

Luke Chapter 4 v 31 - 44

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[0 : 0 0] Good morning. Welcome. Particularly good to welcome friends from Beverly and others who are visiting us. We trust that together. In God's presence we might know his help and encouragement and his blessing too. The Apostle Paul opens his letter to the Christians at Ephesus with this wonderful truth, this wonderful call to praise. Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. Every spiritual blessing. When we come into relationship with the living God, we come to faith in the Lord Jesus. We are given and lavishly given every spiritual blessing in Christ. There's nothing that we lack, nothing that our Lord God does not provide and help us with and give to us in Christ. He holds nothing back. He is a generous and faithful God and therefore he is deserving of our praise and deserving of our worship. Our first hymn is a wonderful hymn, 704, come thou fount of every blessing. In other words, the source of every blessing. Tune my heart to sing your praise. With the Lord's help we come to praise him and worship him. Let's stand and sing 704 together.

Let's continue in our praise and our thanksgiving as we pray together. Let us all pray. O Lord our God, there is so much that we have to praise you and thank you for. So much that we have to bless your name for. We are people who are richly blessed. A people who have received from your loving and tender hand gifts of blessing and mercy and grace and goodness and faithfulness over and over and over again. Even those of us here perhaps who do not know you as our saviour and our king. Lord we've received of your blessing unknowingly. We've got health and strength to be here. We've had homes and food and beds to sleep in. We've got family and friends and loved ones. Lord we've got so many blessings and how often we take them so for granted. But for those of us who know you as our heavenly father. For those of you who've come into the wonderful reconciliation. The restoration of that right relationship with you our creator and maker. Oh Lord we have as we've read at the very beginning spiritual blessings without number. Every spiritual blessing. There's nothing that we lack. You've given us Lord life when we were dead. You've given us sight when we were blind. You've given us ears to hear your voice when we were deaf. You've given us forgiveness for all our many sins. Every one of them taken and dealt with at the cross. You've given us eternal life so that we need not fear death.

You've given us your gracious and lovely Holy Spirit who's made us and made and become the channel of all these blessings in our lives. And yet Lord we confess even at the start of our service Lord.

Our hearts have been cold this week. Lord in this week we've sinned. In this week Lord we've been thoughtless and careless. We've been unloving. Lord in so many ways we have been forgetful of you.

And Lord we want to ask your forgiveness. Thank you that we know you do forgive all who turn to you in repentance and faith. You forgive us oh Lord. Not because we deserve it. Not because we're worthy of it.

[3 : 53] Not because we've earned it. But because Jesus your son has paid the price and purchased full forgiveness for all our sins by dying in our place upon the cross. Suffering for us. Suffering the anger, the wrath, the hell that we deserve in our place. What love. What amazing love. How can we doubt this morning that we are loved when we think only for a moment of the cross. When we think of Jesus and all that he has done for us and all that he still does for us. Thank you that the cross was not the end.

It was that triumph, that victory over sin and death and hell. But we thank you that you rose again. You're alive. Ever living to make intercession for us. Ever living to bless, to sustain, to keep, to strengthen. Thank you that you're the friend who sticks closer than a brother. Thank you that you are my Jesus, my Savior. And Lord we do pray again this morning as we come to praise you that indeed our hearts may be filled with thankfulness and praise. We ask oh Lord as we come to hear your word that you would give us understanding. Help us to see something more of the wonder, the loveliness, the greatness of our Jesus. And equip us and strengthen us to live for you in the week ahead.

Lord we thank you that it's not just Sundays that we meet with you. We meet with you day by day. We know your grace day by day. But we thank you especially for the gathering together of your people. What an oasis it is, oasis it is for us in the wilderness of this world. Draw near then we pray. Minister we ask.

Bless we pray in Jesus name. Amen. Amen. Let's turn together in our Bibles to Luke and chapter 4. And we're journeying through the gospel of Luke, Luke's record of the life, ministry of our Lord Jesus. And we're in chapter 4 and we're going to read from verse 31. So Luke chapter 4 verse 31 reading through to the end of the chapter. And if you got one of the church Bibles that should be page 1031. Page 1031. So Luke chapter 4 beginning at verse 31. Jesus has just left Nazareth, his hometown, where he has received a very, very unpleasant welcome, driven out really from the town. So what happens next? Verse 31.

Then he, that's Jesus, went down to Capernaum, a town in Galilee. And on the Sabbath he taught the people. They were amazed at his teaching because his words had authority. In the synagogue there was a man possessed by a demon, an impure spirit. He cried out at the top of his voice, go away. What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God.

[7 : 11] Be quiet, Jesus said sternly. Come out of him. Then the demon threw the man down before them all and came out without injuring him. All the people were amazed and said to each other, what words are these?

With authority and power he gives orders to impure spirits and they come out? News about him spread throughout the surrounding area. Jesus left the synagogue and went to the home of Simon. Now Simon's mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever and they asked Jesus to help her. So he bent over her and rebuked the fever and it left her. She got up at once and began to wait on them. At sunset the people brought to Jesus all who had various kinds of illness. Laying his hands on each one he healed them.

Moreover, demons came out of many people shouting, you are the Son of God. But he rebuked them and would not allow them to speak because they knew he was the Messiah. 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 the other towns also.

Because that is why I was sent to keep on preaching in the synagogues of Judea. If the children, the young people would like to go out to Sunday school or to creche, please would they do so now?

Turn back, if you would, to Luke in chapter 4. It would be very helpful for you to have a Bible before you open as we look together at these events in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[9 : 08] Now I'm sure all of you from time to time have had to pay a visit to the hospital, whether it's with your own children or whether it's for yourself, whether it's with your parents, whether it's visiting a friend or whatever. But when you go to hospital, if you visit a hospital, it's almost certainly, if you live in Whitby anyway, that you will go to either the hospital in Scarborough or York or in Middlesbrough, James Cook. Why do we need to go there? Well, that's another question perhaps as well politically. But it's because in those larger hospitals, particularly York and Middlesbrough, you have doctors, consultants, specialists in just about every branch of medicine, those who are able to deal with the whole person. And as you've walked down the corridor or into a department, you've noticed that there's a hospital wing or a ward to deal with every aspect of human health. So you've got ear, nose and throat, but then you've got renal and cardiac and hematology and surgery and gynecology and all these other words, big names, but they all are specifically targeting the needs of people. Why do we need so many different areas?

Why do we need so many different doctors, specialists, consultants and so on? Well, because no individual doctor, consultant or specialist is capable of caring or healing the whole range and variety of complex needs that people have. But when we come to the Lord Jesus Christ, we find one who is holistic in his ministry. In other words, here in Jesus, we find someone who ministers to the whole person, to every part, every area, every need, every aspect of human trouble.

And we have in the Gospel of Luke, as we know, a very full record of the life of Jesus, a very careful record of Jesus' life, a very accurate record. If you remember at the very start of Luke chapter 1, Luke writes his record of the life of Jesus to a man he calls Theophilus. He tells us about eyewitnesses and servants of the word. He tells us of his careful investigation of everything from the beginning and his orderly account. So he has very carefully laid out for us in the life of Jesus in a particular way. He's arranged the events of Jesus in blocks of teaching, blocks of events. So not everything happens, as we might say, chronologically, immediately one after another. But Luke has done it to get across to us very clearly how Jesus ministers to the whole person and teaches us that Jesus is the Savior of the world. And in this block that we're going to look at today, verses 31, it goes actually all the way through into chapter 5 as well, but we're just going to look at the second half of chapter 4. We find Jesus, or Luke, giving us teaching about how Jesus ministers to the needs of humanity, how Jesus ministers to the particular needs of the people that he was dealing with there, but also with us as well, the people of this world. So first of all, we see particularly in verse 31 and 2, Jesus ministering to the needs of the human mind. The human mind. We are people who have minds. Whether we choose to use them or not is another matter, but we all have them, and we're all born with them.

And Jesus, it deals with the mind. There we see in verses 31 and 2, particularly verse 32, they were amazed at his teaching because his words had authority. Now, Jesus was teaching in a way which was radically different to the rabbis, the teachers, the scribes that were teaching normally. Most of them, if not all of them, taught by referring back to a previous or earlier rabbi or teacher. So they'd open the Bible and they'd read it, and then they'd say, well, rabbi so-and-so says this about this, and rabbi so-and-so says that about this, and it was really just a sort of a history tour, an explanation. They had nothing new to bring, as it were, nothing fresh to bring from God's Word, nothing original, we might say.

They simply used the interpretations of past teachers who were considered to be authoritative. But notice that Jesus' teaching here, we're told, was with authority. They were amazed. Their minds were captivated, we might say. Their minds were stimulated. Their thinking and their thoughts were taken hold of. Here was somebody opening up God's Word in a revolutionary and authoritative way.

[14 : 34] That is to say that Jesus' words had the very sound of someone who knew what they were talking about. They had the sound of someone who had first experience of God and the works of God.

It wasn't simply that Jesus was a great charismatic orator, that he was somebody who was able to grip your attention. We've had people like that in the past, politicians and world leaders who've been able to speak in an amazing way, and their words have captivated. They had that gift, we might say.

This isn't the case. Jesus certainly had the gift of the gab, but it was more than that. His words were satisfying the cravings of the human mind. See, as human beings, we have this unique hunger. A hunger for knowledge. A hunger to find things out, to discover, to understand, to grasp.

We have a hunger for truth. That's why even in our own day, we see the amount of money that is spent on researching, finding out the origins of the universe, sending satellites millions, if not billions of miles into space to the edges of the universe to discover, to find out.

We find that we're digging under the earth, archaeology. What came before us? What is our history? Who were the people that formed and fashioned us? We're plunging the very depths of the ocean. It seems wherever humanity is gone, wherever people are, they are seeking out answers. They are looking for truth. They are looking for understanding. And the words of Jesus are the words which alone bring understanding about who we are, where we've come from, what we are about. Because that's the real question, isn't it? That's the real searching and seeking in the mind. Who am I? I want meaning in my life. I want to understand why I'm here. Why was I created? These are the things that the words of Jesus alone answer. He ministers to the mind. Now we know that our minds are complex things. They have all sorts of problems and difficulties, all sorts of incredible capacities. The human mind is indeed a marvelous thing. But the words of Jesus ministered to the mind. They were amazed. Their minds were moved and stimulated. And that's important, again, for us to remember. We live in a world where men and women are seeking after knowledge and truth. But they're looking in all the wrong places, aren't they?

[17:32] By looking to the edges of the universe to find out how this world was created is looking in the wrong place. In searching in the past and digging up archaeology, exciting and interesting as it is, to find out what formed and fashioned us is, again, looking in the wrong place. But we know it goes beyond that as well, don't we? We know it goes beyond that into pleasure, into hobbies, into relationships, into all sorts of aspects where we engage our minds. We're looking for that something that will bring our minds peace. And it's only found in the words of Jesus, in the person of Jesus, in the ministry of Jesus.

Jesus ministers to the mind. It's not only our mental needs that Jesus ministers to. It's not just his words that deal with the mind. We find here, don't we, moving on into verse 33 and following, that Jesus ministers to the human spirit. The human spirit. Now we're told there in verse 33 that there was in the synagogue, gathered with all the people as Jesus was teaching. There was a man there who leaps up, it seems, after Jesus had finished teaching and shouts out, go away to Jesus. That wasn't the first time that Jesus' teaching or the last time that Jesus' teaching had created such a negative response.

Just last week, we looked at how the people of Nazareth reacted to him when they drove him to the edge of the cliff to kill him. And he walked right through them.

But this reaction of this man to Jesus wasn't born out from prejudice or pride like the Nazarenes, which we looked at. Their attitude was, well, this Jesus is just an ordinary bloke who grew up in the village. How dare he say he's the Messiah? How dare he declare that unless we believe and trust in him, that God will pass us over? No, this man who shouts out clearly is someone who is what we might call a spiritual prisoner. We're told that he was possessed by a demon, an impure spirit.

Jesus meets other people like that later. If you look down at verse 41, the same chapter, moreover, demons came out of many people shouting, you're the Son of God. He rebuked them, not allow them to speak. Both this individual and these others recognize who Jesus truly is. They recognize he's the Son of God. They have a spiritual insight beyond that of the rest of the people because they have this spiritual, this demonic spiritual experience.

[20 : 30] We find that's the case throughout the New Testament as well. Other people who have spirits all recognize Jesus. They all recognize him as the Son of God, recognize the truth.

Later on in Acts in chapter 16, the Apostle Paul meets a young slave girl who, we're told, has a spirit by which he can discern the future. And she follows Paul about and she says, these men are servants of the Most High God who are telling you the way to be saved.

Paul later delivers her of that spirit. In Acts chapter 19, a group of Jewish men attempt to perform an exorcism on a man who they know has a spirit. And this spirit says, Jesus I know, before he chases them away and attacks them.

This man is spiritually bound. He is a prisoner. He is a captive of this evil spirit. And Jesus sets him free. Be quiet, Jesus says, verse 35. Come out of him. And this man is, we might call, delivered.

He's liberated. He's set free from that spiritual captivity. And even though the spirit throws him to the ground, he's not harmed, he's not harmed. Again, showing the power of Jesus over this spirit.

[21 : 59] And again, these others later on in verse 41, no doubt, Jesus with a word delivers and sets them free. What are you to make of all this in the 21st century? What are you to make of these demons and spirits and exorcisms? Certainly they're very disturbing. I'm sure they must have been very disturbing for those who witnessed them. Perhaps even they're quite frightening for us. We live in a day and age where the supernatural is a popular fascination in horror literature and film and all sorts of very, very unpleasant things are enacted and written. But why does Luke include this event, these events? And there will be others a bit later on as well in chapters 8 and 9.

Well, he includes them because, of course, they really happened. These aren't fairy stories. These aren't horror stories. These aren't myths. This really happened. Jesus did meet with this man, with a demon. He did deliver him and others like him. It's part of the ministry of Jesus.

Jesus. But Luke includes these because we live in a world which is both material and spiritual.

We ourselves are physical and spiritual beings. You and I have a soul, a spirit, just as certainly as we have a body. Therefore, we are affected by spiritual forces, as well as material forces, unseen things. We know about gravity. It affects us physically, though we do not see it. It's real.

And so there are spiritual forces that we do not physically see, but are real. Ephesians 6, as Paul writes to the Christians, he warns them and he speaks to them about the struggle that they have with the powers in this dark world, the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

[24 : 07] Just earlier on in chapter 4, Jesus himself had that battle with Satan in the wilderness for 40 days and 40 nights so that we can recognize that the devil is real, that he's not just a myth or a story or a bumper sticker or a cuddly toy as he's become now, but he is involved in an ongoing conflict with Christ.

And we are in the midst of that. We are living in a spiritual battle. We are part of spiritual world. And the very reason that Jesus came, or at least one of the reasons Jesus came into the world, we're told, was to destroy and to defeat the devil and his work. 1 John in chapter 3, verse 8, the reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work.

Now when Jesus came into the world and walked amongst the people of this world, in one sense his very presence agitated the devil and his forces, so that wherever Jesus went, he met people in the grip of these evil spirits that manifested themselves in this way.

Yet Jesus had the power to deliver. He had the power to completely crush his spiritual enemies. And if we are a Christian, dear friends, if we know Christ, we have no need to fear the devil.

He is real. He is active. He is opposed to us. But he cannot do anything to the believer because, as John tells us in his first letter, chapter 4, the one who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.

[25 : 57] Christian has the Holy Spirit. There is evil in our world, as there was then. We see that even just as we prayed for a few moments ago about the evil of terrorism and the taking of life.

There is evil. How do we account for that evil? We account for it as the Bible accounts for it, that there is a devil and there is spiritual wickedness and evil in the world.

And there are times when men and women are instruments of that evil. Yet it is Jesus who ministers to them.

Dear friends, we are spiritual people. We have a soul. And that soul needs Jesus. That spirit within us has been created for a unique relationship with God.

We have a soul which is going to outlive this physical body and outlast our mental capabilities. A soul which has been created for intimate relationship with God.

[27 : 07] Jesus ministers to the spirit as he does to the mind. And then we see here as well, thirdly, that Jesus also is the one who ministers to the human body.

verses 38 and following. First of all, Jesus heals the mother-in-law of Simon. That's Simon who later we know as Peter, who becomes one of the apostles of Jesus.

Hopefully we'll see him and meet him properly next week. Luke, who we know was a doctor, because we learn that later on, uses his medical knowledge to diagnose her illness when he says a high fever.

It's a unique word. None of the other gospel writers use that. A high fever. Such is the fever that she is completely washed out, we might say. She is completely, she's lying down because Jesus bends over.

She's in a complete state, we might say. Really, really poorly, really ill. And what does Jesus do with a few words?

[28 : 11] He rebukes the fever. In other words, he heals her. And we're told at once she begins to wait on them. Now, any of you who've had the flu or some sort of a fever or been very unwell, you know, it takes a long time to get over that washed out feeling.

It takes a while to regain your strength. But here she is, such is the healing power of Jesus. She's up at once and she's about her business. She's about caring for the family and providing food and doing the things that she loves to do by way of hospitality.

And so news begins to spread fast. Have you heard about Simon's mother-in-law? She had a fever and she's been made well by this teacher, this incredible teacher, Jesus. And so what happens at sunset?

All the people gather to Jesus. They bring all their family, their friends, anyone who's unwell or ill, they bring to Jesus. And what do we find? He heals them.

Even those who are imprisoned by evil spirits, He liberates them with a word. Their bodies, their spirit, their mind, all receive the healing touch of Jesus.

[29 : 24] All receive the wholeness that Jesus alone can bring. So what is it that Luke wants us to recognize? What is it that we're to see about the Lord Jesus here?

Simply this, whoever we are, wherever we are, whatever our trouble, Jesus is the one who can transform us. Jesus is the one who can meet our very deepest need, mentally, spiritually, yes, and physically.

How is he able to do this? How is it that simply with words, he can create such a transformation? Well, because these are the words of the Son of God.

Here's the evidence we're looking for afresh to see that this Jesus is not merely a great teacher, but he is God amongst us, ministering, working, healing, transforming.

See, even those evil spirits couldn't deny who Jesus was. Even though they hated him and were in fear of him, they could not help but shout out, you are the Son of God.

[30 : 33] This isn't his, as some people say, his brainwashed disciples were saying, you're the Son of God. He are the evil spirits. He are those who were against him. He were those who had everything to lose from declaring him to be the Son of God.

Do you have mental need, physical need, spiritual need? It is Jesus who makes us whole.

It doesn't mean, and please don't think I'm saying that every single physical ailment or mental ailment that we go through or struggle means that Jesus is going to take them all away.

He has a purpose in them often. He is with us in them always. Being a Christian does not mean that life is easy and all our problems are solved, but it does mean that we find only in Jesus the answer that we're searching for.

But look how the people of Capernaum react to Jesus. Compare them to the people of Nazareth. The people of Capernaum, we're told, at daybreak when Jesus goes to get some peace and quiet, some time with his father in prayer, the people come and look for him.

[31 : 48] Verse 42, they try to keep him from leaving. Compare that to the people of Nazareth. What do we find about them? They drove him out of the town and tried to kill him. These people are saying, please, Jesus, stay with us.

Please continue to teach us. Please continue to minister to us. Please be with us. We need you. We want you. Jesus has to say to them, I understand that, but there are so many more towns and cities that need to hear the good news of the kingdom of God.

His words are the good news of the kingdom of God. He cannot be stopped in his ministry. He has other people to heal, other people to reach, other people to rescue and to deliver and to save.

But my question to you, dear friends, is this. Are you with the people of Capernaum or with the people of Nazareth? Are you the sort of person who says to Jesus, yeah, I can see that you are somebody special and great and significant and so on, but I don't want you in my life.

I don't want you to change things. I don't want to acknowledge you as the Son of God over my life. I'd rather continue in my own muddling along of life rather than have you be king of my life.

[33 : 11] Or are you the person who's like those in Capernaum and saying, Lord Jesus, I see that you are the one who can make me whole. I see that my spiritual need for forgiveness and peace with God and guilt only you can deal with.

Lord, I see that the searching and the questioning and the things that I'm longing for in my mind that make me uneasy and keep me looking this way and that way. I know that you alone have the answers.

And I know that this body, which is aging and decaying and growing old, you alone are the one who has promised eternal life and a resurrection body.

Lord Jesus, please stay with me. Please, please, don't leave me. Please come and be my Savior.

I must proclaim the good news, says Jesus.

[34 : 14] And he's given me that privilege of sharing that with you. And he's given you that privilege of sharing it with others.

Don't you know, dear friends, that we are living in a broken world with broken people. We see them all around us all the time, people broken mentally, spiritually, physically.

We see people who have no hope in this world. We see people who are scarred and damaged. We see people around about us that are lost and searching.

And the good news of the kingdom of God has been given to us. We can't heal them. We can't save them. We can't transform them. But we know a man who can.

The Son of God. It's to us that we can say to them, Jesus makes you whole. Jesus makes life complete.

[35 : 11] Jesus is the answer. Not all the other things. The empty things. The pointless things.

Let's pray together. We thank you, Lord Jesus, that you came into this world because of your love for humanity, because you are the only one who can save, heal, restore, and deliver.

And we come to you ourselves even this morning, and each of us, oh Lord, has needs.

Some of us, we have mental needs. Mental health needs, too. Our minds are troubled and struggling. Lord, with all sorts of questions, all sorts of difficulties, Lord, we thank you that you are the one who is able to bring peace even to the most empty mind, searching mind.

We pray, Lord, that you would help us. Lord, do you know that there are many of us here who have spiritual needs. We feel ourselves very much in the battle, spiritual battle, with evil.

[36 : 41] We feel ourselves very much under assault where the devil, we know, though he cannot remove our salvation, he cannot prevent us from getting to heaven or take away forgiveness.

He can't do any of those things, but he can make things difficult for us, and he does. And we're struggling with temptation, and we're struggling with living for Christ, and we feel the pull and the temptations that he has, and, oh Lord, we pray that you would strengthen us in the battle, that you would help us.

Others, Lord, we have that spiritual need where we are still dead in sin and lost and helpless. Again, we pray, oh Lord, please set us free from that bondage.

The devil, we know, has dominion over men and women, keeps them from seeing and knowing the truth. Oh Lord, set people free spiritually.

And there are nearly all of us here who have physical struggles and difficulties and pains and aches. And Lord, we find them very tiring and trying at times.

[37 : 52] And Lord, we thank you that you are the God who has given us doctors and specialists and consultants. We thank you for the amazing measure of health that we enjoy and the age to which we're able to live.

Yet we know, Lord, that these bodies are frail, and we ask that you sustain us in them, in the midst of them. But Lord, especially, cause our eyes to be lifted up to that wonderful promise of a new body, a resurrection body, of eternal life, that this body, when it is done its work, may rest until that resurrection day.

And so, Lord, we thank you that you are the whole Savior, the Savior of this world. Help us, we pray, to make your greatness known and to point men and women, whatever their needs, to Jesus.

In the coming days, we ask. Amen. Amen. May God himself, the God of peace, make you thoroughly whole.

May your whole spirit, soul, and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it.

[39 : 15] The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you now and always. Amen.