

Luke 4:14-21

The **title** of the hymn which we just sang, **Jesus Lead Us On**, serves as the **theme** for today's sermon. Our text today shows us that Jesus is uniquely **qualified to Lead Us On** into the days which still lie **ahead** for us in the future. The text tells us about a **visit** which Jesus made to the synagogue in **Nazareth** on a particular **Sabbath** day. It all started out as a pretty **normal** Sabbath. People came to the synagogue to **worship**, as they usually did, and Jesus was no **exception**. It had been His **custom** to worship and study the Scriptures **regularly** already as a young boy, and it was a custom which He **continued** to observe throughout His lifetime.

When the time in the service came for a reading from the **prophets**, Jesus **stood up**, indicating that He wanted to do the reading that day. The synagogue rulers were **happy** to have Jesus participate. After all, in a very short time after He had left Nazareth, this hometown boy had made quite a **name** for Himself. News of His captivating **sermons** and powerful **miracles** had been making their way **back** to Nazareth, and the people were excited to hear what He was going to **say**, and what He was going to **do** for **them**. So Jesus was handed the scroll of the Prophet **Isaiah**. There was a hushed silence among the worshipers as Jesus **unrolled** the scroll, and began to read the words of our Old Testament lesson for today, where Isaiah wrote about the coming **Messiah** and His **work**. *"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed, and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."*

When Jesus finished reading, He handed the scroll back to the attendant, and **sat down**. That's **different** from what we would **expect**, but it was the custom in **those** days for the teacher to **read** the text while **standing**, and then to **sit down** to **expound** on the reading. So, every eye and every ear was focused on Jesus, as the congregation anxiously **anticipated** what this popular young rabbi was going to **say** - and they were **not** disappointed. Jesus simply said, *"Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."* Jesus was telling His fellow worshipers that **He** is the one that Isaiah had **written** about - that He had been **commissioned**, **sent**, and **anointed** by the Holy Spirit, to be the **hope** of Israel, and the **Savior** of all people. The people who had gathered there couldn't miss the point, and they were **astonished**. Jesus was saying that the prophecies about the Messiah were no longer something

for just **reading** about and looking **forward** to. But rather, on that very **day** those prophecies had **come alive**, and had reached their **fulfillment** in **Jesus Himself**.

That was **a lot** for the people to take in, and it's **still** a lot for **us**, and for the people of our world **today** to take in. But what a marvelous **revelation!** The long-awaited Messiah **has come**. The **Savior** of the **world** is **here**. This is the same Jesus whom we ask to **Lead Us On** through the days which lie ahead. And what a **capable** and **dependable** leader He is. Jesus is the one who came down from **heaven** to reveal the Father's loving **plans** for us - the one on whom the **Holy Spirit** descended at the time of His **baptism** - to **equip** Him in His human nature for His work of redemption. Jesus is **uniquely qualified** to **Lead Us On** throughout the days of our life. No one else always has our **best** interests in mind, and we can trust Him **completely** to safely **Lead Us On** to our home in **heaven**.

But let's get back to our **text**. The words of the Prophet Isaiah which Jesus read that day concerning the promised **Messiah** offer a beautiful summary of the **ministry** and **message** of Jesus, starting with proclaiming the **Good News** to the **poor**. That **doesn't** refer to those who are poor in terms of **worldly** possessions, but rather those who are poor in **spirit** - those who know they have **nothing** to offer God in order to turn **away** from them His **anger** because of their **sins**. They know and confess that they are **sinful** - that **nothing good** dwells in them - and that their only **hope** is to plead for God's **mercy**. And God doesn't let them **down**. He says, *"This is the person I will **watch over**: the one who is **afflicted** and whose spirit is **crushed**, the one who **trembles** at my word."* Jesus brings the comfort of **forgiveness** to those who are **poor** in spirit, and He makes us **rich** with the treasures of His **grace**. The Apostle Paul said it beautifully in his second letter to the Corinthians, *"For you know the **grace** of our Lord Jesus Christ, that although he was **rich**, yet for your sakes he became **poor**, so that through his **poverty** you might become **rich**."*

The second phrase in Isaiah's description of the Messiah also points to the work of Jesus, our **leader** - *"to proclaim **freedom** to the **captives**."* Here again there's a **spiritual** meaning. Jesus came to proclaim **freedom** to those who were held captive by **sin**, **death**, and **Satan**. He paid the **penalty** for all of our sins with His **death** on the cross. And His **resurrection** from the dead **assures** us that we have been **set free** from those sins, and from the **fear** of

condemnation. **Satan's** power has been **broken** and **death** has been **defeated**. So, we're free to **serve God** as citizens of His kingdom.

Isaiah goes on to tell us that Jesus came to bring "*recovery of **sight** to the **blind**,*" and He had **that** phrase **doubly** covered. Not only did Jesus provide **sight** to people who had been physically **born blind**, but He also provided the **light** of His **Word** to those who were groping around in the darkness of **unbelief** and **spiritual blindness**.

Then we're told that Jesus also came "*to **set free** those who are **oppressed**.*" **Oppression** can come to us in **many** different ways. It can certainly come from people who **oppose** God and His Word, but it can also come from the **pain** that **sin** has brought into the world - from the **sorrow** that **death** brings when it takes a loved one away from us - from the **tears** caused by disobedient **children** or quarreling **parents** - and even from the **shame** that we bring on **ourselves** when we choose to live **contrary** to what **God** wants for us. To those who are **oppressed** Jesus offers the invitation, "*Come to **me** all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you **rest**.*"

These are the **blessings** which Jesus brings to all those who **follow** Him in **faith**. As our **leader**, He graciously offers them to us **freely** and without **cost** to bring **joy**, **peace**, **comfort**, and **hope** to everyone who **follows** Him. They are blessings which **we** receive every time we hear the **Gospel**.

And finally, with Jesus as our **leader**, we are assured that He has come "*To **proclaim** the year of the Lord's **favor**.*" God had told His people in Old Testament times, that every **50th year** was to be a year of **jubilee** - a time in which all **slaves** would be set **free**, all **prisoners** would be **released**, all **debts** would be **cancelled**, and all **property** would be **returned** to its original owners. It would be a year of the Lord's **favor**, showing God's great **love** for His people, and His fervent **desire** that they would experience His **blessings**. It was truly a time of **joy** and **celebration** for all Israel. Jesus told the worshipers at the synagogue in Nazareth that **He** had come to **usher in** a year like that - a **new** time - a time in which God would provide **salvation** for **everyone** through **Him**.

That year of the Lord's **favor** is also ours **today** in Jesus - not just the year 2022, but an entire **era** that will continue until the Last Day. The same

Jesus who went to the synagogue in **Nazareth** and said, *“Today this Scripture is **fulfilled** in your hearing,”* also comes to **us** with the same message. We can **trust** Him and His words **completely**, because we actually know Jesus even **better** than the people of His **hometown** knew Him. We have the **full** revelation of Jesus in the words of the four **Gospels**. We **know** Jesus as the one who lived a **perfect life** for us - who **gave** that perfect life to **us** through His **death** - and who **conquered** death and the grave through His **resurrection** on the third day. We **know** Jesus as the one who ascended into **heaven** - to rule with might and majesty over **all things** in heaven and on earth - who rules in our **hearts** by **faith** - and who guides and shapes all the events of this **world** for our **benefit**.

With Jesus as our **leader**, the future can only be **bright**, because Jesus promises to guide us through **everything** that comes into our lives. As we wisely **follow** Him in faith, we can **face** everything because we have God’s promise, *“Though the mountains be **shaken** and the hills be **removed**, yet my unfailing **love** for you will **not** be shaken nor my covenant of **peace** be **removed**.”* So, as we **boldly** forge ahead into the future, may our desire always be - **Jesus, Lead Us On**. Amen.