

Sermon: Jesus' Ministry Defined

Text: Luke 4:38-44

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Introduction: Last week you looked at the “Authority of Jesus” with Don Cochran. This week we want to continue that idea and expand it. Jesus not only taught and spoke with authority, His words had created everything from nothing in the beginning. Now, His words create new life and hope for those who are sick and dying. Jesus’ ministry was one of compassion. Jesus demonstrates power and authority over sickness and demonic oppression. Jesus was able to perform miracles, and exorcise demons, but what would be his main mission? Last week Jesus was found confronting demons. He is repeating that kind of activity in today’s lesson.

It had been a full day already, and it was time to go home after services. This day the people who had come to worship did not try and kill the Messiah. Capernaum was on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee, an important area for fishing and agriculture. It would be a frequent base of operations for Jesus’ ministry. Capernaum was much more appreciative of Jesus’ presence with them. Yet there remained the temptation to accommodate the crowd’s understanding of what the Messiah would be like. There were at least three watchers of these events. Certainly God was there. The crowds had their own expectations, and even the Devil and his demons had more than a passing interest. They had already lost a couple of early rounds in this championship title fight.

Luke 4:38-44 (NIV) ³⁸Jesus 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. ³⁹So he bent over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her. She got up at once and began to wait on them. ⁴⁰When the sun was setting, the people brought to Jesus all who had various kinds of sickness, and laying his hands on each one, he healed them. ⁴¹Moreover, 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 Christ. ⁴²At 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. ⁴³But he said, “I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent.” ⁴⁴And he kept on preaching in the synagogues of Judea.

In the KJV it reads “Galilee, where in the NIV it says “Judea.” This is not a mistake because the term “Judea” sometimes is used to indicate a broader region that also would include Galilee.

After having read the Lucan text you must realize:

I. Jesus Performed Miracles (vv.38-40).

Here Jesus had been invited to the home of Simon. Simon is called by various names: Simeon, Cephas, and Peter. This is the man who would become an inner-circle disciple. You might remember Jesus' words:

Matthew 16:18 (NIV) ¹⁸And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.

From Scripture we know that Peter was married (**I Cor. 9:5**), hence the dreaded mother-in-law. In those days extended family and multiple generations lived together. Here, Peter's mother-in-law was sick and suffering from a high fever. In this case, and many others, Jesus performed miracles:

A. That were instantaneous

In almost every case of healing recorded in the New Testament Jesus heals people instantly. Here the fever leaves immediately and Peter's mother-in-law gets up "at once" and actually begins waiting on the people in the house.

It seems to me that this is a good paradigm of how we ought to react to God's grace in our lives. When we have been healed, we should get up and serve as well.

Other examples from the next chapter:

Luke 5:13 (NIV) ¹³Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" And immediately the leprosy left him.

Luke 5:24-25 (NIV) ²⁴But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins...." He said to the paralyzed man, "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home." ²⁵Immediately he stood up in front of them, took what he had been lying on and went home praising God.

I could certainly add many more examples.

Jesus did not always use the same approach to healing. It depended on the situation of the individual and also what Jesus wanted to demonstrate about Who he was. Jesus performed miracles of healing:

B. By various methods

Luke says that Jesus spoke a word of rebuke and the fever left Peter's mother-in-law. This is the same word of rebuke that is used to remove the demon in **verse 35**.

Mark (1:31), in his gospel adds: Jesus took Peter's mother-in-law's hand and helped her up. Matthew says Jesus touched her hand and the fever left (8:14). For Jesus words and deeds are always matched.

I believe most of us recognize the importance and even therapeutic value of proper touching coupled with words. A mother or father can soothe the pain of their child by words and touch. As helpful as that is, though, when Jesus acted in this way people's lives were changed both physically and spiritually.

Sometimes Jesus could just say a word of assurance of healing and it would be accomplished even though the sick person was not present like in the story of the centurion in [Luke 7:1-10](#) who had sent elders to see Jesus. What great faith!

Later in the same chapter Jesus touches a coffin ([Luke 7:14](#)) and a widow's son is brought back from the dead.

And even faith is not required for healing ([John 5:1-15](#)) as is clearly shown by the invalid at the pool who is healed after 38 years of suffering and did not even know who Jesus was.

Jesus is not restricted in any way because he can bring wholeness/wellness to any person and to any situation.

C. How about today?

Be very careful when you hear someone has the power to heal miraculously. Your odds of being "healed" at a so-called "healing service" is about two percent (Bock, [Luke](#), p. 150). Jesus' rate of success was much different. And even then Jesus did not attempt to physically heal everyone because that was not his main purpose in ministry. There are worse things than being physically sick. [See World Magazine article regarding Todd Bentley.](#)

II. Demons Are Everywhere ([vv.33, 41](#))

Even today, our culture is obsessed with angels and demons. There is even a movie just out by the same name. "The movie transpires after the events of the earlier movie *The Da Vinci Code*. Hanks stars as professor Robert Langdon, the most respected symbologist in the United States, who uses his knowledge in order to decode a symbol on the skin of a murder victim. The clues put him on the trail of an international conspiracy involving the Catholic Church..." - Perry Seibert, *All Movie Guide*

Of course, for Ron Howard who sees the Church as one of the demons, it is difficult to get an objective and even truthful presentation.

“Demons are noted twenty-three times in this Gospel (Luke’s), with fourteen of those references occurring between here and 9:50 in the Galilean ministry section.”

- Bock, *Luke*, p. 147

In our historical account of the life of Jesus we are also shocked to notice:

A. Demons are in the synagogue.

Not only are demons *in* the synagogue, they are being vocal and disruptive. Jesus does not appreciate their confession of his messiahship. While the Devil and demons recognize who Jesus is they choose not to obey him, put their faith in him, or worship him. They certainly are not the kind of character references one would want for God’s messiah. It would be on the order of Larry King or Elizabeth Taylor providing testimonies for someone telling of the value and importance of marriage.

Jesus is so put off by the behavior of the demons that he takes this opportunity to perform his first miracle that is recorded by Luke, an exorcism. This silences the disingenuous confession.

B. Demons are outside.

A belief in demons is not unique to Judaism or Christianity. “Demons were said to inhabit deserts, large bodies of water, the air, and the subterranean regions.” in other words, they were everywhere. - Craddock, *Luke*, p. 65.

Jesus believed in demons, and so should we. They need to be taken seriously. We need to be aware of the cosmic spiritual battle that surrounds us. The Apostle Paul, who suffered from “a messenger of Satan” also understood what was in play. [Ephesians 6:10-12 \(NIV\)](#) ¹⁰Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. ¹¹Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. ¹²For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

We will soon meet Mary Magdalene in [8:2](#). Jesus exorcised seven demons from her, and she went on to serve Jesus and his ministry. She was not an immoral woman as she is sometimes wrongly portrayed - just someone who had come under Satan’s power before Jesus healed her.

Luke wants us to know that God's word has great power and can defeat anything the Devil may attempt against the Messiah or any of his followers.

C. How about today?

Illus. Russell Bone, chaplain for El Paso jails (demon possession, witchcraft, etc.)

Demons are still found everywhere. Sadly they are still in the synagogue and now the Church. There are those speaking about knowing Jesus who misrepresent who He is and what his ministry is about. They mention Jesus' name while pushing their agenda of immorality and disobedience, preaching a false gospel.

Part of the reason for our study of the gospel of Luke is to get a clear picture of Jesus' teaching and his expectations for the church that began *this day* nearly 2000 years ago. The church should be a place today where demons are confronted and lies uncovered and where Jesus is known for who he really is. Church should be where people receive deliverance and healing from the power of Satan by the overwhelming and undefeatable power of God.

III. Jesus' Ministry (Mission) Was Clear (vv. 42-44)

A. To stay close with the Father.

The text says:

Luke 4:42a (NIV) ⁴²At daybreak Jesus went out to a solitary place.

The word that describes where Jesus went is the same as where he went for the temptation experience earlier in [chapter 4](#). It is Mark (1:35) who adds the detail that Jesus was praying.

To stay in the Father's will, it is important to have a time of prayer to not so much talk, but listen to God's instructions. We can do that through Bible study and also through being sensitive to what the Holy Spirit is saying. And a test of the validity of the voice we are listening to - is to compare it with Scripture.

Stay close to God's word and his people - and His Spirit will provide discernment and guidance for maintaining a close and developing relationship with God.

"Just a Closer Walk with Thee" - That should be our prayer, too.

I personally believe that like so many of the commentaries might say that Jesus was getting away to gain strength for his next round of service/ministry. But I also believe Jesus would go to hear God give him the next day's agenda and reassure Jesus that the gospel was man's only hope.

What are some of the distractions that take you away from your life's purpose? There are so many wonderful activities, but not everything we do is the best use of our time, talent, and treasure for the Kingdom.

Jesus' Ministry (Mission) Was Clear

B. To preach the Gospel to others.

Jesus' ministry was primarily one of the Word. It was Jesus' mission to tell others of God's love for them. He demonstrated the truth of his words on the cross when he died for our sins.

The people around Capernaum wanted Jesus to stay so he could spend long days healing all their sick and infirmed. This was a wonderful thing Jesus was doing, but it was keeping him from the main agenda. Some see Jesus as a meal ticket and Christians as easy marks. People will always guilt-trip and manipulate others. And we do need to help people with *every* aspect of their lives as God directs us, but we dare not be moved away from our primary task: to share the Gospel with others.

The early apostles recognized that they were also limited in effectiveness by wonderful ministry people wanted them to do.

Acts 6:1-7 (NIV) ¹In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Grecian Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. ²So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, "It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. ³Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them ⁴and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word." ⁵This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism. ⁶They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them. ⁷So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith.

This worked because this was Jesus' way of doing ministry. In [verses 43-44](#) of our text, three words are used to describe Jesus' ministry: preach, proclaim, and being sent (like an apostle). All this is gathered under the word "duty" (*must*, NIV).

C. How about today?

Every Christian here today has been gifted by the Holy Spirit to do various ministries. Every Christian here today has been given the responsibility of preaching/teaching/sharing the Word of God with everyone we can.

Our primary mission was given to Jesus' disciples and now us in the closing verses of Matthew's gospel.

Matthew 28:18-20 (NIV) ¹⁸Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Therefore go 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 I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Luke would later record for us:

Acts 1:6-8 (NIV) ⁶So when they met together, they asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" ⁷He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. ⁸But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Conclusion: What is your ministry? How would you define your life's work for God? Whatever you and God decide, I am sure it will be filled with compassion. As followers of Jesus we must care and love like He did. We need to be Jesus' hands and feet sharing his heart and message for the world.

Prayer and ministry go together. Neither is effective without the other. I encourage you to do both.

The Apostle Paul got it.

II Timothy 1:11-12 (NIV) ¹¹And of this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher. ¹²That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day.

I hope His Word will always be on your lips and in your heart.