

Luke Chapter 4 v 16 - 30

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[0 : 00] Welcome. Good morning. Particularly good to welcome visitors amongst us and I trust that you enjoy your time in Whitby and you feel refreshed, but particularly as we come to worship our God, our Saviour, that we might be particularly renewed and revived by His Holy Spirit.

The verse I've chosen to lead us into worship is on the screen behind me. It's Psalm 73, Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth is nothing I desire besides you. The world in which we live and people of the world and that we ourselves at times find that we run here and there finding and looking for something to satisfy, something to give us a sense of peace. But actually when we come to Christ we realize there's nothing compared to Him, nothing that compares with the joy of the forgiveness of sins, nothing that compares with the assurance of God's love for us. And we come this morning because we want to set our hearts and minds upon the Lord our God and praise Him for all that He's done for us. And our first hymn is 144 in our books, All My Days I Will Sing This Song of Gladness, Give My Praise to the Fountain of Delights. Another one, the source of all my delight and joy is the Lord Himself. Let's stand and sing 144.

Let's come to God in prayer together. Let's continue to praise Him as we all pray. Father in heaven, you are a God, the God who satisfies the deepest longings of the human heart. You are the one who is the great desire of all the world, of all the nations. To know you is to know life, to know peace, to know sins forgiven, to know conscience cleansed, to know life everlasting. There is none like you, O Lord, none who compares. There is nothing in heaven or earth or in the universe beyond that can possibly compare to you. Lord, we live our lives so frequently, seeking, hungering, searching for that which we hope will dumb the pain, that which will lift our spirits, that which will make us happy. But wherever we look and forever briefly we experience those feelings, they do not last. They don't last when we look to them in alcohol or in relationships or in career or in money or possessions or in pleasures or in adventures. Lord, wherever we go, it's all just momentary and often so much of it is damaging.

So much of it is harmful to us and to others. But O Lord, when we come to you, when we discover you as our creator and maker, our redeemer and friend, when we realize that all through our lives you have been searching for us, searching for us, searching for us, and more than that, that you sent your son into the world for us, when we realize the immensity of your love and how, Lord, you paid such an awful price that we might be found and rescued and saved and restored to you, our maker, when we realize that it cost you the very life of the most precious son of your love, when we realize that Jesus died in our place and took our sin, when we realize that there was nothing else that could be done to save us, then O Lord, we melt. We melt with joy.

We melt with a sense of praise. We melt, O Lord, with delight. Oh, we find ourselves enraptured and caught up and deliriously in love with you who first loved us. And we thank you again that our hearts desire this morning as we come is just to fulfill the words we've sung. We want to sing your praises all the days of our life. We know that you'll never leave us or forsake us. We know that your love for us is always the same. We know that wherever we go, Lord, you will never be separated from us or us from you. And so, Lord, we pray that not just in this time, but, Lord, throughout our lives we may sing your praises from hearts that overflow with thankfulness and delight. But we especially pray for your help this morning that as we gather together to hear you speak to us, that you would give to us ears to hear. Lord, give us hearts hungry for truth and for those words of life.

[5 : 15] For we ask again that your Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth, may come upon us and amongst us and within us and that, Lord, we might have our eyes opened to see more of your beauty and loveliness.

For we ask it all through Jesus who is God revealed to us. Amen. We're going to read now from our Bibles and if you'd like to turn with me to the Gospel of Luke, Luke and chapter 4. We started

looking at this Gospel even before Christmas and we have had a few breaks in between and, of course, we've had folk away and bits and pieces. So, we're back in Luke and chapter 4 and verse 14. Luke chapter 4 verse 14. If you have one of the red church Bibles, that's page 1031. Page 1031. We're going to read from Luke 4 verse 14 through to verse 30. Verse 30.

Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit and news about him spread through the whole countryside. He was teaching in their synagogues and everyone praised him. 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 and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him.

On rolling it, he found the place where it is written, 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 favour. 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.

[7 : 30] He began by saying to them, Today, this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing. All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips.

Isn't this Joseph's son? They asked. Jesus said to them, Surely you will quote this proverb to me, Physician, heal yourself. And you'll tell me, Do here in your hometown what we've heard that you did in Capernaum.

Truly, I tell you, he continued, No prophet is accepted in his hometown. I assure you that there were many widows in Israel in Elijah's time, when the sky was shut for three and a half years and there was a severe famine throughout the land.

Yet Elijah was not sent to any of them, but to a widow in Zarephath in the region of Sidon. And there were many in Israel with leprosy in the time of Elisha the prophet, Yet not one of them was cleansed, only Naaman the Syrian.

All the people in the synagogue were furious when they heard this. They got up, drove him out of the town, and took him to the brow of the hill on which the town was built, in order to throw him off the cliff.

[8 : 51] But he walked right through the crowd and went on his way. We remember again, O Lord our God, that you know all things.

There's nothing that we can tell you that you are ignorant of or unaware of. Even the very emotions of our hearts, even the very thoughts of our minds are known to you, for you are God.

No limits to your knowledge, no limits to your understanding. Even the very secret things that we, as it were, squirrel away in our own hearts. The secret feelings and the secret fears, struggles, whatever they are.

They're all open to you. And, O Lord, we thank you for that. We're so grateful that we can't hide anything, nor do we need to hide anything from you. In one sense, nor should we.

Because, O Lord, it's only as we bring to you, not only our secret sins of our hearts, Lord, that we know forgiveness. It's only as we bring to you those secret concerns and anxieties of our lives that we know your peace, which surpasses all understanding and is of far greater worth than any human understanding or wisdom.

[10 : 03] And, O Lord, we do want to bring to you, first of all, in the quietness of our hearts, we want to bring to you our own prayers, our own needs and concerns.

We thank you, Father, that we can bring everything to you that pertains to our own lives. But we thank you, too, that you teach us and call us to pray for the needs of our friends, our families, and for strangers and for the world.

Lord, we are to be those men and women who pray and look to you for the really big things, as well as for the small things, knowing that nothing is too hard for you. We do bring to you the London Christian Answer weekend.

And pray, Lord, not only for Emily and Caleb, but for the other several dozen Christians who are there seeking to share your gospel in London, in Hyde Park, in Speaker's Corner.

We pray, Lord, that many may be stopped to listen and to hear and to think. Lord, we are so busy in life that so often we do not make any time to even think about life and the world, the universe and the future.

[11 : 21] We are so busy and wrapped up in the things of ourselves. But we pray, Lord, there many good contacts would be made. Many people would be reached to begin to think.

And that your Holy Spirit would be at work in people's hearts and minds, Lord, drawing them to yourself. Protect and watch over all involved in the team. May there be no violence in that sense or aggressive behavior.

We do want to pray again for the family, the relatives and the survivors of the Manchester bombing. And again, O Lord, you are the God who abhors evil.

You are the God who hates wickedness. You are the God who detests the sort of actions and the attitudes that drive men and women to these acts of violence.

We do pray again, please, for those who've survived, that you would give them ever grateful hearts, that they have survived, that they have been spared. We pray for those who are injured, that they may continue to receive treatment, that they may continue to improve in health, not only in their bodies but in their minds.

[12:33] And we pray for those relatives who lost loved ones. Lord, we cannot begin to fully comprehend their feelings, their struggles, their sorrows, but you can.

You know what it is to lose the most loved person to an act of great violence when your son, the Lord Jesus, was taken by wicked men and crucified.

And so, Lord, we pray that you would comfort those who mourn and that most of all you would cause them to draw near to you and see that you are the God who alone can comfort and heal the brokenhearted.

And we pray again, Lord Jesus, that you would be at work in our nation in these days where there is such a sense of sadness in many places over acts of evil or wickedness or negligence, where there's been loss.

Lord, we pray, O Lord, that you would speak words of peace. We pray for ourselves now, Lord, too, that you would help us as we come to your word, help us to understand what it is that you are saying to us.

[13:41] You are the living God who speaks into real situations and circumstances with truth. And we pray again, O Lord, that you would give us ears to hear and give us hearts to believe, minds to understand and lives to obey your word.

For, Lord, it is the word of life. And we ask these things now. In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Luke chapter 4, verses 14 to 30.

Open in a Bible before you. That will be a help. There's noise, chaos, clamor, pushing and shoving until eventually he's thrust out of the door.

Then, without hesitation, down the main street, they hurry him past the closed shops, past their own homes.

Beyond the village boundary, they keep on pushing, goading, driving towards the steep drop on the hillside on which the village is built.

[14:56] Looking around him, he sees familiar faces, neighbours, relatives, one-time friends, Hosea, the baker, Joel, the builder, the twins, Jacob and Simeon, with whom he had played as a child.

He can name them all. He's known them all of his life. But here they are intent on his death. How could it have come to this?

What had led up to this moment of madness where these people are baying for his blood? After all, it had started so well.

Everything had seemed to be so good. If you go back to the beginning of the events in verse 14, here it seems that you would never have thought that something like this could ever happen to Jesus.

He's finished that titanic battle in the wilderness where Satan, the devil, had tempted him for 40 days and 40 nights. He had done everything within his power to destroy Jesus, to divert him from his mission, to undermine him and to break him.

[16:11] And even after all that time, he could not move him one iota from the path he had chosen.

In fact, we read there that he returns from the wilderness to Galilee in the power of the Holy Spirit. He has that sense and that awareness that God, the Spirit, is with him to minister and to accomplish all that is in the plan of God's salvation.

And as he returns to Galilee, he stops along the way at the villages and he goes into the synagogues. And there he teaches. And when he teaches, everyone loves him.

Everyone praises him. Everyone says, this is incredible. We've heard nothing like this before. News had spread from the villages to his own home village of Nazareth.

The place he'd grown up. The place where he'd been a small boy, an apprentice to his own father. And now, he's back in Nazareth after this duration.

[17:19] Everyone wants him to read the passage. Everybody in the synagogue is looking to him. They want him to read and explain God's word to them.

They've heard these reports and their ears are itching. And possibly more than ever before, the synagogue is packed to the rafters. People are there who often miss out.

But no, the gossip has got around. They are squeezed into the room to hear the notorious local boy who's made good. And so he stands. The roll, the scroll of the prophet Isaiah is given to him.

And he turns and rolls it to that place. That place where the Messiah is promised. One of many places in Isaiah that the Jewish people turn to and look to as the promises of God.

For a Messiah, a savior, a redeemer, a rescuer, a king. What he would be like and what he would do. And so Jesus reads those words. Wonderful words.

[18:48] Glorious promises of God's anointed one who would bring a time of momentous blessing to the whole nation. A blessing to the people that they had never known before.

Of freedom and liberty. Of God's favor and grace. And then as the custom was in the synagogue, he handed the scroll back to the attendant and he sat down to begin to teach.

All the teaching was done from a seated position. We're not told everything that he said but we're told how he began his sermon. Today, this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.

Today, the Messiah is standing in your midst. Today, you are witnessing the promise being fulfilled. Yes, right in your synagogue in that little village in Nazareth. God's long promised Messiah and Savior is here. No wonder when he finished speaking, they were amazed at the gracious words that fell from his lips.

[19:59] They were in awe of what he had said. They had hung on his every word. You could have heard a pin drop. Astounding.

Amazing. But. Isn't this Joseph's son?

Hold on. Isn't this the carpenter's boy? The tradesman? That not so well off, working class, ordinary man?

He can't be the Messiah. Who does he think he is? Has he got ideas above his station? Is he trying to con us into thinking that somehow he can be the long-hoped-for liberator, saviour of Israel?

He's just a man. An ordinary, everyday, one of us, man. And they took offense at his orneriness.

[21:22] He's a man. He's one of us. And being one of us means he cannot possibly be anything more than one of us could be. He can't be any more special than us.

He can't be any Messiah or king. Yes, like any gifted teacher.

Like a visionary or revolutionary in this world. We can recognize he's a gifted man. We can recognize he's a clever man. We could even stretch so far as to think of Jesus as an exceptional man.

But in the end, he's still nothing more than a man. So for these Nazarenes to be expected to worship him and to believe that he is the Messiah, for any human being even today in this world to be expected to honour Jesus Christ as the Son of God, come into this world, it's just too much to ask.

It's not reasonable to think that this man is the Son of God, the Saviour, the Messiah, the hope of all the world.

[22:43] But for the Christian, the humanity of Jesus is one of those things that draws us to him and makes us love him all the more. Because he is truly human and one with us, we do love him and we do adore him and we do delight to call him our Saviour.

The humanity of Jesus is something which is to be celebrated and rejoiced in and is done so through the whole of the Scriptures. Here in the Gospels, as we shall go through them, as we read them, we find again and again Jesus experiencing things like tiredness and hunger and thirst and even a broken heartedness and a grief, weeping tears at the loss of loved ones.

They're openly on display. Nobody is pretending or hiding his humanity in the Bible. And when we turn to the rest of the New Testament, to those letters and books written to believers, we find again that there is that stressing of his humanity.

Hebrews is one of the books which is particularly written to Jewish believers, Jewish Christians. And in the opening chapters, the writer stresses Jesus' nature.

He says in chapter 2, or writes in chapter 2 and verse 14, Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shed in their humanity so that by his death he may break the power of him who holds the power of death.

[24 : 19] And in verse 17, For this reason he had to be made like them, fully human in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people, because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he's able to help those who are being tempted.

Chapter 4 and verse 15, We do not have someone who is unable to feel sympathy for our weaknesses. We have one who's been tempted in every way, just as we are yet without sin.

In chapter 5, Here is someone who truly understands me.

Here is a God, the God, who has experienced the things that I go through and I'm going through.

Here is not a monarch, a king or a queen, who's never felt the pain of an empty stomach.

Here is not a president who got to the top by standing on the people he thought beneath him. Here is not a revolutionary, whose life is riddled with contradictions.

[25 : 48] But here is God made man, the friend of sinners, a man of sorrows, one acquainted with grief. Here is one who weeps where we weep.

One who is touched with our frailties. The humanity of Jesus, dear friends, is something joyful and wonderful and marvelous for the believer.

Because he is truly human and truly God. As a human man, he endured such suffering in his death that no other human has endured.

For in his body he bore the punishment for our sins, my sins. In his flesh he felt the very anger of God.

Don't we love the man, Jesus Christ? Don't we love the man, Jesus Christ?

[27 : 21] When we're coming to him or seek his face, you are coming to someone who is high and distant. Coming to someone who is aloof and indifferent. But always, dear friends, remind ourselves that we are coming to one who feels.

One who senses. One who has experienced. One who has gone through. One who has walked the walk. That we are walking now. we have not a saviour who doesn't care but that wasn't the only thing that peeved his listeners was it it wasn't that he taught himself to be the promised messiah that really got them to the point of seeking his life there was something much more troubling that pushed them to the edge and him almost over it Jesus knew their minds and thoughts when he says in verse 23 Jesus said to them surely you will quote this proverb to me physician heal yourself you will tell me do here in your hometown what we've heard you did in Capernaum the miracles he performed the healings the deliverance of demons the things that Luke reminds us of and brings our attention to in the following passage which we'll look at God willing next week in one sense they're saying well if that's who you are then give us a sign show us a miracle give us that proof that evidence that you really are who you say you are because we just don't believe it but he wasn't going to give them a miracle he wasn't going to pander to their sinful hard hearts he wasn't going to give them what they wanted in some vain hope that this would give them the evidence and that they would immediately receive and accept him he knew that the familiarity that they had with him had bred in them a contempt which blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts this is the sad truth again of our generation a nation which has known so much of the Christian gospel a people that have known so much of the truth of the gospel have churches on every corner yet that familiarity has bred contempt when you speak to people and speak to them about Jesus they know all about Jesus they know all about God they've come to their own conclusions they are unwilling to be convinced no instead of pandering to their desire he actually says things which reveal the state of their hearts which they were unwilling to admit to those in that room he was going to speak the most horrifying words now the words that Jesus speaks which we read here in verse 24 and following don't stir up any strong emotion in his ass they're just stories which we know of from the Old Testament they don't make us angry they don't cause us necessarily great delight or grief but to those people in the room his words were like dynamite and their reaction was one of immediate anger verse 28 all the people in the synagogue were furious when they heard this doesn't just mean angry or naffed off or annoyed they were furious and their actions of course show that so what is it that Jesus says here that has such a devastating effect upon them he begins by saying to them a

proverb as it were truly I tell you he continued no prophet is accepted in his hometown that's something that's generally true great men and great women are rarely recognized as such by those who knew them before their greatness when they were ordinary people think of the incredible men of history

men like Vincent van Gogh who died at his own hand in poverty and virtually unknown having sold but one painting who now is esteemed to be probably one of the world's greatest artists it's even more of a sad fact when it comes to great men and women of God in their day they are rarely acknowledged for who they are they're more often despised rejected ridiculed and ostracized and so to give evidence to that he points the people back to two of the most well known prophets in Israel in the Old Testament two men who were admired by the people of Nazareth and were exalted as being great servants of God but in their day were treated badly and rejected by those they were sent to teach God's word to the first was Elijah who during the time of King Ahab ministered in Israel he was someone who had to flee for his life hounded out of the country for preaching God's word against the sin of the king and of the nation as well and when he fled for his life he was led to this region of Sidon outside of Israel beyond God's people into what was known as the Gentile world there amongst the Gentiles amongst the ungodly at least as the Jew would have seen them he fed a starving widow and raised her dead son to life they knew that story well they had read about it but they had failed to grasp that this was a work of God to the undeserving later on

Elisha another prophet who followed after Elijah preached God's word in the nation he was jeered at and mocked his word was rejected the nation at that time had turned away from God and was worshipping idols it was doing the most atrocious and unthinkable things in sacrificing its own children people did not seek Elijah though he was God's prophet and brought God's word they ignored him and carried on as they were it was only an army officer from Syria another Gentile country in fact a country which was often at war and an enemy of Israel who came and sought Elijah to be healed of his leprosy and was healed as he obeyed God's word what's the point of these stories why does Jesus teach them what are they saying to the people there they are speaking to them words which clearly are very powerful and effective he's saying this if you reject me

God rejects you and his word and salvation will be given to others it's the worst thing Jesus could ever have said to these men and women they were Jews they were the in their own eyes the only people deserving of God's favour and grace and goodness they were deserving of God's mercy they were deserving of God's blessing they were after all the descendants of Abraham they were the rightful inheritors of all the promises that God had made to him and to his children hadn't God said of them in Exodus 19 out of all the nations you will be my treasured possession and now this carpenter's son says God prefers those ungodly uncircumcised Gentiles to us their reactions showed the very inner workings of their hearts towards the word of God and even today it's the attitude of many to the preaching of Jesus who are you to call us sinners how dare you tell us that God is angry with our lifestyle with our thoughts with our actions and our words don't you know that we are good people at least better than most others that we could name isn't pride self righteousness self acceptance the real problem people won't say to you well if

[36 : 43] Jesus was here if he was alive and I could hear him speaking I would believe in him I would trust in him I would obey him no you wouldn't if Jesus was here our reaction to him would be exactly the same as the reaction of these people and the many others who eventually called for his death these are the people who knew Jesus best they had seen his life from infancy they had nothing that they could find fault within him he had never lied or stolen or cheated or fought he had never done any of the things that others did he was exemplary and they knew therefore that he was different and yet still they kicked him out of their lives and called for his death and so it is with perhaps even some of us certainly with many others as well as soon as Jesus would speak to us his word then we would immediately put our fingers in our ears and we would shout shut up

I don't want to hear about my sin about judgment about hell about holiness these verses in verse 18 that Jesus spoke and said about they don't refer to us we're not to be pitied as those who are poor miserable sinners to whom he's brought good news we don't need the good news our good news is that our shares are up our good news is that we are due a rise our good news is that we are healthy and well our good news does not affect us in that way we aren't prisoners to our own lusts and our own evil desires we're free to express ourselves in whatever way we like and we certainly aren't blind we're the most enlightened generation that has ever lived on the earth we aren't ignorant

about anything how can you call us blind when we understand how the world was made and where we come from and who we are and yet we can't find peace oppressed yes we have a few worries and a few concerns but we are at liberty we are libertines this is the time of liberation when men can be women and women can be men and you can be anything in between we are free to live as we please and be whoever we want to be but still we are anxious still we are oppressed with fear still we are unhappy and so the world wants to shut up

Jesus and so these people wanted him permanently quiet so that's why they drove him through the streets that's why they pushed and jostled him to the edge of the town and out and to the cliff top that's why they were determined that he could not live but he must die and then he gave them the sign then he gave them the proof then he showed them that he is God he just walked right through them can you imagine that a great crowd of dozens maybe possibly a hundred people all furious and taking hold of one single man that he somehow can overpower them and prevent them from doing what is in their will when it comes to harming him doesn't this say to us just these simple words in verse 30 that he is

God and he will do whatever is in his mind to do and no man or woman no human being is comparable to him he walks right through the crowd and went on his way it's not his time to die yes he's going to die but he's going to die on his terms in his way for the purpose for which he came nothing can prevent Jesus from accomplishing his will nothing can stop him from bringing you and I to that place of judgment on that day of judgment nothing that we do or say can make us have peace with God nothing that we can do whether we plug our ears or whether we convince ourselves that we're good enough or whether we seek here or there or anywhere nothing that we do can bring about in our lives that which

Christ plans and purposes and lived and died and rose again to do and therefore let me urge you dear friends let me urge you take those words of Jesus in verses 18 and 19 recognize that they are his words about himself for you he wants to proclaim to you good news in a world of bad news a word that enriches the soul and enriches the life beyond measure he wants you to know true freedom freedom from following the crowd and going along with the peer pressure of the day he wants you to be free to walk and enjoy fellowship with God he wants you to see just how much you are loved of God to see yes your sin to see yes that your powerlessness to see yes that you are lost but to see that he is the one who breaks the chains he is the one who leads to freedom he is the one who brings

[43 : 11] God's favour into your life what will you do with this Jesus whose words are amazing and wonderful and unlike any other what will you do with this man who truly must be God let me urge you not to thrust him out but to invite him in because only then will you really know who he is only then will you really know what he's done for you only then will you really know life let's pray together there's so much we don't know Lord there's so much that we don't understand but there are things oh Lord that you have said to us which are clear as day that only if we blind our own eyes only if we stop our own ears can we miss out on the reality of the love of God to us in Jesus oh Lord thank you thank you that you came as an ordinary man thank you they didn't come with great pomp and sway you didn't come with great glitter and glitz you didn't come oh Lord with bling you came oh Lord as one of us you came as an ordinary man we thank you that you came in that reason that through your ordinariness we may see that we have a God who understands a God who knows us a God who cares for us a God who is willing to roll up his sleeves and get dirty in our dirty world we thank you so much that Lord

Jesus though you are God you humbled yourself you brought yourself low down to our level not merely to empathise or sympathise with us but to lift us to lift us out of the mud and the mire to lift us out of death to lift us out of the darkness to lift us into life into light into peace into the presence of the living God we're so grateful that we have one in heaven now who understands who feels and who is able to save completely all who come to God through him oh Lord help us not to treat you or your word with rejection or with anger with fury in spite of the fact that it touches the sore point of our pride need but oh Lord we pray that we might gladly daily welcome you in to our lives and if we've never done that oh

Lord grant us that faith to do that grant us to see grant us oh Lord to receive all the goodness and the gifts of your favour we ask these things too Lord that you would help us as we go to a broken and lost world as we meet with men and women today Lord wherever we go who will know nothing of this or think that they know all about it but be blinded still and in chains still help us Lord by our

lives not by the force of our arguments but by the love of our lives help them oh Lord help us oh Lord to tell them and point them to Jesus we ask these things as we commit to you our lives are fresh and ask oh Lord walk with us in the day to day Amen