

Jesus' Priority

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 24 April 2022

Preacher: Craig Anderson

[0 : 00] Well, in the coming weeks, of course, it is election time. I don't know you, but every time I walk in the front door, it seems like there's some more bump on the floor from some local MPs telling us just how they're going to save the beautiful city of Dundee.

And in the bits of information we get election time, isn't it? It's often related to their manifesto, the thing explaining what it is they're going to do if we elect them.

Well, here in this passage, we see in a way Jesus' manifesto. He lays out for us exactly what he is going to do as God's king.

Verses 14 and 15 there, an introduction, intersection of Luke's gospel. And also it sets the tone. Have a look in verse 15. He's been very popular and he's been teaching.

Then see Jesus comes on to Nazareth, which was a home for him. And he does the same as before. He teaches. And everyone is desperate to see him.

[1 : 14] Forgive the analogy, but sort of like a homecoming gig for Jesus. It's the proclaimers at Edinburgh Castle. Biffy Clyro on Glasgow Green. Runrig on the Black Isle.

Annie Lennox at P&J; Live. But now it's Jesus of Nazareth in the synagogue there. And not only do you get to hear him, listen to this amazing teacher, but you know him.

He's one of us. He's someone you grew up with. Imagine the buzz. And Jesus, he's given the scroll. The scroll of Isaiah. And he gets out and he deliberately goes to chapter 61. And he reads the beginning of it. It was a well-known passage to those in the synagogue.

It was a passage written hundreds of years earlier, describing an event when the people were in exile, when they were no longer in Israel. When they were in Babylon under slavery. The people had lost everything because of their sin.

[2 : 17] But this passage gave them hope. This passage reminds him that God would rescue them. Bring them home to be with him and to bless them.

And Jesus rolls up the scroll. Gives it back. Sits down ready to teach. And look at this remarkable eyewitness detail in verse 20. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. Everyone is desperate. What is he going to say? What is this amazing teacher going to say? Who's been taking the whole area by storm?

And Jesus opens his mouth in verse 21. Today, this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.

Can you just imagine the look on people's faces? Surprise? Confusion? Or perhaps? What do you mean, Jesus?

[3 : 22] How is this scripture fulfilled today? How is that possible? And yet Jesus says, Today, now, God is working. The hundreds of years of waiting are over.

And it's finally fulfilled. What this means, that, Is if the people then, And us, want to know what Jesus is all about, If we want to know what he came to do, Then we must pay close attention To the passage from Isaiah, Which Jesus just read.

So, Let's do a Bible study together. Let's spend some time looking at that passage, Which Jesus read from Isaiah, And see how it applies to Jesus. So, first off, let's think, Who was it that was speaking?

Look at the passage quoted here in verse 18, The bit we read in Isaiah 61 earlier. And it says, The Spirit of the Lord is on me, Because he has anointed me, He has sent me.

Now imagine if one Sunday, Joe came in on himself, Stands up, reads a Bible passage, And we say, Yeah, It's all about me.

[4 : 37] You'd be like, On your bike. Of course it's not. So you think, Who is the me in Isaiah? Well, when you get to the second half of Isaiah, He says that God's deliverance, This hope that they look forward to, Is going to come through one individual.

One individual who was a servant of God, Who was anointed by God. Someone who was sent by God, Someone who was a warrior of God, Someone who will do God's good work. And Jesus says, I am the servant. I am the one who is anointed. I am the one who's been spirit filled, As you've just seen early in Luke's gospel. Jesus is saying here, The focus of this quote here, The focus of Isaiah, Is on me.

It's therefore all the promised blessings of God, Are going to come through me, Says Jesus. So Jesus is speaking, He's saying the passage is all about him, But what is it that he came to do? Look again at this, This quote in verse 18, Jesus says he's come to, Proclaim good news to the poor. Proclaim freedom for the prisoners.

[5 : 55] Proclaim the year of the Lord's favour. We'll see Psalm verse 15, Didn't we, That he was teaching in the synagogues. I think it's quite clear, Jesus came to preach, And to teach the good news of the kingdom of God.

That's what's seen here over and over again, He was teaching, He was teaching, He was proclaiming, He was proclaiming. And if you're really not sure on that, Have a look at verse 42 from chapter 4. At daybreak, Jesus went out to a solitary place, The people were looking for him, And when they came to where he was, They tried to keep him from leaving them, But he said, I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God, To other towns also, Because that is why I was sent, And he kept on preaching, In the synagogues of Judea.

Jesus is clear, That's why he came, Isn't he? Now often I, I think back to, Was it COP26 last year in Glasgow? I saw so many things in, In the papers about talk is cheap, The time for talking is over, The time for action is now, And yet Jesus seems to say the opposite.

He says, I have come to teach, I have come to proclaim, This is his priority, Not performing miracles, But proclamation.

I notice that in this quote from Isaiah as well, That as Jesus proclaims, His purposes are done. For example, That as he proclaims, The oppressed are set free.

[7 : 37] So what Jesus is saying, That as he proclaims, He does. For Jesus talking, And action are the same thing. See as, As the church, As Christ's church here, We want to make sure that our ministry, Is Jesus' ministry.

And so as we proclaim, Just like it was for him, His word, Does his work, By the power of the Holy Spirit. This is what Christ is commissioned to do here, And this is what his church, Is also commissioned to do.

What this means then, Is that if churches begin to, To drift from this, If other things have priority, Over proclamation of the gospel, Then we're no longer in line, With the ministry that they've been given.

And I'm sure as I say that, Some of us perhaps think of churches, Just look at that church over there, They just do this, They've forgotten the heart of it. But actually for, For churches like ourselves, It's something that we have to fight, To keep as a centre.

Sometimes I've seen churches start, Start good things, Really good things, But actually they become the priority. Giving out foods, Helping people with bills. And yet I know a number of people, Who've been saved, Attending things like these.

[9 : 08] But let's be clear, People aren't saved, Because they are no longer hungry. People aren't saved, Because they're no longer debt free. People aren't saved, Because they're no longer lonely.

Instead they're saved, Because someone told them about Jesus, And shared their life with them. They're saved because, Because friendships were built, At the Mums and Tots group. And they're able to say something, About Jesus to them.

They're saved because, They started coming to a church, Because they noticed, There's something different, With these people who are helping them. And they wanted to know more, And heard the gospel, And believed. See these, These ministries like this, They're important, They validate the message, That we proclaim.

But even more importantly, They provide opportunities, To actually proclaim the message, That we believe. I think a saying from one preacher, John Piper is helpful, I think we see it in the life of Jesus, Which says, Christians should care about all suffering, Especially eternal suffering.

That's what we see in Jesus, He cared about suffering. He came to help people, But especially, Cared about eternal suffering, Which is why he came to forgive sins, So seen in our Bible study, The passage, It's about Jesus, He's come to proclaim, The good news of the kingdom of God, But who is Jesus, Speaking to?

[10 : 40] Who is this for? Well in the quote, We see don't we, It's for, The poor, The captives, The blind, The oppressed, Let's just pause there, Let's remember, Jesus reads this, And says, This is fulfilled in your midst, Today, So, Who are the poor, The captives, The blind, The oppressed, That he's speaking to in the synagogue, Are there poor people there, As he's speaking?

Perhaps, Are there, Are there captives there? Well no, They're free to worship Yahweh, That's what they're doing right there, They've got their own laws, Are there blind people there?

We don't know, Is there anyone there, Who's oppressed? Well not really, Yes the Romans are ruling over them, But actually they were, Pretty free to do their own thing, So how can Jesus say then, That this is fulfilled, In their midst today?

See, As we read this, What we don't want to do, Is bring in our understanding, Of these categories, Into the text, Instead, We need to think, What did Isaiah mean, By these people?

And therefore, Who did Jesus, Mean, By these people? So, In verse 18, Jesus says, He's come to proclaim, Good news to the poor, Literally, Good news to the afflicted, Who was the afflicted, Isaiah was speaking about, Well in, The second half of Isaiah, Where this is from, The afflicted, The poor, They're, They're people, Who are in poverty, Because they're under God's judgment, It's a spiritual, Affliction, A spiritual, Poverty, For example, In Isaiah 64, Verse 12, It says, Will you restrain yourself, At these things, O Lord?

[12 : 40] Will you keep silent, And afflict us so terribly? Who are the blind? Who are the captive? Who are the oppressed? Who does Isaiah say they are? Well think back to the start of Isaiah, Chapter 6, His commissioning, Where you read this, He said, Go and tell this people, Be ever hearing, But never understanding, Be ever seeing, But never perceiving, Make the heart of this people callous, Make their ears dull, And close their eyes, You see the blindness spoken about here, Again, It's a spiritual blindness, The Jewish people can't see who God is, Because they are blinded by God, As part of their judgment against them, And what happened to the Jewish people?

Since they'd rebelled, Continuously against God, They were taken captive, By the Babylonians, They were oppressed by them, All as part of God's judgment, For their sin, So what we see here then, Is that in Isaiah, For these exiled Jews, These terms, Describe physical symptoms, Of a spiritual reality, Does that make sense?

Are we following this? Let me explain what I mean, These four terms, The afflicted, The prisoner, The blind, The oppressed, These aren't four different types of people sitting there, Rather, They're collective terms, Describing people under the judgment of God, Just think, When somebody is poor, They have a crushing debt, They can't repay, Before God, All of us are spiritually poor, We have a debt that we can't repay, And we are dead in our sin, And cannot offer him anything, And in our sin, We are captive, We are bound, We cannot do anything but sin, And in our sin, We are blind, To see the truth of who God is, And so we are oppressed, Because Satan has domain over us, Without Jesus,

That's us, That is the picture that Isaiah is describing, Of the people in Isaiah's day, And they are the people Jesus is saying, Is in the room before him then, But this is who the good news of Jesus is for, It's for all people, Because all people are sinners, In need of salvation, Let's sum up what we've seen, In this Bible study so far, The spirit filled Jesus, He's come, He's come to proclaim the good news, He's come to proclaim good news, To those who feel lost, To those who feel bankrupt, To those who feel like, There's no point in life, To those who feel like, There's no way out of this life, He's come to proclaim good news, To sinners, This is who Jesus' message is for, But so what? What does this message achieve? Freedom. What is freedom?

[16 : 05] It's the favour of the Lord. True freedom is the removal of that barrier, Between us and God, Having the favour of the Lord, His countenance upon us, His smile gazing over us, Freedom is a heart, Knowing that they are loved, By the one who is love, Freedom is no longer being crushed, By what others think, Because the one who thought the world into being, Thinks of you.

Freedom is what the hymn writer, Charles Wesley describes, When he gives a picture, Of what it means to be saved, Long mine prison spirit lay, Fast bound in sin, And nature's night, Thine I diffused a quickening ray, I woke the dungeon flame with light, My chains fell off, My heart was free, I rose, Went forth, And followed thee.

The freedom that Jesus brings, It's not an emotional high, But it brings its climax, And worship, Doesn't it? Of knowing this God, And praising him, Jesus has come, To teach good news to sinners, So that they can be free, And know the favour of God, And as he said then, It's fulfilled and arise today, So for ourselves now, 2000 years later, This is fulfilled today, This is something that we

can have, Now if you don't know it already, Perhaps some of us here, Struggle to believe this, If you're so far from God, I'll just read this passage again, Jesus has good news for you, He's come for you, If perhaps you're hearing this for the first time, And the lightbulb's going on in your head, Of what the gospel's about, You likewise can know forgiveness of sins today, Know the favour of God today,

Just for Easter, I was back in, Down in Northumberland, Seeing my parents and my brother, Down there, And I was really struck, Catching up with friends from school, Just how easy it is, To see how good and sorted their lives feel, I wonder if you find that, With friends and family, You look at their lives without Jesus, And their lives look fine, The thing is, Unless we see the severity of their condition, Laid out for us just in verses 18 and 19, That without Jesus, They are trapped in spiritual poverty, Held in sinful captivity, Blind to what they see and need, And bound by satanic oppression, Unless we see that, And grasp that, Then we won't have the urgency, To tell them of the good news of Jesus, They are in danger of drifting, From the priority of the church, And if we forget, That without Jesus, We were trapped in spiritual poverty, Held in sinful captivity, Blind to see, What we needed, Blind to see that, We are bound by satanic oppression, Then we can forget, Just how great, God's love is for us, God's love towards, Undeserving sinners like us, See what we read off here, This is what Jesus came to do, This is what we celebrate, The last week at Easter, When he achieved it, Is this not the greatest manifesto, You've ever read?

[19 : 41] Surely, As Jesus proclaimed this wonderful news, These great promises, Of what he was going to do, Revival broke out, Well no, Of course not, That's not what happened, Is it?

Let's look at verses 22 to 13, And you'll see in verse 22, Everybody, They are amazed, They're amazed, That's gracious words, And yet, By verse 29, People try and chuck him off a cliff, That's not revival is it?

I'm glad I'm in Aberdeen, Not our broath today, With the cliffs there, But why the change? What has, What's happened? What has Jesus said, That's caused them, To do such a turn?

Let's have a look, Well after Jesus, Speaks there, There's some confusion there, They, They recognize Jesus' preaching skills, But hold on a minute, Isn't this Joseph's son?

How can he possibly, Be the one that Isaiah foretells? How can he possibly, Be the one that, The scriptures are about? What? I used to go for a kickabout with him, I bought a chair off him, They know him, And Jesus knows, What they're going to say, Do that miracle thing, We know he can do, But he doesn't, Jesus never does miracles, For the sake of, Doing miracles in the gospel, They're always there, To validate the message, He proclaims, Now Jesus begins, To speak like a prophet of old, And just like a prophet of old, He's not going to be accepted, In his hometown, Look what he says here, In verse 19, Jesus says, He's come to proclaim, The year of the Lord's, Favor, And then verse 24, The word we have for accepted, Is literally favor again, And he says, That he the one favored by God,

[21 : 38] Who proclaims the favor of God, He and his message, Are not favored, In his hometown, They think Jesus, Is just Joseph's son, Not God's son, And to drive home the implications, Of what they think, He tells them, Two stories, Two stories they know well, Two stories from the lowest point, In Israel's history, And the people get this point, And they are raging at him, What they're saying, Well, These stories, Well, The first one's about Elijah, Verse 25, He mentions Elijah, And at the time, There's plenty of poor, Lonely widows in Israel, Widows are seen as, As underprivileged, As, As spiritually devastated, There's plenty of them in Israel, But Elijah doesn't go to them, Instead he goes, Outside to a Gentile, Non-Jewish widow, She is the last person, You would ever have expected, To receive God's blessing, Jesus goes on, The second story about Elisha,

The prophet who came after Elijah, And here Elijah, Heals no leper in Israel, Again, There was, There was lots there, Instead he heals Naaman, The commander of the Syrian army, One of Israel's most feared enemies, And so we see in these two stories, In these two warnings, To the Jewish people, That if they reject Jesus, Others will respond, And they don't like this, Because those people, They think don't, Deserve God's favour, And some of those people, Will be the most unlikely, Of people, Can ever think of to respond, Like the Gentile widow, Like the unclean leader, Of the enemy army, The most unlikely people, Like you and I, Thousands of years later, Thousands of miles away, And then the people go on, Just to show how blind they are, The one who says, Has come to proclaim to them, To free them, To bring the year of the Lord's favour, What did they try to do to him? Tried to kill him, But they couldn't, He walked right, Through the crowd, Because it was not time, For him to die, It was not time, For Jesus to be afflicted, So that we could know

peace, It was not time, For Jesus to be bound, So that we could be free, It was not time, For Jesus to become blind, So that we could see, It was not time, For Jesus to be oppressed, So that we could be blessed, It was not yet time, For Jesus to go to the cross, But let me close with this, like it was for Jesus as we proclaim this good news it shouldn't surprise us that many will hate it sure they might like the the community stuff the people but they don't like the bible stuff because they don't like Jesus they don't like grace what is grace it's God's sheer unmerited favor towards people and Jesus sermon here his big announcement him arriving on the scene saying this is what I'm going to do this is the freedom I'm going to achieve this is who it's for what does it look like a failure they try to trick him off a cliff and often so we feel like don't we when we tell people people about Jesus but actually it wasn't a failure here was it as Jesus says in our passage today it's often the most unlikely people who might respond to the gospel and that's actually how how Luke's gospel goes on if you want to read it when you get home it goes on from this you see Simon Peter we see the leper the paralytic Levi the tax collector they all recognize that sin is their greatest problem forgiveness is their greatest need and what you see as Luke goes on in these unlikely converts is that's only by hearing the teaching from Jesus that they or anybody else can enjoy the freedom and favor of God because one day Jesus will be bound on a cross for their sin for our sin so that we can be free with God forever praise his name for that let's enjoy this favor now and speak to God as I close in prayer let's pray our Lord Jesus thank you for your grace towards us thank you that you came to proclaim freedom forgiveness and so as you proclaim your word does your work and you achieve that Lord Jesus we praise you for the cross and thank you that now because of your work we aren't simply speaking to a ceiling but instead our prayers are coming before the throne of grace what an amazing thing that is our Lord Jesus help us to never forget where we were bound by sin blind to see your glory in debt to you help us not to stay there instead to praise you because of all that you have given us by your grace when we're tempted to see people we know we love and think their lives are fine without you help us to remember their true condition to see with eyes given us by the spirit that the greatest need is Christ and so help us to say something about the Lord Jesus Christ and when we feel like a failure in our evangelism

our Lord please protect us from discouragement knowing that your word always does your work that as the gospel seed is sown it takes time to grow so help us to be to persevere in our prayer to stay encouraged in our proclamation of your word knowing that that's the way that people are saved to never move on from that to give us confidence in it we ask Lord Jesus we enjoy the favour of God we are free from sin now but how we look even more to that day you return and you remove all sin and we shall enjoy our freedom in a way we can never ever have dared believe how good it would be and so we praise you Lord Jesus for all that we have in your name Amen Amen Amen Glieder Amen Amen you I want to be I want to be you