

Luke 4:18-19

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[0 : 0 0] I will do something that our professor of homiletics at the seminary told us not to do, and I will assume that we are familiar here with Jesus' identity. I mean, I will assume we all know who he said he was and comfortable believing it. If that's not the case, I'm sure your minister will be more than happy to spend some time with you and discuss the thing at length. But for today, we'll just take for granted that we know and we accept that he said he was the Son of God, one with the Father, the way, the truth, the life, the risen one, the firstborn, God incarnate, God, totally human, totally divine, sitting now at the right-hand side of the Father, interceding for us, our advocate, our atonement, our Savior, our Good Shepherd, and many other titles that we know our Lord has. However, the text we read a few minutes ago in the chapter 4 of Luke tells us directly not so much of who Jesus said he was, but says very much of what he saw his mission as God incarnate was. And listen to his declaration once more, and I will read it this time from the New King James Version.

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 at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.

There's a slight difference with the version in the NIV because the NIV does not mention that one part of that mission was healing the brokenhearted, but that line appears in the original prophecy of Isaiah chapter 61. It does not appear in some of the manuscripts, but it appears in the Old Testament in the Old Testament in all translations. Now, if you think of it, what is the strength here?

What is the weight of these words? If we were to look into this passage without recurring to other texts in other parts of the Scripture, without bringing in all we know about Jesus' identity and all the spiritual realities and implications of His work as prophet, king, and priest, we would say that the person we have before our eyes at this very moment, in this few verses in chapter 4 of Luke, is a healer, a divine healer, but somebody who says that his mission is to heal the brokenhearted, to release the one who is imprisoned, to give sight to the blind, to deliver the one who is oppressed.

[3 : 3 1] Now, let me pause here and go a bit slowly, for I need to be very careful here. I don't want to be misunderstood, and I know that no matter how careful I may be, sometime later, sometimes in the very day, sometimes a year later, somebody says, oh, you remember when you said this? And I'm pretty sure that never in my life I could have said such a thing, but anyway, I need to be careful anyway.

As many of you know, many of you, because you have been praying for us as a family faithfully for almost 14 years now that we've been in Colombia. I live and work in Medellin, and down there, many, many Christian churches, organizations, and individuals have sadly made the mistake of reducing the person of our Lord Christ to a healer, just that of a healer, and His mission on earth to bring us happiness, perfection, health, and prosperity. And according to that heresy, because no other name can be given to that way of presenting the person of our Lord, faith is the currency with which you pay to obtain Jesus' favors, so that little faith will leave you with little or nothing, whereas much faith will bring you whatever you like or want in any area, in any dimension of your life, to the point where for them the worst possible sin is lack of faith, and that lack of faith is reflected on not having what you want or what you need. It can be something as trivial as saying, well,

I want a house, I want a house, or I want a sports car, but if you want it, if you're a Christian, and you don't have it, that's your fault. You don't have enough faith, you have not prayed long enough, you do not trust God to give you what you want. But it can go from the very trivial to the very important and transcendent as praying for somebody to recover his health, and that not happening.

Praying for somebody to come to Christ and be saved, and that not happening. And again, the same rationale goes behind that and saying, it is your fault because you are not having enough faith. Of course, the other part of it is putting all the glory in you when things do happen, because it is not God's grace, God's mercy, what has occasioned that you were blessed in one way or another, and your prayers were answered, but it was your own faith. And of course, if you want to fill your church with hundreds, thousands, and even millions of people, all you have to do is to preach this.

And you forget about our Lord's role as a prophet who declares truth and denounces sin, a priest who brings us to God and God to us, and a king who rules over our lives and has a right to demand from us total allegiance and obedience. Without those elements, we are left with a God who is little more than a vending machine, and therefore is a false God. You put some coins of faith, you press the right button, and you will get what you want. Anyway, I'm not called to preach heresies, but to preach Christ. And so let me now suggest that we, proper, orthodox, sound, fully evangelical as we may be, or think we are. We may just be making the same kind of mistake, but coming from the opposite shore, as it were. We do acknowledge, understand, obey, and worship the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior, the very embodiment of truth, the only way to the Father, the perfect sacrifice and priest who achieved a perfect and eternally valued atonement for our sins, gaining for us an equally eternal and perfect access to God's grace and salvation. All that is correct, and we can be thankful that those truths have been brought into our minds and anchored in our hearts. Praise God for that. However, we may be missing at least one of the many blessings that come attached to those truths.

[8 : 36] Otherwise, why is it that I'm finding in my counseling practice so many Christians who do not have the foggiest idea of the meaning of the word joy? And you may have noticed we have sung about joy in the sounds that we've been singing before. And Jeremiah claims to, asks God to save him and to heal him so that he would know what joy is. Why is it that there are so many Christians, so many disciples and followers of the Lord Jesus who struggle and suffer and huff and puff just to keep their faith alive?

Christian life is a burden, and boy, they are tough and stubborn, and they keep plodding on, and that's good, but not good enough. I'm taking, I'm talking here of good men, good women, saved by the blood of the Lamb without a shadow of a doubt, redeemed for all eternity, yes, people who will certainly enjoy God's presence and favor forever, but people nonetheless that are here and now bent under the weight of an unbearable sense of worthlessness, bent under the despicable weight of their shame, caused by the awareness of how unholy their thoughts are, how despicable their acts when they think that nobody's seen them, how selfish their reactions to others, how petty their feelings, and we could continue on and on and on with that list.

If you think of it, by definition, if you're a Christian, you're a man or a woman who is so incredibly precious in the eyes of the Almighty that he willingly gave his own son to a terrible death, just to save you. Even if you had been the only one who would respond in the whole history of humanity, he would have saved you all equally.

He did all that to bring you to his very presence, to love you, to bless you, to make you the very heir of his riches and glory.

If you believe that, then try to explain to me how on earth a person under such a glorious state of bliss can act, think, or feel in such a way that he or she is so deeply miserable.

[11 : 39] How can he or she feel so unworthy, so valueless, so despicable, so hopeless?

And again, I need to make myself perfectly clear here. I'm not advocating for a always happy, at all costs type of Christianity. A Christian, as any other human being, will have times and situations in which sadness, worry, and anguish will be unavoidable.

Healthy reactions to normal uncertainties and difficulties that are part and parcel of the fallen reality we live in. We all cry.

We all worry. We are all very much aware of our shortcomings and our weaknesses and even our sin. And it is right to feel sad when we sin.

Mind you, even the Holy Spirit gets sad when we sin. And it is, of course, right to feel disgusted by our sin. Of course it is. But one thing is to feel disgust at sin and another one is to feel disgusted by our own selves.

[13 : 03] That's a different matter altogether. Coming back to our text again against that background that we have just described, let us ask who are the poor, the brokenhearted, the prisoners, the blind, the oppressed.

Very often I've looked at this text myself or I've heard somebody preaching about this text talking about the poor in some remote part of the world in Africa or South America or maybe around the corner.

Or the blind as those men and women who have not seen the light, who have not known Jesus yet. and the brokenhearted, those who are sad for whatever reason it is in their lives.

And it is a very legitimate way of seeing at this list. However, from another and equally legitimate perspective, we can wonder whether you are the one who is poor.

Lacking the resources you need to be who you have been called to be. Or you are the wretched individual whose heart is so broken and shattered that you cannot even fathom what is that joy that the scriptures talk about.

[14 : 32] What it looks like. How it smells like. Joy. What's that? You are the one so blind that you cannot see that God has what He has already done for you and what He can still do to bring you closer every day to the image of the utterly perfect human being our Lord Jesus.

Perhaps you are the one imprisoned by a sinful character that you think you cannot change or by a sinful habit that seems invincible in your life or imprisoned also in an unbearable relationship that you think is totally beyond repair.

Maybe you are the one oppressed under the ruthless unrelenting attack of the enemy constantly reminding you of your failures whispering in your ear that you are nothing but a hypocrite because you say you love God but you act in a very different way.

He will be always that enemy of our souls condemning you forever wanting to change your ways and convincing you that it is impossible to do so. You've been trying 30 years and you've gone nowhere.

Stop trying. Stop hoping. Stop doing anything about that. Sadly hundreds and thousands of Christians live like that.

[16 : 21] Think of it. Probably we all can recite what the fruit of the spirit is. Can't we? Love peace joy forbearance kindness goodness faithfulness gentleness and self control.

How many of those boxes can you tick in your life? The crucifixion of our flesh and its desires that is inherent to our coming under Christ's sovereignty brings in our lives under the control of the Holy Spirit and as a result the fruit of his presence and activity in our lives becomes evident or does it?

And if it doesn't we turn miserable and we think what kind of Christian I am and very often it has taken people to think maybe I'm not a Christian I'm not saved the Holy Spirit is not in me I cannot see him and I cannot see his fruits in my life.

Why is it not happening? Why is that fruit not showing? My suggestion is that we have not given proper attention to this passage which is presented as a fulfillment as the fulfillment of a prophecy.

We have been granted the awareness of our sinfulness and the privilege of asking for forgiveness and forgiving we are. Our salvation is secured but as the psalmist in Psalm 6 or as Jeremiah does in the text that we read beforehand we need to cry out to God in both dimensions.

[18 : 19] God save me but also God heal me save me and heal me.

And Jesus came to save us yes but he is telling us in this text that he also came to heal us to set us free.

Let me tell you that after having accumulated years and years of counseling both given and received I know we do need healing.

we all have broken hearts. Some have serious issues. Some others have lesser issues. Some of us need deep long divine therapy by the Holy Spirit.

Some others just as little kiss a weak kiss and perhaps a band-aid and off we go. But we all need that healing touch from God and we should approach our Savior as also the one who can perform that healing in our lives.

[19 : 34] Alcohol and other substances act as anesthesia and soothe and ease our pain for a while. But the price we pay in shame and despair is unproportionate and only makes the pain when it comes back worse.

unsolved traumatic experiences do leave us vulnerable to anger as a defense mechanism and we end up being defensive even against those who are not threatening us, very often the ones we love the most.

Shame and fear make us vulnerable to lust and whenever we act it out we only sink deeper in that very dark pit and so on and so forth.

we were created free. Our own disobedience made us slaves of sin and of our own limitations but our Savior came to set us free and he died and was risen again and left with us the Holy Spirit to help us find and enjoy and live that freedom.

Our call is to live not only eternally but to live rich, joyous, powerful lives that make us lighthouses in the midst of so much darkness.

[21 : 07] Real, solid lives that make us to be the salt of the earth. Joyous, healthy lives in which we are free to obey and follow our master in such a way that others may feel irresistibly drawn to him.

I would encourage you to use this text as a check-up of your life. As you may be the blind, lame, oppressed, broken-hearted, prisoner he came to minister to.

Are you joyous? Are you victorious? Are you free to love? Free to obey? Free to serve?

Can you come to him with your burdens, your doubts, your anxieties, and find in him what you need to be relieved from them?

If the answer is no to any of those questions, you may be needing to come even closer to the Lord. You may be needing to discover a new dimension of who he is and what he has done for you.

[22 : 22] Your Lord and Savior is also your liberator, and he is also your healer. Try him. Trust him.

Believe him. And let yourself be loved by him. you can never regret doing such a thing, but you will certainly regret if you don't.

Let us pray. keep lot herein or commune.