

January 3  
Lesson 5 (NIV)

## **CALLED TO PROCLAIM**

**DEVOTIONAL READING:** Deuteronomy 8:1–11

**BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE:** Luke 4

### **LUKE 4:14–22A**

<sup>14</sup> Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside. <sup>15</sup> He was teaching in their synagogues, and everyone praised him.

<sup>16</sup> He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read, <sup>17</sup> and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:

<sup>18</sup> “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, <sup>19</sup> to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

<sup>20</sup> Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of every one in the synagogue were fastened on him. <sup>21</sup> He began by saying to them, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”

<sup>22a</sup> All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips.

### **KEY VERSES**

*“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” —Luke 4:18–19*

## **CALL IN THE NEW TESTAMENT**

### **Unit 2: Jesus and Calls in His Ministry**

LESSONS 5–8

### **LESSON AIMS**

After participating in this lesson, each learner will be able to:

1. Identify the passage of Scripture Jesus read in the synagogue of Nazareth.
2. Explain the meaning and significance of Jesus' declaration regarding that passage.
3. Make a list of ways he or she can continue to fulfill the tasks in the mission of Jesus.

## LESSON OUTLINE

### Introduction

- A. Going Home
- B. Lesson Context
- I. Power (Luke 4:14–15)
  - A. Spirit-Filled Ministry (v. 14a)
  - B. Successful Ministry (vv. 14b–15)
- II. Preaching (Luke 4:16–17)
  - A. In Nazareth (v. 16)
  - B. From Isaiah (v. 17)
- III. The Point (Luke 4:18–22a)
  - A. Jesus' Call (vv. 18–19)
    - Blindsided*
  - B. Jesus' Mission (vv. 20–22a)
    - Today Is the Day*

### Conclusion

- A. Come Home
- B. Prayer
- C. Thought to Remember

## HOW TO SAY IT

Agabus *Ag-uh-bus*.

Arabia *Uh-ray-bee-uh*.

Corinthians *Ko-rin-thee-unz* (*th* as in *thin*).

Barnabas *Bar-nuh-bus*.

Capernaum *Kuh-per-nay-um*.

Damascus *Duh-mass-kus*.

Galilee *Gal-uh-lee*.

Isaiah *Eye-zay-uh*.

Judea *Joo-dee-uh*.

Messiah *Meh-sigh-uh*.

Nazareth *Naz-uh-reth*.

Nicanor *Nye-cay-nor*.

Parmenas *Par-meh-nas*.

Pentateuch *Pen-ta-teuk*.

Pentecost *Pent-ih-kost*.

Prochorus *Prock-uh-rus*.

synagogues *in-uh-gog*.

Timon *Ty-mon*.

Zechariah *Zek-uh-rye-uh*.

## Introduction

### A. Going Home

A memorable line from the classic film *The Wizard of Oz* is Dorothy's declaration, "There's no place like home." Returning home can have different meanings for many people. For some, home can be a good place to get away from the busyness of life and relax. Others, however, can become anxious after a few days of vacation away from home—eager to return to comfortable routines and familiar surroundings.

College is a great way to begin an independent life. But it's nice to return home to experience again the loving support of one's parents and to connect with old friends. Even so, it eventually dawns on every college student that once he or she leaves for that first class of the freshman year, there's a figurative sense of never returning home. Things are different when coming back on spring break. Family dynamics have changed permanently.

The sense of a permanent break is heightened as the years go by, when people "back home" remember you only as you were, not acknowledging who you've turned out to be. Something similar was the case with Jesus.

### B. Lesson Context

The Gospel of Luke, source of today's study, is one of the three so-called synoptic Gospels, the other two being Matthew and Mark. The word *synoptic* means "presenting or taking the same or common view," and that's what these three Gospels generally do. The operative word here is *generally* since there are exceptions.

Today's text is one of those exceptions. All three synoptic Gospels document Jesus' baptism (Matthew 3:13–17; Mark 1:9–11; and Luke 3:21–22) and his testing in the wilderness, where the tempter's proposed solutions to hunger, greed, and insecurity failed (Matthew 4:1–11; Mark 1:12–13; Luke 4:1–13). And all three make note of Jesus' subsequent beginning of ministry in Galilee (Matthew 4:12; Mark 1:14; Luke 4:14). But we should note a gap of time between Luke 4:13 and our text for today, which begins at 4:14. That gap of several months includes the events recorded in John 1:19–4:42.

## I. Power (LUKE 4:14–15)

### A. Spirit-Filled Ministry (v. 14a)

#### **14a. Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit.**

The record of the presence of *the Spirit* in Jesus' life in the early chapters of Luke is noteworthy: the Spirit had descended on Jesus at his baptism (Luke 3:22), had led him into the wilderness for 40 days of preparation (4:1), and had contributed to his *power* as he began ministering in *Galilee*. Jesus undoubtedly walked along one or all of the three main roads that connect Galilee to the rest of the world: a road south to Jerusalem, a road east to Arabia, and a road connecting Egypt to Damascus.

Later in the book of Acts, the author Luke recorded something similar from Peter's sermon on the Day of Pentecost, when Peter spoke of "how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power" (Acts 10:38).

Luke emphasizes the presence and power of the Spirit in the lives of others as well. These include John the Baptist (Luke 1:15–17), Mary (1:35), Elizabeth (1:41), Zechariah (1:67), and Simeon (2:25). In Acts, the presence and power of the Spirit was evident in the lives of Peter (Acts 4:8; 11:12); the seven men chosen to oversee an important benevolence program (namely, Stephen, Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas per 6:3–5; 7:55; 8:29, 39); Barnabas (11:22–24); Agabus (11:28); and Paul (13:9).

### B. Successful Ministry (vv. 14b–15)

#### **14b–15. And news about him spread through the whole countryside. He was teaching in their synagogues, and everyone praised him.**

Jesus' three-and-a-half-year ministry is often described today in terms of the rough time segments in the outline at the bottom of page 158. The depiction also offers some insight into the time gap discussed in the Lesson Context. Therefore, Jesus' *fame* that the verse before us notes has been building over several months by this point.

The region of Galilee was an area administratively distinct from Judea to the south. At this time, Galilee was ruled by Herod Antipas (see Matthew 14:1–12).

While in this area, Jesus was given opportunities to speak *in their synagogues*, and he was successful in so doing. Everyone was talking about Jesus (Luke 4:15, 37)! Ideally, the place to worship was the temple in Jerusalem. But wherever a certain number of Jewish families lived, there could be a synagogue. That Greek word means "place of gathering," and these became

centers of communal religious life. The concept developed when worship in the temple became impossible after its destruction in 586 BC or soon after the Jews' returned to Judea from captivity.

Luke does not give the substance of Jesus' teaching at this time. Later, when Jesus was in Capernaum, Luke noted that the people were "amazed at his teaching, because his words had authority" (Luke 4:31–32). The Gospel of John adds that Galileans welcomed Jesus because they had seen what he had done while he was in Jerusalem (John 4:45); many believed in him when they saw the miracles he performed (2:23).

## II. Preaching (LUKE 4:16–17)

### A. In Nazareth (v. 16)

#### **16a. He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up.**

Part of Jesus' teaching and preaching tour of Galilee involved a stop in his boyhood home of *Nazareth*. The Gospel writer spoke briefly in Luke 2 of Jesus' upbringing there, indicating that Jesus grew up in a typical Jewish family. He was circumcised in accordance with the Law of Moses and attended the yearly Passover celebration with his parents—standard things for Jewish boys at the time. Nazareth itself was a village on the lower slopes of Galilee. A topographical feature was that of "the brow of the hill on which the town was built" (Luke 4:29).

**16b. And on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read.**

The phrase *as was his custom* indicates a regular practice of teaching and/or preaching in synagogues (compare similar practice of Paul in Acts 17:1–2). This hints at a habit of faithful Sabbath Day attendance developed during boyhood days. There were many practices and attitudes of synagogue leadership that Jesus found lacking (Luke 13:14–16; etc.), but such people did not dissuade him from his own faithful attendance.

#### *What Do You Think?*

How does Jesus' regular attendance ("as was his custom") at weekly worship challenge your own practice in that regard?

#### *Digging Deeper*

What does Hebrews 10:25 add to that challenge?

Mention of *the sabbath day* is a reminder of God's creative work. The word *Sabbath*, meaning "rest, cessation from labor," first appears in Exodus 16:23–30. That text served to remind the covenant people of the requirement for a day of rest, echoing God's own rest after six days of creating (Exodus 20:8–11; compare Genesis 2:2–3). Sabbath observance is a sign of faithfulness to the covenant between God and Israel. "You must observe my Sabbaths. This will be a sign between me and you for the generations to come, so you may know that I am the Lord, who makes you holy" (Exodus 31:13).

After Jesus' death and resurrection, there is a transition from Saturday (the seventh day of the week) to Sunday (the first day of the week). Nine of the Ten Commandments are based on the nature of God; and since his nature never changes, neither does the application of those nine. The one commandment that is based on God's work rather than his nature is the one on keeping

the Sabbath. After Jesus' resurrection, a shift occurs away from focus on the old creation to focus on the new creation available in Christ. The result is corporate worship on the first day of the week in light of his resurrection on that day (Luke 24:1–7; compare Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:2; Revelation 1:10).

## B. From Isaiah (v. 17)

**17. And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written.**

The ruler of the synagogue supervised the service to see that it was carried out in accordance with tradition (compare Luke 8:41; Acts 13:15; 18:8). There are distinct parts to Sabbath services: prayers, reading from the five books of Moses (the Pentateuch), reading from the Prophets, and a sermon or lesson.

The Scripture readings followed a definite cycle. In some synagogues, the entire Pentateuch was covered in one year, with each reading supplemented by a reading from the Prophets. If a distinguished visitor was present, he was asked to give the teaching. This procedure is seen in Acts 13:13–47, where Paul delivered the message after the readings from the Law and the Prophets.

In the Nazareth synagogue, Jesus was given *the scroll of the prophet Isaiah* to read. Scrolls for use in copying Scripture could be made from paper made from the papyrus plant, which grew along the Nile River in Egypt (Exodus 2:3; Job 8:11; Isaiah 18:2; 35:7). The scroll handed to Jesus, however, was more likely made from animal skin, which was more durable (contrast the ease with which a papyrus scroll was destroyed in Jeremiah 36:23).

The Great Isaiah Scroll, one of the Dead Sea Scrolls discovered in 1947, is 24 feet long and about 10 inches high. The scroll handed to Jesus may have been similar.

*What Do You Think?*

What percentage of your Bible study time should you devote to reading the Old Testament? Why?

*Digging Deeper*

How do Romans 15:4 and 1 Corinthians 10:1–11 guide your decision?

## III. The Point

(LUKE 4:18–22a)

### A. Jesus' Call (vv. 18–19)

**18a. "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim the good news to the poor.**

The place from which Jesus reads is Isaiah 61:1–2, which speaks of God's servant being *anointed* with *the Spirit* and given several responsibilities. The servant's work will be for the good of people, cities, and nations. God will use the servant to bring salvation and fulfill his covenant. The servant is to proclaim good news by saying that the situation will change. The words of Isaiah describe the current situation in Jesus' ministry.

To be anointed refers to the act of pouring oil on someone's head to symbolize being set apart to a special office, such as priest or king (example: 1 Samuel 16:13). Anointing also symbolized the endowment of the Holy Spirit on someone's life. Together, these ideas indicate the consecration of Jesus to his messianic role and task.

*To proclaim the good news to the poor* is exactly what Jesus was tasked to do—and did (Luke 6:20; 7:22; etc.). In Isaiah 66:2 God says, "These are the ones I look on with favor: those who are humble and contrite in spirit, and who tremble at my word." Those who are poor have nothing to offer God, but therein lies the opportunity to realize one's need.

*What Do You Think?*

What guardrails can your church erect to ensure it maintains evangelistic focus on those who are poor in spirit while not neglecting to help those who are economically destitute?

*Digging Deeper*

How do texts such as Matthew 5:3; Romans 15:26; Galatians 2:10; James 2:1-7; and Revelation 3:17 help frame the task?

### **18b. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners.**

The first phrase here does not appear in certain ancient manuscripts of the New Testament, although it does appear in Isaiah 61:1.

The word *prisoners* often refers to prisoners of war who are dragged into an exile of servitude by their conquerors (example: Isaiah 5:13); it is also used in contexts of those captives' *freedom* (52:2). Spiritually, the devil holds people captive with no hope of escape on their own (2 Timothy 2:26). Jesus came to set everyone free.

### **18c. And recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free.**

Jesus' subsequent ministry resulted in several recorded instances of healings from physical blindness (Luke 7:22; etc.). Healing spiritual blindness proved to be more difficult because of unbelief (8:10).

*What Do You Think?*

How do you resist those things that put you at greatest risk of reentering the captivity of sin?

*Digging Deeper*

Which is most helpful to you in that regard: remembering consequences of your past captivity "to the law of sin" (Romans 7:23) or focusing on the positive captivity of your obedience to Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5)? Why?

## **BLINDSIDED**

When I was 8 years old, I attended a basketball game with my parents. Throughout the evening, I frequently asked them to tell me the score. They repeatedly said, "The scoreboard is right there. Just look for yourself." Finally, my parents realized that my vision was blurry since I couldn't see the scoreboard. A few days later, they took me to the optometrist to buy my first pair of glasses. My vision needed correction.

Spiritual vision can also require correction. Reading the Bible like a rule book, hating yourself or others, or seeking fulfillment outside of your marriage can all indicate spiritual visual impairment.

Isaiah prophesied that the Messiah would restore sight to the blind, and on several occasions Jesus did so literally (example: John 9:1–7). he can fix your blind spots too. Will you invite the Lord to open your eyes and wipe away anything that blurs your spiritual vision?

—D. F.

#### *What Do You Think?*

How do Matthew 7:1–5; 23:13–36; John 8:7; 1 Timothy 4:6; 2 Timothy 2:25; and Titus 2 interact to prohibit you from pointing out someone else's spiritual blind spots? How do those text require you to do so?

#### *Digging Deeper*

Under what circumstances, if any, would you encourage other Christians to point out to you your own spiritual blind spots?

### **19. To proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."**

This refers to the Year of Jubilee, described in Leviticus 25. God instructed the nation of Israel that every seventh year the land was to rest (have a Sabbath). Then after seven such rests (49 years) was to be the year of jubilee. During this 50<sup>th</sup> year, slaves were to be set free, debts cancelled, etc. It was to be a time of great rejoicing.

## **B. Jesus' Mission (vv. 20–22a)**

**20. Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him.**

Each synagogue had an *attendant* (an assistant) who took care of the building and called the people to the service. He was also responsible to hand the speaker the scroll and to return it to its proper place. Handing back the scroll and sitting down marked a transition to the next phase of the service. The fact that *the eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on Jesus* implies a great sense of expectation. Today we might say, "You could hear a pin drop!"

**21. He began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."**

This announcement means that the spiritual year of jubilee has come. Luke connects *hearing* with eyes (Luke 4:20, above). Jesus was and is the Messiah proclaimed by the prophet Isaiah.

As we see Luke connecting eyes with ears in these two verses, we note a sad contrast of the same connection in Acts 28:27: "They hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, ... and turn."

## **TODAY IS THE DAY**

At 112 years old, Richard Overton was likely the oldest man in the United States when he died in December 2018. A military veteran, Richard had served his country during World War II. On Veterans Day in 2013, President Obama honored him in a ceremony.

## **MINISTRY YEARS OF JESUS**



(NOT INCLUDING HIS FINAL WEEK)

<u>Matthew</u>	<u>Mark</u>	<u>Luke</u>	<u>John</u>
<b>Ministry Begins</b> 3:13–4:22 →	1:9–34	3:19–23; 5:11	4:14–1:19–4:54
<b>Popularity Rises</b> 4:23–9:34; →13:58	11:2–1:35–6:6	5:12–8:56	5:1–47
<b>Opposition</b> 9:35–11:1; <b>Increases</b> →20:34	14:1–6:7–10:52	9:1–19:27	6:1–11:54

All that was well and good, but here's the best part of the story: Mr. Overton accepted Christ and was baptized at age 107. He said "it was about time"!

Jesus told the crowd in his hometown synagogue that he was fulfilling Isaiah's messianic prophecy that very day. Hundreds of years had passed since Isaiah predicted that the Messiah would come to bring the good news and deliverance. After centuries of waiting, God's plan was being fulfilled through Jesus right then and there.

Today is the day of salvation (2 Corinthians 6:2). What will you do to continue bringing the message of the gospel? Don't put it off. Very few, if any, of the people you might speak to today will live to be 112.

—D. F.

### **22a. All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips.**

Jesus' *gracious words* reflects the fact that "the grace of God was on him" (Luke 2:40). Indeed, the gospel itself is "the good news of God's grace" (Acts 20:24; compare 20:32).

Given that the townspeople's next words and actions were much less gracious, even deadly (Luke 4:22b–29; compare John 6:42), we wonder why the difference! Jesus gave a reason in Luke 4:24: "No prophet is accepted in his hometown." Jesus' ministry was characterized not only by grace but also by truth (John 1:14, 17). The "hometown boy syndrome" had blinded them to reality.

## Conclusion

### A. Come Home

Messiah has come to set us free from the bondage of sin and death (Galatians 5:1). The whole purpose of Christ's coming was to rescue us. To do so, he had to die that he "might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is the devil" (Hebrews 2:14; compare 1 John 3:8).

Whoever we are, wherever we are physically or spiritually, God's message is clear: he wants all to be rescued. he wants us to come home. The acronym COME reminds us of this fact. he wants **c**hildren, **o**ld people, **m**iddle-aged, and **e**veryone else to come back to him. Jesus wrapped

a robe of flesh around himself and came to die to pay sin's price to make that possible. And he departed this world on the promise that he would prepare a place in Heaven for his disciples (John 14:1–3).

There is a star in the northern sky that never sets. The Phoenicians, Vikings, and sailors long ago used this star to get their bearings and to help them reach their destination. For thousands of years it has been a reliable guide for travelers. It is called the North Star. You can find it rather easily by using the stars in the handle of the Big Dipper (Ursa Major) as an imaginary line to point to it. As travelers can use that star yet today to guide them, how much more is Jesus still the only reliable light for our path to Heaven!

We can find our way home only by following Jesus and by following Jesus only. He is the light of the world to lead us all from the path of darkness into the light of the Father. Like Jesus did for his audience at Nazareth, Jesus calls us to him.

### **B. Prayer**

Father, we thank you for sending Jesus to die for our sin, for paying sin's price so we don't have to. May our eyes and ears be ever fixed on him as we continue his mission. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

### **C. Thought to Remember**

Jesus, the Messiah,  
has come to set us free.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Cockrell, J. L., Faust, D., Taylor, M. A., & Nickelson, R. L. (2021). [Called to Proclaim](#). In R. L. Nickelson, J. A. Kenney, & M. K. Williams (Eds.), *The NIV Standard Lesson Commentary, 2020–2021* (Vol. 27, pp. 153–159). Colorado Springs, CO: Standard Publishing.