

The Gospel Of Luke

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 let the oppressed go free,
¹⁹to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.’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.’ (Luke 4:16-21. NRSV)

Message 4

Authority

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Luke 4:31-37

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Introduction:

Open your Bibles to Luke 4:31-37 and just strap in. We’re going to move fast this morning and we are going to end up someplace amazing. Does that sound good? The Bible says:

31 He went down to Capernaum, a city in Galilee, and was teaching them on the sabbath. ³²They were astounded at his teaching, because he spoke with authority. ³³In the synagogue there was a man who had the spirit of an unclean demon, and he cried out with a loud voice, ³⁴‘Let us alone! What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God.’ ³⁵But Jesus rebuked him, saying, ‘Be silent, and come out of him!’ When the demon had thrown him down before them, he came out of him without having done him any harm. ³⁶They were all amazed and kept saying to one another, ‘What kind of utterance is this? For with authority and power he commands the unclean spirits, and out they come!’ ³⁷And a report about him began to reach every place in the region. (Luke 4:31-37. NRSV)

Jesus in this story is now a force of new creation and he is manifesting POWER and AUTHORITY the likes of which people had never seen. This authority, this *ecousia* as it says in the Greek, is evidenced in NEW, EXPANSIVE TEACHING and in impressive demonstrations of his DOMINION over the realm of Satan. Let’s pull this apart into its component pieces so that we can clearly understand what Luke is trying to tell us. The first thing we need to remind ourselves of is the STATE that Jesus is in while manifesting this authority.

The STATE of Jesus:

We don't need to take much time here as we've preached on this state over the last several weeks. While moving in this authority, Jesus was:

i. FILLED

We saw that at his baptism where the text says that:

²²and **the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove**. And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.' (Luke 3:21-22. NRSV)

After his baptism and before he was led into the desert Luke tells us:

Jesus, **full of the Holy Spirit**, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness (Luke 4:1. NRSV)

Everyone say: FULL OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. Right, Jesus was full, he had been FILLED and he was operating in a state of fullness even before he went into the desert.

ii. TESTED

Secondly, Jesus was in a state of TESTED-NESS when he was operating in this power. We know that from the desert story. Luke 4 tells us:

Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, ²where for forty days **he was tempted** by the devil. (Luke 4:1-2. NRSV)

The Greek word translated as 'tempted' is the word *peirazw* and means 'to try or tempt a person, to put him to the test'. That's directly from the dictionary. So Jesus when he is operating in power and authority in our story has been thoroughly tried, tested and proved. He is operating in a state of TESTED-NESS.

iii. EMPOWERED

Third, he is in a state of EMPOWEREDNESS. Look at verse 14 of Luke 4. After he was fully tested in the desert the text says:

14 Then Jesus, **filled with the power of the Spirit**, returned to Galilee (Luke 4:14. NRSV)

We've upped the ante here. In verse 1 of Luke 4 he was 'full of the Holy Spirit' now after the time of testing he is full of the 'power of the Holy Spirit'. We need to hear that church. You can have the Spirit without having the power of the Spirit and even Jesus was not given the power until he had passed the test. We could preach on that all day and all night couldn't we?

iv. FOCUSED

Lastly we see that Jesus was in a highly FOCUSED state when he was operating in this power and authority. We saw last week how Jesus knew EXACTLY what he was going to be about in his earthly ministry during his first coming. He wasn't trying to do every good Messiah thing, he knew some good Messiah things would be deferred. He knew that due to the KINDNESS of God he was being charged with a very specific ASPECT of Messiah's mandate at this present time. He said:

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 let the oppressed go free,

¹⁹to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.'

²⁰And 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. ²¹Then he began to say to them, 'Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.' (Luke 4:18-21. NRSV)

He knew there were two more components of that prophecy and he knew he would get to them. But he was focused on the task of the moment which was to open the season of God's favour and to begin immediately setting captives free and to immediately begin bringing light to those in darkness. That was the need of the hour and it was that that Jesus was focused on.

Jesus was FILLED, TESTED, EMPOWERED and FOCUSED as he moved out in power and authority to begin his earthly ministry. That was the state he was in, but I want to also slow down enough to recognise HOW exactly that authority manifested. What did it look like?

How Did His Authority Manifest?

Luke makes that clear for us in verse 32:

³²They were astounded at his teaching, because he spoke with authority. (NRSV)

Now I don't want to be Captain Greek pants this morning but this verse doesn't make the same impact in English so it needs to be translated. In Greek it says that they were amazed at his WORD, his λογος. Logos is a word that most Christians are familiar with. It can be translated as 'message' or 'teaching' as here but it means way more than that. There is a Greek word which means 'teaching' but that isn't the word used here, logos is a big word in Christian theology.

You remember John 1:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God. ³All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. ⁴In him was life, and the life was the light of all people. (John 1:1-4. NRSV)

Logos was a creation word, it was a 'breath of God' word. Any person reading Luke's Gospel in Greek would hit verse 32 and be immediately reminded of Psalm 33:6 which says:

'By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and all their host by the breath of his mouth. (NRSV)

In the Greek version of the Old Testament which was the Bible of the early church that word is LOGOS. So Luke is saying that the crowds were amazed at his LOGOS. This teaching was **as the breath of God** which lies behind all life and creation. It was different from regular teaching in two ways. First of all it was new and expansive. The Gospel writers frequently recorded that the crowds who heard Jesus' teaching were amazed at the newness and expansiveness of his message. In Mark's Gospel he records this same event and he adds a phrase:

²⁷They were all amazed, and they kept on asking one another, 'What is this? **A new teaching**—with authority! (Mark 1:27. NRSV)

Rabbis in Jesus' day did not say new things, they repeated and explained old things. One famous Rabbi from around that time said: 'nor have I ever in my life said a thing which I did not hear from my teachers' (Rabbi R. Eliezar. *Sukkah* 28a.) How would you like to be that guy's disciple? But Jesus didn't just repeat and explain he EXPANDED. He did this all the time:

21 'You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, "You shall not murder"; and "whoever murders shall be liable to judgement."' ²²**But I say to you** that if you are angry with a brother or sister, you will be liable to judgement (Matthew 5:21-22. NRSV)

27 'You have heard that it was said, "You shall not commit adultery."' ²⁸**But I say to you** that everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart. (Matthew 5:27-28. NRSV)

But I say to you – Rabbis did not say: 'But I say to you'. Who is this guy? He is Jesus, the LOGOS OF GOD and he can say whatever he wants. When Jesus opened his mouth REVELATION came out. New things. New knowledge. Divine understanding and the people developed a hunger for it. The authority of Jesus manifested in revelation.

It also manifested in WORDS OF DOMINION. Look at verse 36:

³⁶They were all amazed and kept saying to one another, '**What kind of utterance is this?** For with authority and power he commands the unclean spirits, and out they come!' (NRSV)

Again the word that is translated as utterance is LOGOS. What kind of WORD is this for it evicts demonic spirits. The word of Jesus was not just a new word, it was a word carrying the power of DOMINION. When Jesus spoke, people were set free from the realm of Satan and they were moved into the Kingdom of God. Amen. By the way that's why the Gospel writers are so careful to position the majority of healing stories within the teaching ministry of Jesus. They wanted to be clear; Jesus was not a travelling healer, he was the BREATH OF LIFE whose very WORD moved people out of bondage and into the freedom of the new creation, the kingdom of God. Mmmmm! That's good theology. So that's what is going on here: Jesus, in a state of FILLED-NESS, TESTED-NESS, EMPOWEREDNESS and FOCUSED-NESS is moving in POWER and AUTHORITY. That authority is manifesting in WORDS of REVELATION and WORDS of DOMINION. Amen, hallelujah but what does that mean for us? Is this just another one of those Jesus stories that increase our affection but do little to increase our faith? Or is this,

as we have suggested, a story that Luke again shares with the hope that we will try and repeat it? Does this story carry the suggestion that so ought it be with us? Let's test that and see.

Is This Story Repeatable?

The first clue we have that Luke intends this story to be repeatable is found in Luke 10. There Jesus has gathered together some disciples and he says to them:

After this the Lord appointed seventy others and sent them on ahead of him in pairs to every town and place where he himself intended to go. (Luke 10:1. NRSV)

He says to his disciples: 'Now boys, you've been watching me do this and you know how its done. I think its time you went out and gave it a try for yourselves.' So out they go. They come back and share this report:

17 The seventy returned with joy, saying, 'Lord, in your name even the demons submit to us!' (Luke 10:17. NRSV)

'That stuff you did Jesus, WE DID IT TOO!! The demons retreated before our Word as well Master!!' And Jesus says in response:

¹⁸He said to them, 'I watched Satan fall from heaven like a flash of lightning. ¹⁹See, I have given you authority to tread on snakes and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing will hurt you. (Luke 10:18-19. NRSV)

Jesus says: 'I know what happened boys, I watched it happen! I saw the dominion of Satan shrink as my word went out through you. You don't even understand this yet boys, but you have an authority within you now that has power over the greater and lesser minions of the enemy.' The authority of Jesus was in them now – the WORD of Jesus, the LOGOS, the NEW CREATION POWER UTTERANCE was in them and when they spoke it, when they manifested it, the realm of Satan was in full retreat. Interesting.

But maybe those 70 disciples were special? Maybe the Bible only meant to imply a limited application and repeatability of this phenomenon? Well let's check that. Look at Mark 16:

And he said to them, 'Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to **the whole creation**. ¹⁶The one who believes and is baptized will be saved; but the one who does not believe will be condemned. ¹⁷And **these signs will**

accompany those who believe: by using my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues; ¹⁸they will pick up snakes in their hands, and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover.’ (Mark 16:15-18. NRSV)

Jesus says to all those who would follow: ‘Take this creation WORD to all the cosmos!

Anywhere the curse is found, anywhere the dominion of Satan is leaving a stain on my good creation you take this WORD. This word is AUTHORITY and it is POWER and you will manifest that power by bringing truth and saving revelation to people living under the power of darkness. Your Word will be a DOMINION word and where it is uttered in faith the greater and lesser minions of the enemy will fall back before you.’ Amen. Amen. It was meant to be repeatable, indeed it was repeated in the life of the early church. The real question then is can it be **recaptured**? Well, it seems to me that if we want to walk in what Jesus walked in, that POWER AND AUTHORITY to bring revelation and dominion utterance then we need to go where Jesus went. We need to walk the pathway of preparation that put him in the state where he could be used the way he was. Do you agree with that logic? If that’s true, then we need to begin by asking:

How Can I Be Filled?

Jesus began his preparation journey with a filling experience so we should start there too. How can I be filled? The Bible answers that question in several places, let’s look at what the Apostle Paul says in Galatians 4:6:

⁶And **because you are children**, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, ‘Abba! Father!’ (NRSV) Now in case we might be confused by that thinking that it is being a physical child that causes us to receive the Holy Spirit, Paul defines what he means a few verses earlier saying:

²⁶for **in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith**. ²⁷As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. (Galatians 3:26-27. NRSV)

You become a child of God, Paul says, by having faith in Jesus Christ, faith that is proclaimed publically through baptism. And all those who are children of God through proclaimed faith are filled with the Spirit of his Son Jesus which is the Holy Spirit. That is why the descent of the Holy Spirit in bodily form upon Jesus is associated with his public baptism because everything

Jesus did he did to set us an example. Step one is preparing for this power is conversion through faith and public proclamation in baptism.

¹⁶The one who believes and is baptized will be saved (Mark 16:16. NRSV)

How Can I Arrange For Testing?

The second question we should ask is how can I arrange for testing? I've got some good news and some bad news for you here. The good news is that God will arrange the testing, you don't have to worry about that. The bad news is that testing is really hard and it is different for everybody. Let me show you a testing story in the Bible that speaks to me. Its in Galatians 4 as well, verses 13 and 14:

¹³You know that it was because of a physical infirmity that I first announced the gospel to you; ¹⁴though **my condition put you to the test**, you did not scorn or despise me, but welcomed me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus. (NRSV)

The Apostle Paul reflects back on a time in his missionary travels where he took seriously ill. Many scholars think he got malaria but we don't know for sure. Whatever the illness, he had to take rest in Galatia and some people, perhaps some Jews or Gentile God-fearers associated with the local synagogue took him in and nursed him. This would have been terribly difficult for the high energy, workaholic Apostle, but rather than complain about it he recognised it for what it was: a faith test for them. These people obviously came to Christ and then were given an immediate opportunity to prove their faith by caring for an extended time for God's sick messenger. Jesus said we would prove that we were his disciples by our love for one another and they got to that test pretty quick.

I know something about that one. My own faith was tested that way. Most of you know that during the pregnancy for our fourth child my wife contracted a blood disease that has destroyed or greatly depleted her immune system. For the last 5-6 months of that pregnancy she was bedridden and I had to serve her. That was pretty trying for a high energy freakazoid like me. It meant I had to leave for work later because I had to get the kids breakfast and off to school. It usually meant I had to leave work to get them into the house and settled and then I would go back to work for a couple of hours, then come back home and make dinner and do bedtime before

going back out more often than not. But more than all of that, there was the compassion test. Shauna Lee will tell you that the old Paul didn't do compassion very well. Sickness was weakness and the less attention you received the more likely you were to be motivated toward recovery. That may work for a cold but it doesn't work for a serious disease. God was testing my love and my patience and my gentleness and that experience changed and refined me. It was my desert. It taught me prayer and patience and faith. Deserts are like that.

Your test will come, maybe you're in it, maybe you failed it and you are waiting for a make up. Do not be surprised by these tests, as though they prove that God doesn't love you, these ARE THE WILL AND LOVE OF GOD.

My brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of any kind, consider it nothing but joy, ³because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance; ⁴and let endurance have its full effect, so that you may be mature and complete, **lacking in nothing**. (James 1:2-4. NRSV)

Trials are God's gift to you so that you can grow up and mature and become capable of carrying the power you are destined to receive.

How Can I Facilitate Empowerment?

Thirdly we want to know how we can facilitate empowerment. Jesus was full of the POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, how can we get to that place? The Pentecost narrative in Acts supplies some wonderful counsel here; just before Jesus ascended into heaven he told his disciples this:

⁸But **you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you**; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.' (Acts 1:8. NRSV)

Good! Power is coming; but what were they to do to facilitate that? Luke provides that information at the very end of his Gospel:

⁴⁸You are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹And see, I am sending upon you what my Father promised; so stay here in the city until you have been **clothed with power from on high**.' (Luke 24:48-49. NRSV)

Jesus says: 'I am sending you what has been promised: POWER FROM ON HIGH. You will have that. To facilitate that you need to wait in the city.' And Luke records that they were careful to do that very thing:

12 Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a sabbath day's journey away. 13When they had entered the city, they went to the room upstairs where they were staying, Peter, and John, and James, and Andrew... 14All these were constantly devoting themselves to prayer, together with certain women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, as well as his brothers. (Acts 1:12-14. NRSV)

They went to the city and they stayed there together and several days later, Luke tells us, they were still there:

When the day of Pentecost had come, **they were all together in one place.** 2**And suddenly** from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. 3Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. 4All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability. (Acts 2:1-4. NRSV)

Putting these Scriptures together it seems clear to me that power from on high is given in response to patient, obedient waiting, in an atmosphere of prayer and unity and in the perfect, indecipherable timing of God.

On What Should I Be Focused?

Lastly we need to ask into what focus is this power given? Does God give us power from on high so that we can win sporting events or achieve political supremacy? No, it is very clear that this power and authority is given to those who are committed to and focused on the expansion of God's Kingdom and the birth of his new creation. Just like we saw in Luke 10, just like we saw in Mark 16, in Matthew's Gospel authority is promised to those who go out as kingdom messengers:

'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.' (Matthew 28:18-20. NRSV)

Go into ALL THE NATIONS and as you are going understand that I am with you in all my power and authority even unto the completion of this task, when the old, dying world under the curse of the enemy is laid to rest and the new creation birthed of the Word of God is fully present in all its glory, wonder and splendour.

It is clear that this power is not given for our amusement, nor to alleviate our suffering, nor to bless us for being such good boys and girls. It is given for the advancement of the Kingdom of God. Those who have proven their commitment to it will be given the power and authority to advance it. That is no doubt why Jesus taught us to pray: Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. The disciple focused on these things is in the state where authority is given.

Conclusion:

Many people would relegate this story we have studied to the dust bin of Biblical history. ‘Just another story that shows how different Jesus was to how we are. Its value is in inspiring worship, not followership’. I disagree. I believe that if we have THE LOGOS of Jesus, the WORD OF JESUS, inside of us, as indeed we do, and if we have THE SPIRIT OF JESUS, the HOLY SPIRIT OF GOD inside of us, as indeed we do, then there is no reason why we cannot speak that word in such a way as to BRING FULL CONVICTION, FULL CONVERSION, FULL RE-CREATION to the lost and bound of this present world. I see no reason why we cannot begin EVEN NOW to speak DOMINION UTTERANCE, I see no reason why we cannot begin to function EVEN NOW as the sons and daughters of God, for that is what we are. 1 John 3 says:

²Beloved, **we are God’s children now** (1 John 3:2. NRSV)

Now! The Greek word there is *nun* and it means NOW in an emphatic sense. Not later, not soon but NOW. The Apostle Paul said:

For **all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God.** (Romans 8:14. NRSV)

Its time to wake up church! We need to wake up to who we are. What was true of Jesus as the Son of God is, can be, true of us **now**. Paul was working so hard to make that very point in Galatians 4. He says literally:

And because **you are sons**, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, “Abba, Father!” (Galatians 4:6. NKJV)

Jesus is the Son of God and YOU ARE THE SON OF GOD. That's not a gender statement, its a statement of the fact that the SPIRIT OF GOD'S SON, who was a male, LIVES IN YOUR HEART if you are God's child by faith. Paul used this same terminology later in the same chapter saying:

¹⁹My little children, for whom I am again in the pain of childbirth until **Christ is formed in you** (Galatians 4:19. NRSV)

The word that is used there for 'formed' is the word used for the growth of a human embryo inside the mother's womb. Paul is saying: 'I am watching you with a father's anguish, anxiously and prayerfully observing you develop like a foetus in the womb.' Something is being birthed in them and Paul tells us what it is: It is Jesus, the Son of God that is being FORMED in them. Soon he will become huge within them and he will take control and they will be THE SON OF GOD on earth. Wow! And don't you dare think I made that up, its all over the Bible. Luke said:

16 'Whoever listens to you listens to me, and whoever rejects you rejects me, and whoever rejects me rejects the one who sent me.' (Luke 10:16. NRSV)

Matthew said the same:

40 'Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. (Matthew 10:40. NRSV)

If the Son of God is formed in you, if the Word of God abides in you and the Spirit of God has filled and empowered you then you are what this world has been waiting for:

¹⁹For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God (Romans 8:19. NRSV)

They're waiting for you. They're waiting for us. They are waiting for us to walk the path of Jesus so that we can be filled, tested, empowered and focused and operating in a level of authority and dynamism that this world has never seen. Church, listen, I want to do more than believe in the Son of God, my friends. I want to follow him and I want to BE HIM. That is the promise of God's Word and that is what this world is waiting for. And all God's children said, Amen.