

Part 14: Jesus' Ministry Sampler

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Have you noticed that we have entered a unique stage of celebrity culture? It used to be that if you wanted to achieve fame of sorts you had to do something famously. But with the way in which our media has increased, we are seeing people who are famous simply because they are well known.

I remember one celebrity being described to me by a college student once. I asked, "Did she invent something?" No. "Did she win something?" Well, no not really. "Is she particularly talented in something?" Not really, I was told that she was famous for being famous.

As silly as that might sound I wonder how many of us import a similar level of distinction to Jesus and this Easter season. If you had to answer why Jesus is so popular, even across cultures and centuries, could you describe it? Why is it that every era of the Christian church has seemed to base their calendar off of the special memorial of Resurrection Sunday?

People know the name Jesus Christ because Jesus Christ is famous. But why is he famous? Why is he significant? Here at Sovereign Hope we have been working our way through Luke's account of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ and since Luke 4:14 the fame of Jesus' ministry is increasing. Reports of him are getting out, and crowds are showing up.

But why? Why are you here today? Why have you sought out Jesus and what do you expect to see? Today Luke begins to answer these questions for us by showing us a bit of Jesus' ministry sampler.

I went to an Indian restaurant once and they offered me a curry sampler. It was a smattering of little cups of their various curries, and it was spectacular. I got enough of each curry to make me eager for more, but not enough of any one curry to stop me from trying the next. What we see in our passage today is not the full bowl of Jesus work. It's not done here, there's more of the story yet to come. But what we do get to experience together are sample tastes of what will define Jesus' ministry, snapshots of who Jesus is, and the benefits he might offer those who come to him.

What we are going to see today in Luke 4:31-44 are three samples of Jesus' ministry, three pictures of Jesus' significance. What we will see today is first: **The Power of Jesus**, then we will see **The Passion of Jesus**, and lastly we will see **The Purpose of Jesus**.

Let's begin this ministry sampler by examining our first point: **The Power of Jesus**.

Read with me: **Luke 4:31-37**.

There's a primary theme that runs through the whole of our text today, and I wonder if you already began to notice what that theme is from what we just read: the power and centrality of Jesus' words.

Jesus' word was attractive, Jesus' word cast out demons, we will see it heal the sick and through it we will see the gospel made visible by the end of our time today.

If you've spent any time on the internet, or even reading bumper stickers, you've realized that there is an innate tendency to divorce the actions of Jesus from the words of Jesus. But what we see in this text is that you cannot separate the man from his message and it's in this union of the two we see his power.

This is the first demonstration of power this morning: ***Jesus' word has power over hearts and minds.***

If you were with us last week you will perhaps remember that those in Nazareth also had an interest in Jesus' words. But the way in which those in Capernaum encountered Jesus' words is far different. We can marvel at the words a YouTuber has when he preaches to us about the race of Lizard People who live in the sewers of New York. We can even be gripped by those words. But I'm guessing that for most of us those words have no authority and no power.

But did you notice at why the crowds were astonished here? Because his word possess authority. His word had something. What was that something? It was the authority to grab one's mind and heart and to demonstrate the potential of something new. (bunyan)

To hear the teaching of Jesus, which nothing short than the teaching of the gospel of Jesus throughout all of scripture, is to hear the promise of something that will rule your life in the most wonderful way possible. That's what the Greek word here communicates: the ability to command and rule.

There's a tension in our text today and that is that in a passage where we the reader encounter very little of Jesus' words, by the time his miracles are done, we are left pondering the power of his word. The miracles serve the message.

The word of Jesus alone has the power to change our affections and our understanding of God. That's why despite cultural, technological and political changes over thousands of years God's church has set itself to the task of preaching, reading, memorizing and sharing God's word. It has authority and it has power.

Consider this historic proof. David Brainerd was a missionary in the 1740's to the Native American's in what is now New Jersey. While he faced many challenges in this venture, one of his greatest was finding faithful translators to translate his sermons when he preached. He would spend entire days praying that God would overcome these issues, and one day this was answered in quite a powerful way.

Brainerd had found a translator, but the translator showed up to the message that night completely drunk. But as David Brainerd preached, and as the drunk translator mumbled, dozens of Native Americans were saved. Why? Because the word of God is living and active. When it grabs a soul it does so with authority because it is the authority, it is God's very word. (I hope this would be you)

Even though we have in the Bible God's very word, Jesus' had these words in a different sense. Why? Because when he spoke, God spoke. He was God himself. He not only had the word of God, he was the word of God, the second person of the Trinity in the flesh. It is the nature of his words and his position which leads into the next display of power: ***Jesus' word has power over the satanic realm.***

Jesus' word casts out a demon.

Now perhaps you're one who is too scientific and rational to believe in such things as demon possession. Or maybe you've heard it said by one of your favorite social media philosophers that events like this in

scripture weren't demonic possession, but instead fits of seizures or bouts with epilepsy that the uneducated minds of the day couldn't understand.

But the forces of darkness thrive in just that, darkness. Satan would not want to operate in the daylight, because he knows he would be exposed. He loves flying under the radar. In fact he would be quite pleased by the person who pays no attention to his work. But interestingly enough, in our modern minds interest in the demonic and the spiritual is not decreasing, but for the first time in a long time it is increasing.

David Brooks of the New York Times recently reported that as of 2018 more Americans believe in Astrology than attend mainline protestant churches. Websites which believe the power of the stars organize our lives and energy in observable patterns have posted an increase of usage by 150% what it was prior to 2017. In 1990 only 8,000 Americans identified as practicing witchcraft and identifying as Wiccan, but today there are over 1,000,000 who identify in some sort of neo-pagan witchcraft.

There's an increasing subset of books on Amazon which guide individuals on how to harness hexes and curses for social change. While we might laugh at the application and audacity of it, we ought not to assume that because it seems silly that it is not also satanic.

Instead we should realize that our battle is not against flesh and blood but against the powers and principalities in heavenly places. There is a real degree of authority Satan has in this world and that authority is devastatingly powerful to us. But it is nothing here compared to the voice of Jesus is it?

If you were with us last week Jesus quoted a specific prophecy from Isaiah 61. Look with me again at **Luke 4:17-19**. The point Jesus goes on to make is that he is that anointed one of God. He's the one who has come to bring what? Liberty. To set captives free.

We see demonic forces at play in the Old Testament. But despite the mighty men and women God used back then, none of them were able to cast out a demon. We don't have a single account of that in the Old Testament. But here, for the first time, a man comes who with a word (not with a spell, not with a ritual, not with a magic stone, but a word!) commands a demon to come out of a man and the demon must obey him. Here is authority over the forces of darkness. Here is greater power.

Peter tells us that the Devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Increase in the satanic should not be seen to us as the rise in fantasy, but actually an unfortunate glimpse into reality. The purpose of stressing this is not to make you fear that the devil is coming for your kids, or that the devil is coming for you. Because the truth of the matter is that apart from this liberator, the Devil already has all of us.

Now the Bible makes it very clear that not everyone is possessed by a demon, it's a unique phenomenon even in scripture. But what we do see is that each and every one of us at one point in our life is under the authority of the Devil: Look Paul's words in **Ephesians 2:2-3**. We all once walked here. Every one of us. But Jesus came to liberate us. **2 Corinthians 4:4-6**. Jesus shone forth.

Jesus has power over the forces of evil. Jesus is freedom for those whose hearts are spiritually enslaved and whose eyes are spiritually blinded. Here is one stronger than anything in the world.

Jesus not only showed power over the spiritual here, but also the physical. Our last glimpse into Jesus' power is that ***Jesus' word has power over sickness and suffering.***

Look at what happens next in **Luke 4:38-39**.

So here Jesus goes to Simon Peter's mother-in-law who was sick with a fever and what did Jesus do? He rebuked the fever and it left her.

Now, you have all met Paul. Paul is a pastoral resident and our service leader today. He is a nurse who works in the ER. I imagine Paul has seen many high fevers. But I also imagine that Paul has never rebuked a fever. Why?

Because Paul is not Jesus. Jesus here, again, with the power of his word calls sickness out of someone. This is astounding. In the book of Acts we see Jesus' disciples healing people, but we never see them rebuking sickness. Why? Because they aren't Jesus. But Jesus can heal with his words.

I was given a tour once of a power plant and the guide showed us the coal burning furnace in the middle of it. Surrounded by layers and layers of iron steel there was the tiniest little window that he showed us where we could see the burning center. There, too bright to be seen in fullness, was the source of all the power in the area. Here in Luke 4, we get a glimpse into power so bright it demands our hearts, commands evil spirits, and calls out sickness.

But more than his power, we also see his passion. This is the second sampler we see this morning: **The Passion of Jesus.**

Read with me **Luke 4:39-41**.

We just stressed Jesus' authority in the previous passage and we live in a world today which often fears and wishes to dismantle authority because it's harmful. But authority itself isn't harmful. What's harmful is when the passion of the person with authority is to do harm. A person's passion reveals one's character and unfortunately for many people their passion abuses their power and authority.

But did you see the passion of Jesus in this text? Do you see the character through which all of Jesus' authority and power flows? Here the one who came to rebuke sin is also the one who came to touch sinners.

This is so incredibly beautiful. It's probably obvious to us that unclean spirits and the work of the Devil are part of the economy of evil. That's self-evident.

But so too is sickness and diseases part of the economy of evil. Now, this is where we need some nuance, this does not mean that anyone who is sick or who has a disease is actively sinning. It doesn't mean that your sickness, your suffering, or your disease is because of your sins in the past. But it does mean that all sickness, all suffering, all diseases exist because sin has stained every aspect of our world.

When God created Adam and Eve in the garden there was no sickness, there was no suffering, there were no diseases. Why? Because they have no place in God's perfection. Sometimes we suffer because we sin. But whenever we suffer, we suffer because sin has ruined what God created.

But did you notice how Jesus spoke to the sickness and the spirits? He rebuked them.

Don't pass over that. You've probably gathered already from this small ministry sampler that Jesus came to save you from sin and its effects. But do you realize that Jesus hates sin and its effects. Jesus didn't say, "I'm going to need you to leave." Jesus rebuked the effects of sin and evil. Jesus is impassioned against all that would harm his people.

Jesus knows that he's there to defeat sin. He knows that the resurrection of the dead is a certainty for the believer. He knows the end. But he still hates the effects of sin.

Jesus came to die because sin is painful, and no one cares about stopping the pain like Jesus. Here's the beautiful part of this reality. Even though Jesus hates sin and suffering, he is so powerful, and his passion is so motivating, that he intends to use pain and suffering as weapons against sin and evil.

Jesus will use the evil suffering in this world as the very spear upon which he will conquer sin, death and the devil forever. On the cross we see that Jesus hated sin and suffering so much so that he suffered in the place of sinners so that sin might lose its power, death might lose its sting, and Satan might lose his teeth.

Look at how Paul puts this in **Colossians 2:13-14**.

Jesus, by power in his name and the wounds in his hands, came to rebuke sin and crush the devil. But here's the beautiful paradigm in Luke 4:40: he also touched the sick and diseased and healed them.

If you know anyone who has had to undergo the pain of chemotherapy you know the paradigm of poison. That sometimes to kill what is dangerous, you harm what is good. But here we see the unique weight of Jesus Christ. Though we are sinful, Jesus by the work of his cross is able to heal us without destroying us.

Jesus rebukes sin. Jesus crushes the devil. Jesus destroys death. Jesus will judge those who refuse to come to him. But all who come to him, all who are touched by his gracious hands, will have the punishment of sin removed without us being poisoned in the process. How does this happen? Because Jesus drank the poison for us. He died the death we needed to die to rid ourselves of our sin, so in accepting his death, we get his life.

What beautiful hope is there in this text for all who wonder if Jesus will touch them? Here even though a man was violently thrown down by an evil spirit, he suffered no harm. Even though a woman was incapacitated on a bed, at the word of Jesus she was not only healed, but fully restored. Restored to what? Service.

It might seem that in coming to Jesus you lose the joys of life leaving you a shell of who you think you ought to be. But it is Jesus who has come to touch you by faith and bring you into the life you were always meant to live, that is a life free from sin in service to him. This is painful. It is painful to say no to sin, it is painful to repent of our pride, but it's also healing. Because of the cross following Jesus may be painful, but it's never harmful.

Let's continue in our passage this morning: **Luke 4:42-44**

By the end of this passage we see that there are really three characters in this story. There's Jesus, there's the demons, and there's the crowds. What's interesting is that Jesus sort of stiff arms both the demons and the crowds doesn't he?

He rebukes the demons and tells them not to speak even though they seem to have the clearest picture of who he is. And when the sick and diseased try to keep Jesus from leaving, Jesus says he needs to move on. What is going on here?

Well first we see that Jesus rebukes the theologically arrogant, but lovingly bears with humble sufferers.

Look at what James says about demons in **James 2:19**. Don't we see the theologically accurate belief of the demons in this text? Three times in this passage the demons, not the crowds, correctly identify Jesus as the Holy One of God, the Son of God, and the Christ. But in all their theological clarity they see no theological need. Though they see Jesus as the savior, they see no need to be saved by him. Though they experience him as an authority, they have no desire to submit to his authority.

There is no group of individuals, spiritual or human, who Jesus is more brutal with than those who arrogantly assume they know Jesus without every submitting their lives to Jesus. You believe there is a God? Good, so do the demons. Be better than that. Demons believe, Christians worship. Jesus has no time for the arrogant in spirit, but instead he lingers and is gracious with the humble sufferers.

Did you notice how this scene began (vs. 40) when the sun was setting and how it would appeared Jesus healed (vs. 42) when it was day. In other words Jesus healed all through the night. And more than that he healed all who came with every sickness and disease. As far as I could tell this is the only place in Jesus' ministry on earth where he healed everyone who came. This was astounding.

Yet Jesus knew that these weak sufferers who came to him in a humble realization of their need did not fully understand the salvation which he would bring to them. Jesus didn't rebuke their lack of understanding, but gently labored among them and wanted to help them understand his salvation more and more.

For those who are aware of our lack, there should be nothing more attractive than the passion and power of a savior like Jesus. We live in a world where the effects of sin and the condemnation of it poison even the best days of our life and here is the one who can do something about it.

What Jesus is gently trying to show these individuals by leaving is that he actually has something better to offer than temporary physical healing. Jesus stopped to heal because the wounds were significant, but he moved on to preach because what was healed at his touch was still only superficial.

This is our last point this morning: **The Purpose of Jesus**. Look again at what Jesus says to those who would have kept him forever to heal the sick: **Luke 4:43-44**.

Jesus came to preach the good news (to gospel). Of what? Of the Kingdom of God. To whom? To everyone.

Jesus' primary purpose was to good news the Kingdom of God to all who would hear it.

This means that when Jesus healed, it was in service to the preaching of his good news. Jesus didn't preach in order to heal, he healed in order to preach.

When you are online and a website might think that you are a robot just trying to do robot-y unhelpful things, what does it ask you to do to prove you're unique? Read these numbers, or tell me which of these pictures is a traffic light. It validates you.

You want to know what validates Jesus and his message? His miracles. They aren't an end to themselves, they show us more about who Jesus is and how profoundly good his good news is. It's as if Jesus wants us to imagine what it would be like to be healed from our physical and relational wounds only to say—imagine if I could heal the greater wound, the wound of sin.

That's the good news of the gospel. That Jesus takes away our sin, not only removing what was broken but inviting us into what is wholly perfect: The Kingdom of God.

What is this Kingdom? It's not a place where some people get healed and some people don't. It's not a place where some demons are evicted and some remain. The Kingdom of God is the place where there is no sickness, no sin, no unbelief, no suffering. Jesus' miracles and Jesus' message are telling people that there is a world yet to come.

Everyone who Jesus healed would later die. But in this Kingdom, those who get there never die. These miracles of Jesus are postcards from the King showing us the beauty of belonging to this Kingdom.

You see this is why Resurrection Sunday is such a big deal. Because it proves without a shadow of a doubt that there is a place not only where fevers leave, but there's a place where death goes to die. There's something better than seeing demons come out of men, and it's the King of the Kingdom coming out of a grave.

It takes some sort of something to be the guy who commands an evil spirit with a word, who causes fever to flee with a rebuke, and whose touch causes sin and suffering to melt away to then say, "You haven't seen anything yet." But that's exactly what Jesus does.

The beauty of Jesus is that his power frees us from sin, his passion touches the humble, and he invites us into the Kingdom of God through the message of the gospel. It looks like coming to Jesus not only with an understanding of our physical suffering, but of our spiritual sins. It comes to him knowing that he alone is the one who can heal us with his word. It's joyfully placing our lives under his authority and like Peter's mother-in-law serving with new life the King of the Kingdom.

And once we've seen why this Jesus is famous, we get the privilege of brining others to him. People brought Jesus to the woman with a fever, people brought their sick relatives to the hands of the healer, this gospel must go to other towns as well and we get to play a part in increasing that fame by preaching the gospel, the good news of resurrection Sunday, to others as well.