, and it was not his strategy to waste time with the resistant.<sup>3</sup> The first murder attempt on Jesus was King Herod shortly after his birth.<sup>4</sup> The second was Satan in the wilderness, "Take a leap from the temple."<sup>5</sup> The third was in his hometown synagogue where Jesus spent every sabbath of his life and where he knew the names and occupation of everyone. You can do that in a village of around four hundred. King Herod, Satan, and Nazareth: they belong together as a reminder that church and state can both be tools in the hands of the Evil One who opposes God's kingdom mission of welcome and liberation.

When God's word is preached in the power of the Spirit, there will be a reaction, not always positive. Beware of a pastor who only agrees with your prejudices and never crosses them. Jesus comes to offer God's mercy and at the same time reveal the dark side of us, our institutions, our families and our churches that we keep hidden beneath the thin veneer of respectability, predictability and religious regularity. No individual comes to Christ without exposure. No church can be healed and renewed without it. To move into divine light hurts our squinting eyes.

At some time in our walking through Luke's life of Jesus, God may speak, and we will be confronted with the same choice as Nazareth, "How much of Jesus' wondrous mercy and severe judgment can we handle? Are we willing for him to expose us that he might then use us to touch the outsider widows and the outsider lepers of our day, whether across the street or around the world?" Do we want just institutional restoration to keep our franchise going, or do we want kingdom reality?

The timing of that visitation is not my choosing. I do not control it. I will fill this pulpit each Sunday with carefully prepared messages which major on biblical content and offer a few good stories. It's what I'm called to do; it is my craft- like carpentry or plumbing, but revival is not mine to bring. I gather kindling and pile it up in front of you, but I cannot send down the fire. It is more than human energy and

---

<sup>3</sup> Luke 10:10-12.

<sup>4</sup> Matthew 2:13-23.

<sup>5</sup> Luke 4:9-12.

---

good management and pastoral faithfulness and wise politics. It is the mysterious and surprising gift of the Holy Spirit, who like the wind blows where he wills. We fast and pray; we prepare; we preach and give, but what we need we cannot produce. It is God’s work, and on one sabbath in Nazareth revival came in person, and the church said, “No! We don’t like what he exposes. We’d rather label him a false prophet and kill him than change!” Jesus invested thirty years in Nazareth. Friendship, love, service, prayer, marriages celebrated, deaths mourned, likely where his dad was buried, and in a moment it was gone. Their anger, his grief, their loss.

Perhaps the saddest words in Scripture are Luke chapter 4, verse 30, “But passing through the midst of them, *he went away.*” You do not want Jesus to turn his back on your life, your village, or your church. You do not want him *to take a hike* while you get on with life. The next sabbath everyone said their hello’s and caught up on gossip; the scriptures were read, the prescribed prayers spoken, the psalms sung, the offering for the poor taken, the benediction pronounced.<sup>6</sup> They had Jewish church, but God was not there except in the vaguest sense of omnipresence and the truths on the scrolls. New life walked out of town a week earlier. When our time comes, will Main Street be open? Will we sing with Fanny Crosby, “Savior, Savior, hear my humble cry. While on others thou art calling, do not pass me by.”

**TURNING TO THE TEXT**

**The Light Shines (vv. 14-22)**

Luke takes care to prepare for the launch of Jesus’ public ministry. Two full chapters of infancy narratives, an incident in the temple at age twelve, then eighteen years of silence in the ordinariness of Nazareth, Jesus all the while growing in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man. Then the revival under John the Baptist and Jesus’ baptism and filling with the Spirit. This is followed by a strategic pause where we read a long list of Jesus’ forebears back to the first man. Then forty days of fasting and intense temptation in the wilderness, face to face with the personal source of evil himself, fending off attack after attack with the quotations of Scripture. Only halfway into chapter 4 do we hear Jesus speak in public. The time has come to unveil the kingdom and expose the darkness.

---

<sup>6</sup> On Nazareth, [www.nazarethvillage.com/research/content/synagogue](http://www.nazarethvillage.com/research/content/synagogue). On the synagogue liturgy, Darrell Bock, *Luke* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1994), 402ff.

---



**Luke 4:16-30** ..... 9

The first ministry tour begins before Nazareth.<sup>7</sup> Verses 14 and 15 give us a Lucan summary with the following parts: travel north to Galilee, the power of the Spirit (a shorthand phrase for healings and exorcisms), his teaching in several synagogues, and a positive response.<sup>8</sup> No need for a professional public relations campaign. Word of mouth and the rumor mill will do just fine when God's at work. Until then we need signs and brochures and radio adds and the best of marketing. But when a divine visitation comes, we can stop all that. When the work of God is undeniable in a church, people will come: out of need, out of desperation, out of curiosity, out of skepticism, even to criticize what they do not understand, but they *will come*. Jesus never had trouble drawing a crowd because his ministry was not just word but word *and* deed. Stuff happened everywhere he went. There was success on the way home, but a trap had been laid in his home town, an I.E.D.

It still surprises me, though it happens every time. When I cross the creek on Hwy. 1 heading into Cheraw, something changes inside. I'm not just traveling a road but traveling through time. I sing to myself the song by *Alabama*: "Down home, where they know you by name and treat you like family; Down home, where a man's good word and a handshake are all you need. Folks know, if you're falling on hard times, you can fall back home. For those of us raised up down home." It's a sentimental song, and it takes only a bit of imagination to guess what Jesus must have felt as he brought his kingdom work to his home town venue.

In other towns he was a welcome stranger, but Nazareth was home. It's where he earned his living as a tradesman, went to synagogue, and listened to gossip in the market place. Life was here. Luke hints at the emotional weight in verse 16, "And he came to Nazareth, *where he had been brought up*." Jesus hadn't been gone long, a few months perhaps. He left a carpenter and religious seeker; he returns a Spirit-filled prophet of the kingdom of God. An old friend spots him, "Hey Jesus, where you been, boy? Hear you've gone to preaching. Everyone's asking 'bout you.

---

<sup>7</sup> I am aware of the literary and exegetical debate about Luke's relocation of the Nazareth incident (// Mk. 6:1-6, Mt. 13:54-58) as an expanded programmatic piece.

<sup>8</sup> On Jesus' miracles, see Barry L. Blackburn, "The Miracles of Jesus," Chapter 6 in Graham Twelftree, editor, *The Cambridge Companion to Miracles* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2011); N.T. Wright, *Simply Jesus* (San Francisco, CA: HarperOne, 2011), 57-86; Paul Eddy & Gregory Boyd, *The Jesus Legend* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2007), Chapter 1, "Miracles and Method: The Historical-Critical Method and the Supernatural," 39-90.

---

**Luke 4:16-30** ..... **10**

Remember that yoke you and your dad made? It needs some work. Can I bring it by after the sabbath?" Nazareth was where he was best known, and therefore most vulnerable. It was an opportune place for Satan to strike. Remember verse 13 where we are told that after the temptations Satan *departed from him till an opportune time*? Well, this is one of those times. It's the soft underbelly of family and friends.

"And he went into the synagogue, *as his custom was*, on the sabbath day...." There were holy habits in Jesus' life; on the sabbath he was in the synagogue. I confess a steady prejudice against disconnected Christians, what I call *floaters*. They say they *believe*, but they do not *belong* anywhere; they're spiritual orphans and vagrants, and their excuses are as flimsy as they are legion. So in their honor I offer a list of *Ten Reasons Why I Never Wash*:

1. I was made to wash as a child.
2. People who wash are hypocrites; they think they're cleaner than other people.
3. There are so many different kinds of soap, I could never decide which was right.
4. I used to wash, but it got boring, so I stopped.
5. I still wash on special occasions, like Christmas and Easter.
6. None of my friends wash.
7. I'm still young. When I'm older and a bit dirtier, I might start washing.
8. I really don't have time.
9. The bathroom's never warm enough.
10. People who make soap are only after your money.<sup>9</sup>

Some things ought to be made fun of. Being spiritually AWOL is one of them.

Wherever Jesus went he personally identified with the his people in their weekly worship. He was not naive or under any illusions about what was in people or in their institutions, nevertheless we find him week by week in the synagogue. On the great pilgrimage festivals we find him in Jerusalem, but week by week it was the village synagogue that was his home. Jesus did not write off the synagogue because he got bushwhacked in Nazareth. For all our failings and pettiness and sin and silliness, the local church is still the place where the story is read and told. There are things that God wants to do in your life that cannot come about without faithfulness

---

<sup>9</sup> Stephen Gaukroger, Nick Mercer, *A-Z* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1997), 52.

---

to a local church. I believe that, and I will eventually ask nearly every person I meet the same dogged question, “Are you a faithful member of some local church?” And if I find they’re a *float*er, I press them as far as decency allows, and sometimes a bit beyond that. They need to be poked!

When I served Georgetown, I once went to Litchfield to make arrangements for a pastor’s retreat, and there I discovered a *float*er, once active, now inactive, something about a family member not being visited when sick. Hurt feelings, wrote off the church. I listened, I encouraged, I called her to forgive the pastor and the church. I was uncompromising, “Go back next Sunday, make an appointment with the new pastor and work this thing out.” When she asked if she could come to Georgetown, my answer was *No*. I don’t scavenge other churches. She called me on Monday. She’d gone back to St. Paul’s Waccamaw, handed Milton McGuirt my card and said, “Pastor Phil sent me back.” A healing had begun.

If you want to understand in what terms Jesus understood his ministry, this is the place. He is aware since his baptism that the Holy Spirit was operating in deep cooperation, guiding him from town to town, leading him to texts, backing up his words with power. It is significant in the quote from Isaiah 61 that Jesus omits the last phrase, “the day of vengeance of our God.”<sup>10</sup> Jesus goal is not judgment, at least not yet; he’s about claiming all of life back for God. The great day of opportunity is here; the Liberator has arrived. Verse 21 is a summary of a longer message, “And he *began* to say to them, ‘Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.’” Religious routine was interrupted by reality. The one Scripture pointed to showed up in person. It was a moment of encounter and decision. God’s judgment is not the program; the kingdom program is about setting people free in the power of the Spirit; judgment is the unpleasant aftereffects for those who say *No*. Jesus was booted out, and nothing changed in Nazareth. That was God’s wrath; he left them alone; nothing changed! God’s wrath, his hatred of the effects of sin, in not first about added pain. It’s when, after grace is rejected, God says, “O.K, have it your way. I’m going to withdraw from your awareness and see if you notice.”<sup>11</sup> If you do, the door marked repentance remains open, and if you don’t notice, a downward spiral begins.

Occasionally I see a healing that goes beyond standard medicine. Occasionally

---

<sup>10</sup> Isaiah 61:2b. See the chart and analysis of the quote on p. 3.

<sup>11</sup> Three times in Romans 1:18-32 we hear the refrain, “And God gave them up.”

---

I see the darkness of spiritual oppression lift off people after repentance and prayer. Occasionally I see forgiveness set people free from guilt and bitterness and fear. The effects are often immediate. Just this week, after a frank confession and absolution, a beautiful face looked up at me and say with a grin of relief, “It feels as if a weight’s been taken off my chest.” My response? “It has!” It always surprises me, which is part of the problem. Why should I be surprised when Jesus does his work, and I get to watch? The greatest unbelievers wear collars and robes.

Why is there so little power in our churches, so few healings and conversions? Possible answers are many: we have quenched the Holy Spirit with sin and resistance and careless Christianity; we have imbibed a secular world view which is skeptical of the supernatural; we would rather God not come that close; we do not ask for it; we read the Bible as something other than a manual for action; the preachers have not been faithful in teaching and modeling the faith, and many more. But where Jesus is welcomed *things happen* that touch the whole person: spirit, emotions, mind, body, and all relationships. New life flows into people.

After three years a pastor visited the home of one of his faithful members. He found her on the front porch reading her Bible. But there was something odd about her Bible. He’d seen worn Bibles before, but this was different. Some pages were torn out altogether, and others looked as if someone had taken a pair of scissors to them, cutting out some paragraphs, leaving others. “What happened to your Bible?”

She replied, “I listen closely to your sermons. Every time you told us we can’t believe something anymore, I tear or cut it out of my Bible. This is what’s left.”

Hear then the parable of the pit:

“A man fell into a pit and couldn’t get himself out.

A *subjective* person came along and said, “I feel for you down there.”

An *objective* person came along and said, “It’s logical someone would fall down there.”

A *Pharisee* said, “Only bad people fall into pits.”

A *news reporter* wanted the exclusive rights on the man’s pit story.

*Confucius* said, “If you had listened to me, you would not be in the pit.”

*Buddha* said, “Your pit is only a state of mind.”

A *realist* said, “That sure is a pit.”

A *scientist* calculated the necessary hydraulic pressure to lift him out.

A *geologist* told him to appreciate the rock strata in the pit.

---

A *tax man* asked him if he was paying taxes on the pit,  
A *building inspector* asked if he had a permit to dig the pit.  
An *evasive* person came along and avoided the subject of the pit altogether.  
A *self-pitying* person said, “You haven’t seen anything till you’ve seen my pit!”  
A *charismatic* said, “Just confess you’re not in the pit. Believe and receive!”  
An *optimist* said, “Things could be worse.”  
A *pessimist* said, “Things will get worse.”  
An *alcoholic* tossed in a half-empty whiskey bottle, “This will numb the pain.”  
A *therapist* came along and asked, “How do you feel about being in the pit.  
Do you have a family history of pit falling?”  
A *Methodist preacher* shouted, “If John Wesley was here, he could help you.”  
Jesus came along, took him by the hand, and lifted him out of the pit.”<sup>12</sup>

Let’s not be too proud of our history, too confident in ourselves, too sure of our theology or piety until we can get people out of pits. People all over Greenwood are in all kinds of pits. Do we have good news, or only good advice? Any power in the church? Any good news for the poor? Any release for captives? Any sight for the blind? I often pray, “What’s wrong, Lord? In a society of bondage, why are so few set free? When are you going to fix your church? When are you going to fix me?”

Jesus was so eloquent as he read Isaiah to the home folk. “Our boy, Joseph’s kid, grew up right here. I’m sure he’ll want to set up headquarters here in Nazareth and do a few miracles for us as well. We ought to get first cut, don’t you think? After all, Pastor Phil, he’s one of us, and as we all know, *mission starts at home.*”

### **The Dark Side (vv.24-30)**

You never see the dark side of the moon, but it’s there, showing us its bright face and fooling us it’s the whole of reality. Every one of us, and each of us together in our various clusters of family and tribe and town and church and country has a dark side. Just as the Holy Spirit gave Jesus power for liberation, the Spirit also let Jesus see the dark side and name it; it’s called *discernment*. With verse 23 we move from the shining face of Nazareth welcoming Jesus home to its shadow side, and it’s ugly.

As I read the scholars and their commentaries, they all notice a seam between

---

<sup>12</sup> Edited (with personal additions!) from Gaukroger and Mercer, 114.

---

verses 22 and 23.<sup>13</sup> They ask, “How can the people be so positive one minute and so negative the next? Luke must have had two separate stories and edited them together. It’s hard to account for the radical shift of sensibilities.” Yes, I reply, but only if you are naive about human nature, and particularly about the evil of mob psychology that allows people to do together what they would never do individually.

Jesus is the Son of God, God in the flesh, and subordinate for the sake of the mission. That is his identity. But his function here is biblical prophet. He calls himself such, “No *prophet* is acceptable in his own country.” He quotes from Isaiah and tells the stories of Elijah and Elisha. He chooses texts and sees into the collective heart of the people by the power of the Spirit’s gifts. Jesus knows things about them they are loathe to admit. It’s why prophetic people are so often rejected.

Jesus’ words of knowledge in proverb and story did not create the problem, only reveal it. He did not create the spiritual cancer at the heart of Nazareth; he merely diagnosed it and held up the X-ray. What if that was to happen today? What if someone was to stand- inspired by love, not anger- and name the dark side of each and of all of us together? We’d have a choice. Come clean and repent, or get angry and silence the messenger. That sabbath Nazareth chose sides and cut off the lights.

As I read it, Nazareth had three collective sins that touched the whole community. First a demand for miracles. God may grant them; Jesus in fact promised them, but they cannot be demanded as credentials. “What we have heard what you did at Capernaum, *do here also in your own country*. Let’s see the show; then we’ll decide about you.” The second was the desire to control Jesus, to tie him down to their community. “Is this not Joseph’s son? Our boy.” But he cannot be controlled, by Nazareth or by popes or preachers; Jesus is God’s free agent. Their third sin was prejudice against Gentiles, whom they hated. That Jesus promised to include outsiders pushed them over the edge, and they tried to toss him off a cliff.

It was a low time in the life of Israel; the nation was under judgment, and God sent his blessings not to Jewish widows and lepers but to two alien outsiders, and one an army commander. In effect Jesus said, “You think well of yourselves, but you are as lost as the Israel of Elijah and Elisha’s day.” Jesus exposed them to the light. What are the corporate and systemic sins of Greenwood and Main Street? I’m not

---

<sup>13</sup> David Garland, *Luke* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 200ff.; Bock, *Luke*, 413-415.

---

sure yet. I'm not a judge but a pastor. Are there any prophets in the house to help us?

I now understand something I did not see before. Following Jesus means undeserved blessings blended with deserved exposure. He will not stop till he has exposed the dark side and asked, "Are you willing to let me have that too?" You cannot walk far with Christ without dealing with the most agonizing and embarrassing self-knowledge. Many turn back.

The joy of revival is the power of the Spirit to heal and release and forgive and restore and empower and invite. But there is a dark side as well, the relentless exposure of our secret sins by the Holy Spirit. As Campbell's used to say of soup and sandwich, "You can't have one without the other." There are times I loathe myself and my calling; I want to run and hide. Then I hear him say, "Hey preacher, how about give me that stuff too? I know what to do with the dark side."

George Wallace could not have stood in the university door without a mob. Hitler could not have killed millions without a mob. Lynchings that used to occur in the South could not have happened without a mob. The soccer wars that rip up property and kill people in Europe could not happen without mobs. Corporate takeovers that enrich a few and steal jobs from many could not happen without an elite mob of accountants and lawyers. My Lai and Jonestown and Heaven's Gate and Waco could not happen without a mob. An angry mob that will not listen is the corporate face of evil. It's always wise to stop and ask the question, "Why am I angry? Why are *we* so angry?" That sabbath no one asked, *Is this the truth?*

Did you notice the contrasts? Jesus walked in; he was carried out. "Welcome home," became "You're a dead man!" He came in peace; they responded with violence. Hometown became horror story. They'd rather rebel than repent, rather kill the messenger than deal with the message. Hear the report Luke gives:

"When they heard this, all in the synagogue were filled with wrath. And they rose up and put him out of the city, and led him to the brow of a hill on which their city was built, that they might throw him headlong."

Not the hill of Nazareth but the hill called Calvary. Not outside Nazareth but outside the city walls of Jerusalem. Not a fall from on high but fixed high on a cross. Not the sabbath but one Friday. Not alone but suspended between two thieves. Not the leaders of a village but the leaders of the country; those were his executions. Not

---

**Luke 4:16-30 ..... 16**

at the beginning of his ministry but at the end when all was finished. Not with no disciples but abandoned by the ones he had. It's not time yet, so Jesus is mysteriously protected, we know not how, an angel perhaps? Verse 30, "But passing through the midst of them, he went away." One day there will be no protection. There will be a another rescue, what we call *resurrection*, but only after the fact. One day Jesus will face in full fury what Nazareth began.

**CONCLUSION**

You know how I know this stuff if from God? Because it's in the Book plain as day, and secondly because it fills me with both fear and hope. I sit at my desk and tremble at what this would mean for me and this church and this city.

I close with a verses from I Peter:

"For the time has come for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God? And 'If the righteous man is scarcely saved, where will the impious and sinner appear?'"<sup>14</sup>

May God have mercy upon his Greenwood preachers and his Greenwood churches, including this one. May God visit us with the grace of an opportunity for revival and new life, and may we not say *No* as did Nazareth. Only God knows what that will mean, and now is the time to prepare.

This week I met with a group of pastors to pray for an awakening. One thing we agreed on. The problems we are facing in and outside the black and white churches in our area are larger than current resources. We have to have help from above. Human energy and effort are not enough anymore. We need a fresh visit from Jesus with all the risk that implies. Church as usual doesn't cut it any more.

---

<sup>14</sup> 4:17-18.

---