

# **“Letting Go To Serve”**

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Today’s gospel lesson is from the book of Luke, chapter 4, verses 14 through 21. I’ll be reading from the New Revised Standard Version. Then Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding country. He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone. 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, and the scroll from the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

‘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 let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.’ 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. Then he began to say to them, ‘Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.’ This is God’s word for God’s people. Thanks be to God.

Let’s pray. Thank you God for your presence with us here today. Bless each word of yours and allow it to permeate our being and saturate it with the power of your spirit. Move us all to hear and listen as each word travels down into every heart to make that needed change as we draw closer to you. God, let the words of our mouth and the meditations of our heart be acceptable to you, O Lord, our rock and our redeemer. Amen.

Peace be with you! We can think of this passage of Scripture as Jesus' mission statement. It defines what he's going to do and gives us his purpose and mission. After Jesus was baptized by John he was driven into the desert by the Spirit to be tempted by Satan. Then he returned full of the Spirit's power to Galilee—to Nazareth his home town.

Everyone heard about him, and he'd gotten quite a reputation as a miracle worker! As was Jesus' custom, he entered the synagogue. All his friends, parents, grandparents, and neighbors were there to hear him. Jesus was a layperson at this point in everyone's mind; the son of a carpenter from Nazareth; it didn't matter that he'd made a name for himself. The townsfolk only saw Jesus as the son of a carpenter.

In the synagogue, Jesus was asked to read from the scroll of Isaiah. As everyone waited anxiously, this is what he said, '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 let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.' After Jesus was done reading, he sat down and said, 'Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.'

Everyone there would've known the passage that Jesus read to be about the Messiah, but this was confusing. It was Jesus who read, and he'd done some miracles lately, but this was the son of a carpenter? Jesus truly let the tiger out of its cage! Can you hear the whispering, can you see the heads turning? And with some, there was anger.

In so many words, Jesus said this was written about *him* and that *he* had come to usher in the year of the Lord's favor! Literally, that meant that what Jesus read was fulfilled in their hearing and that it had come to a point of completeness.

In other words, Jesus was saying *he* was the Messiah, the Anointed One—the One who Isaiah had written about. The scripture Jesus read was about *his* ministry!

The “year of the Lord’s favor” was the “Year of Jubilee” as described in Leviticus 25. This meant that every 7 years the people would give the land a rest; it was what they called a “Sabbatical year” for the nation. The objective was to balance the economic system: slaves were set free and returned to their families, property that was sold reverted to the original owners, and *all debts were canceled!* Our debt, for our sin, Jesus canceled and paid himself.

Jesus told them that he had come to bring good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, and to let the oppressed go free! Jesus was saying that the year of the Lord’s favor was *him!* *He* was its fulfillment!

So how do *you* hear this message as it applies to your life? Jesus said he’s come to bring good news. What kind of good news do you need to hear today? We came to church, spoke to our friends, but underneath it all, how do we really feel? With some there’s deep sorrow, and we can’t seem to shake it. There’s fear and loneliness, and worry about the future.

We hope things will turn out for the best. But the fact is, to hear good news we’ve got to look at some of the bad news from yesterday. The daughter who doesn’t call us, the son who refuses to grow up and face reality, the spouse who stays indignant because he feels the world has been unfair. Maybe we all need to hear some good news today and feel a sense of joy. That emotion that rejoices regardless of the circumstances.

We’re all waiting to hear and feel that “good news,” but maybe in order to hear that good news we’ve got to look at the bad news. The stuff we lock up in that

room in our hearts. The burdens that just continue to mount up, and frankly, we doubt if things will ever get better.

Today we hear Isaiah's words. We're all living with difficult things in our lives. The good news is this; when we finally get to the point we can admit we need help in life and that we've fallen short of doing and being many things we wanted to be . . . . . that's when God begins to work in our situation. We can rationalize the circumstances, say life is unfair; however, we know our lives are messy.

Today, can we just *let go* of things we can't control? We've tried to solve the problem, and the more we try the worse it seems to get. Why don't we just relinquish control? When we admit our need for more of God in our lives there's some kind of great release that happens inside us. When we do let go, we find that burden needs to be let go of every day. That's when God comes into our situation, comforts us, and begins to work it out.

Maybe it's an attitude or mindset, a feeling of hopelessness, one loss after another, or whatever—invite God into that process of letting go and healing. The grieving continues, but as we invite God into the process, we begin to trust God more and more to take care of it—that's the healing taking place.

I think the challenge for many people is how to begin the process of letting go. One thing we do know is that the control we felt we needed hasn't produced the results we wanted anyway. Do we have a part to play with God in this process?

All of us have been given gifts to use and build up the body of Christ. Some teach and some sing. Whatever you do, it's the building up of others that builds us up. And in that process, we begin to let go, and our healing begins. Whatever your gifts are use them and surrender them to God. When we express our faith in action, it helps us to abide in Christ and keep doing what's right. We use our gifts, we look

to God and we trust him—we let go. You have to let go before you can receive God’s good news of comfort, freedom, and joy. Be part of that unity in the body of Christ. Allow God to work on your behalf and hand the control over to him.

Let’s pray. Dear God, help us to allow these burdens that weigh us down to roll off as we serve you and give you the control. Move us this day to look up and receive your comfort. Amen.