

Luke 4:14-30

NEW REVISED STANDARD VERSION

¹⁴ Then Jesus, in the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding region.

¹⁵ He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone.

¹⁶ When he came to **NAZARETH**, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, as was his custom. *He stood up to read,* ¹⁷ and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

¹⁸ “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed,

¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

²⁰ And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. ²¹ Then he began to say to them, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” ²² All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth. They said, “Is this not Joseph’s son?” ²³ He said to them, “Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, ‘Doctor, cure yourself!’ And you will say, ‘Do here also in your hometown the things that we have heard you did at Capernaum.’”

²⁴ And he said, “Truly I tell you, no prophet is accepted in his hometown. ²⁵ But the truth is, there were many widows in Israel in the time of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months and there was a severe famine over all the land, ²⁶ yet Elijah was sent to none of them except to a widow at

LANGUAGE NOTES & TEXTUAL CONNECTIONS

Luke :: is one of the four gospels. Only in two (Luke and Matthew) is the story of the birth of Jesus told in detail. Luke’s gospel is written according to tradition by Luke, a disciple-intern of the apostle Paul. Our reading today is a story told only in Luke. It contains a marvelous contrast between what is visible and what is audible. Pay attention to the use of such verbs as (see...look...hear...said..)

NAZARETH:: Luke has already told us in the story that Nazareth is the hometown of Jesus and his family.

“²⁶ In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called **NAZARETH**, ²⁷ to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David.” Luke 1:26-27

“³⁹ When they had finished everything required by the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of **NAZARETH**. ⁴⁰ The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom, and the favor of God was upon him.” - Luke 2:29-40

He stood up to read, :: Luke goes out of the way to tell us that Jesus is a pious and observant Jew, in good standing in his community. He goes to Temple on the sabbath. Here he reads from the [TaNaK](#) (the Torah and the Prophets) on the day of worship. Traditionally someone in the community is chosen to read. The implication is that it was Jesus who was chosen this day.

Jesus reads from Isaiah 61:1-2. There are a few changes. Luke inserts the text from the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the TaNaK used in the 1st century by Greek-speakers). It has some different word choices due to translation. AND Luke leaves out part of the original Jewish text (a phrase in v.1 and the end of v. 2) (original text below).

¹The spirit of the Lord God is upon me because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, *to bind up the brokenhearted,* to proclaim liberty to the captives and release to the prisoners, ² to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor *and the day of vengeance of our God,* *to comfort all who mourn,* (continued...)

Zarephath in Sidon.²⁷ There were also many with a skin disease in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian.”²⁸ When they heard this, all in the synagogue were filled with rage.²⁹ They got up, drove him out of the town, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they might hurl him off the cliff.³⁰ But he passed through the midst of them and went on his way.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION & EXAMEN:

- What engaged, enraged, or surprised you in the text?
- How can Jesus proclaim such a radical message of hope, deliverance and justice, and then be indifferent to the needs of his own people – from his own home town?
- When have you felt that God is indifferent to your needs, disappointed by your ignored expectations for divine help?
- It likely that a large part of the expectation of the Messiah and God’s deliverance in this time was quite nationalistic. Jesus turns that upside down. How might this scripture speak to our own current situation in which Jesus is increasingly understood as not humble and nonviolent, but strong and vengeful? How are we possibly embracing [a similar religious nationalism](#)?
- What invitation do you hear the Spirit of God speaking to you – or to us, – to act, speak, be, or change, through this scripture?

LANGUAGE NOTES & TEXTUAL CONNECTIONS

Luke also adds a phrase from Isaiah 58:6

“Is not this the fast that I choose:
to loose the bonds of injustice,
to undo the straps of the yoke,
to let the oppressed go free,
and to break every yoke?”

the year of the Lord’s favor:: for Luke it’s seems that the word year points to eschatological time (God’s time breaking into world time). In particular it points to the prophetic proclamation of the year of Jubilee – every 50th year (7 years x 7) when all debts would be forgiven, and prisoners set free. See [Leviticus 25:8-54](#). Jesus seems to be proclaiming the beginning of the year of Jubilee – as Messiah he proclaims that God’s goodness – which is justice and peace – has entered the world and that we should join in that work. It was understood to be the ultimate return from Exile, the complete restoration of Israel, God’s deliverance of his people from the oppressive power of foreigners, debts, incarceration, and violence.

in the time of Elijah... to a widow at Zarephath in Sidon

:: Jesus answers the community request for more miracles, like those he’s done in Luke 4:14-15 by referring to [1 Kings 17](#). In this story, the great Hebrew prophet raises someone from the dead. But it’s not a fellow countryman, a Hebrew, but rather a foreigner, a gentile (*the widow*) whose son Elijah brings back from the dead through prayer.

in the time of the prophet Elisha,...Naaman the Syrian:: again Jesus answers the community request for more miracles, like those he’s done in Luke 4:14-15 by referring to a complicated story with a twist that’s left unsaid. See [2 Kings 5](#). In this story too, a great Hebrew prophet heals, but not a fellow countryman, a Hebrew, but rather a foreigner, a gentile soldier fighting against Israel! (*Naaman*). Jesus doesn’t only not answer their requests for miracles, he seems to be challenging their nationalistic vision that the Messiah will come from the Israelites. Jesus has done wonders in Capernaum (4:14-15), but here in his hometown, he is unwilling to help his own people. He insists upon the idea that God’s good news isn’t only for his people, or their nation – but for all peoples. This unspoken bit is what pushes the villagers over the edge towards violence against one of their own. *the widow*) whose son Elijah brings back from the dead through prayer.

Jesus seems to be not only not letting the needs of his people – his own townsfolk – go unmet, but also challenging their religious nationalism.