

## JESUS SAID, “I MUST PROCLAIM THE KINGDOM OF GOD”

Luke 4:31-44

Key Verse: 4:43

**“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.’”**

In this passage Jesus proclaimed the good news of the kingdom of God. This is why Jesus came into the world. Why is the kingdom of God good news? In order to accept this good news, we need to understand what the kingdom of God is and why we need it. In the kingdom of God, Jesus is the king. Where Jesus reigns as king, there is the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God does not refer to a geographical area or a specific ethnic group; it includes all kinds of people in whom God reigns. The kingdom of God is open to anyone and everyone—whoever accepts Jesus as their king. It seems that there are many kingdoms in this world. But spiritually speaking, there are only two kingdoms: the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. The kingdom of God is characterized by love, light, life and truth and justice. On the other hand, the kingdom of Satan is marked by hatred, darkness, death and deception and injustice. People are suffering in the darkness, not knowing that they are under the power of Satan. This suffering is expressed in that they do not do what they should do, and do what they hate to do. For example, a few years ago, in the Atlanta area, a criminal escaped in a courtroom and shot and killed the judge and others. He invaded a single woman’s home. She spoke to him with the truth of God and calmed him down. As they watched the news reports of what he had done, he was shocked. He did not think he had done such an evil thing; it was not him but another power. If students are able to control themselves and do what they should do, they will all get straight A’s. If we were able to control our emotions there would be no arguments. This shows us that there is an unseen force that compels us to do what we do not want to do. We cannot get out of the power of darkness by our own effort, even though we strongly desire to. Jesus has come to set us free from evil forces and rule over us with love and peace and justice. This is the good news. Let’s examine in what sense we are bound by the power of darkness and accept Jesus as our king. Let’s learn how the kingdom of God comes.

**First, the kingdom of God comes through preaching the word (31-32).**

After being rejected by his hometown people, Jesus went down to Capernaum in Galilee. Many of Jesus’ miracles took place in Galilee. In Galilee, Jesus

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proclaimed the kingdom of God, taught the living word of God, drove out demons, healed various kinds of sick people, cleansed a man with leprosy, made the lame walk, and gave sight to the blind. Most of all, in Galilee Jesus called ordinary, flawed men as his disciples and raised them as pillars of God’s salvation work. There are so many beautiful memories in Galilee. On the Sabbath, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach (31). People were amazed at his teaching, because his words had authority (32). “Authority” is defined as “power to influence or command thought, opinion, or behavior.”<sup>1</sup> Jesus’ words pierced people’s hearts and made them aware of God’s presence. Why did Jesus’ words have such authority? There are several reasons. First of all, Jesus is the Son of God; his authority comes from his identity. In addition, he was a perfect man, and fully anointed by the Holy Spirit. Also, he taught God’s word as it is with a reverent attitude. Mark comments that his teaching was different from that of the teachers of the law (Mk 1:22). Teachers of the law taught traditions of the elders, which were based on commentaries on the Torah. They followed the historical trends of interpretation set by great teachers. Though the teachings were often profound, they were human interpretations, not the Scriptures themselves, and sometimes even nullified the word of God (Mk 7:13). The teachers of the law assumed that they knew the Scriptures, but they failed to learn God’s heart and Spirit (Mt 23:23). They replaced the living word of God with rules that enslaved people. But Jesus respected Scripture as the living word of God and taught it as the absolute truth which all human beings should live by. When Jesus was tempted by the devil, he said, **“It is written...It is said”** and quoted Scripture exactly, knowing God’s heart and intention. Jesus defeated each temptation by depending on the word of God. Instead of traditional rules, Jesus taught God’s love, mercy and saving grace. Jesus’ words set people free from the power of sin, death and the devil. When they heard Jesus’ words, they experienced God’s presence, heavenly peace and joy. They found the meaning and purpose of their lives and real hope.

These days there are many people who do not see the Bible as the word of God. This is especially true in seminaries which have been influenced by the so-called “higher criticism.” “Higher criticism” designates the study of the history of origins, dates and authorship of the various books of the Bible. When pursued with reverence for God and a spirit of genuine scholarship it

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<sup>1</sup> Mish, F. C. (2003). Preface. Merriam-Webster’s collegiate dictionary. (Eleventh ed.). Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, Inc.

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can be helpful to understand the Bible better. But when pursued without reverence for God—without recognizing the Bible as the inspired, living word of God—it discredits the Bible’s authority, leading people to see Scripture as just another set of human ideas. As a result, they lose the spirit of the Bible and its life-giving power. It can be compared to dissecting a fish. When we take it out of the water and analyze it part by part, we can learn something; but we lose its life. Man’s rational power should be guided by God’s Spirit and not try to rule over it. We can learn from Jesus a right view of God’s word. Jesus said, **“The Spirit gives life, the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are full of the Spirit and life”** (Jn 6:63). **“The word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart”** (Heb 4:12). When we accept God’s word with faith, it works in us powerfully. Paul said to the Thessalonian believers, **“And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as a human word, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is indeed at work in you who believe”** (1Th 2:13). This also applies to how we teach or speak the word of God. When we speak as though speaking the very words of God, the authority of God’s word works in our messages and Bible teaching (1Pe 4:11a). When the word of God is proclaimed with God’s authority, the kingdom of God comes into people’s hearts. The kingdom of God is righteousness, rest, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit (Ro 14:17).

### **Second, the kingdom of God comes when demons are driven out (33-37).**

As Jesus taught the words of God, a man possessed by a demon, an impure spirit, was exposed (33). The demon had hidden himself in one man and manipulated him invisibly. This man had probably heard many messages of the teachers of the law, but nothing happened. During their tedious expositions of traditions, he fell into a sound sleep. The demon was not threatened at all by the teachers of the law. But when Jesus preached the word of God, the demon felt greatly threatened. In a shock, suddenly 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!”** (34). Though the demon cried out, it seemed like the man cried out. This man’s identity had been stolen by the demon. The demon knew who Jesus was, and was terrified to have a relationship with Jesus. It is because he

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knew that ultimately Jesus would destroy him. 1 John 3:8b says, **“The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work.”**

We can imagine how much this man suffered with such a vile, fearful, hateful, deceptive, vengeful, dirty and wicked spirit living inside of him. He was not free, but the captive of the impure spirit. Modern, educated western people tend to ignore the existence of demons, but so many people in the world experience their existence. A pastor friend from Africa, Isaacs Challos, told me how demons worked in his village through witch doctors. People were kidnapped, tortured and even murdered to satisfy the demons. The local police were afraid to get involved and everyone tried to ignore what was happening. Even in America, some criminal investigations document the involvement of grotesque ritual sacrifice as part of heinous crimes. These are related to devil worship. So we should acknowledge that human beings have a spiritual element. If we see people as only body and mind we don’t really understand them and cannot help them effectively. The Bible clearly tells us that man is both body and spirit. God created us with spirit so he could have fellowship with us. When God’s Spirit lives in us, we can be normal people, and we can be satisfied. But when we reject God, we become vulnerable to evil spirits. For example, when King Saul rejected God, he did not become spiritually neutral. As soon as the Spirit of God left him, an evil spirit came and tormented him day and night (1Sa 16:14). John Calvin said that God allows demons to exist to torment rebellious people. Society tries to deal with people suffering from demons in many ways: drugs, education, imprisonment, electric shock, atheistic psychological counseling and so on. But these treatments never work.

How did Jesus deal with a demon possessed man? Jesus said sternly, **“Be quiet! Come out of him!”** Then the demon threw the man down before them all and came out without injuring him (35). Jesus did not ask kindly. Jesus did not negotiate. Jesus did not argue. But he rebuked it with authority and the demon obeyed Jesus, like it or not. After the demon left, the man was set free. His identity was restored and he became a normal person. How, then, should he live after being set free? Should he live according to his own sinful desires? No. If so, the demon may return with others and make his condition worse than before (Lk 11:26). It was time for the man to receive Jesus as his king and live according to Jesus’ words. Then the kingdom of God would remain in his heart; he would be a blessing to others.

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Here we learn the importance of acknowledging the existence of demons and how we can fight against them. Of course, we cannot say that everything bad that happens is a result of demonic activity. Also, we cannot explain all bad behavior as demon-possession. But we can say clearly that demons are real and Satan is working behind the scenes. And some people are possessed by demons. Demons can be driven out only in the name of Jesus. Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms (Eph 6:12). We all know of the tragic event that happened last week at Umpqua Community College in Oregon. A gunman entered a classroom and shot the professor to death. Then he asked all Christians to stand up. As they did, he shot them in the head. In this way, he killed nine people and wounded others before taking his own life. In response, President Obama has called for stricter gun control laws. On the other hand, the Lt. Governor of Tennessee suggested that Christians should buy guns to protect themselves from the persecution that is coming. But we should know that the real power behind this crime was the spirit of antichrist, the devil. Only Jesus can defeat the devil. It is time to proclaim Jesus through Bible study and to pray in the name of Jesus, especially on our campuses. Jesus can drive out the devil. Whoever accepts Jesus can receive the kingdom of God. This is the way to victory over the devil’s murderous spirit.

Verse 36 tells us that all the people were amazed and said to each other, **“What is this? With authority and power he gives orders to impure spirits and they come out!”** And the news about him spread through the surrounding area (37). People were filled with hope and joy because of Jesus’ victory over the power of demons.

**Third, the kingdom of God comes through healing the sick (38-41).** Jesus proclaimed the kingdom of God not only with his words, but also with his deeds. Jesus cared for people practically, according to their needs. Jesus left the synagogue and visited the home of Simon. Home visiting was an important part of Jesus’ ministry. Through home visiting we can understand people’s real problems. When Jesus visited Simon’s home he found a problem: Simon’s mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever. This cast a shadow over the home and made Simon depressed. They asked Jesus to help her. So he bent over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her. Immediately

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her temperature returned to normal, her swelling subsided, her congestion cleared, her headache disappeared, and she felt great. She got up at once and began to wait on them, serving a delicious lunch. Luke, a medical doctor, must have been impressed by this healing. In those days, many doctors treated fevers by draining people’s blood. Sometimes their cure was worse than the fever. But Jesus, with one word of rebuke, healed the fever immediately. Jesus’ personal care for one older woman made a great impression on Simon and many others. When sunset came, marking the end of the Sabbath, people brought to Jesus all who had various kinds of sickness. Jesus did not heal them all at once, in mass. Jesus laid his hand on each one, caring for each of them personally (40). Amidst Jesus’ healing ministry, many demons came out of people. They wanted to be very noisy, shouting, “You are the Son of God!” But Jesus rebuked them and would not allow them to speak. Jesus did not need their advertisement. As Jesus helped needy people one by one, the kingdom of God came into each one’s heart. This personal care for one person at a time reflects the heart of God. Let’s help needy people one by one, practically, as Jesus did, so the kingdom of God may advance one person at a time.

### **Fourth, the kingdom of God must be proclaimed everywhere (42-44).**

Jesus had worked hard all day long on the Sabbath, and then spent the evening to care for people one by one with his great compassion. The next morning, it might have been hard for him to get up. But at daybreak, Jesus got up and went out to a solitary place to have fellowship with God personally. Personal fellowship with God is essential for God’s servant. It is the time to seek God’s direction and wisdom, to renew our spirit and strength, and to enjoy God’s love and mercy. As Jesus was having quiet time with the Father, those who had tasted his love and power shamelessly interrupted. They began to plead with him to stay there with them permanently. They wanted to enjoy Jesus all by themselves forever. We can understand them. When we receive the grace of Jesus, it is so sweet to our souls, and we just want to stay where we are with Jesus forever. But how did Jesus respond? Let’s read verse 43. **“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.’”** And he kept on preaching, crossing over to the synagogues of Judea (44).

Jesus did not follow the demand of people. Jesus said that he must proclaim the kingdom in other towns also, because that is why he was sent.

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Jesus was guided by the Father’s will and followed the Father’s heart’s desire for him. Jesus knew that the Father was concerned about people all over Israel who were suffering under the devil’s influence. The Father’s heart was eager to bring liberation to them all. Jesus came as Savior for all the people of Israel, not only for the Galileans. Jesus came as the light for the Gentiles, not only the people of Israel. Jesus is the Savior of the world. Everyone in every nation needs Jesus and the kingdom of God. All people suffer most from the power of sin, death and the devil, regardless of nationality, gender or generational identity. That is why Jesus died for our sins, shed his blood on the cross and rose again; it was to liberate humankind from the power of sin, death and the devil. This is what all people need most urgently. We should understand Jesus’ heart. In addition to our own family, campus, church and nation, we should be concerned for all people of the world. Jesus constantly challenges us to look beyond where we are to the next family, to the next campus, the next community or nation. We also learn from Jesus that his motivation and purpose came from God, not from people. Whether Jesus was rejected or celebrated, he kept his eyes on the Father by having intimate fellowship with him. Jesus did what God wanted him to do, not what people demanded him to do. Whether we are rejected or celebrated we should fix our eyes on Jesus and continue to follow him in proclaiming the kingdom of God to the people of our times.

In this passage we learn Jesus’ heart’s desire to proclaim the kingdom of God to all people. Jesus did so by preaching the words of God and serving needy people. Let’s accept Jesus as our king and participate in preaching the word of God, caring for the needy, and praying for the people of the world.