

Gospel of Luke
Week 3 Summary
Luke 4:14–6:49

After the Son's testing and being proved, he is ready to move into public ministry in the power of the Spirit Luke reminds us. In Luke's first section Jesus goes into a synagogue where he reads the scroll of Isaiah. This section functions both to tell us what Jesus typically did as he went from synagogue to synagogue, but also to tell us more about the Messiah's mission and ministry. The emphasis is on release, on freedom—the time of Jubilee is here; **today** this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing! While Jesus' teaching is well received it is so for the wrong reasons. He is a home town boy and the expectation is he will use his divine agency to continue to bless his home town, but that is not the mission he has been given, instead he keeps moving having been rejected at home.

Moving from synagogues he moves into a home where he heals on the Sabbath, so that once the Sabbath is ended people begin to line up to bring their sick and demon-possessed. But, again, he is not here simply to heal forever one town. The divine imperative is on him, he must continue to preach in the other cities.

Where there has been only mixed reception to Jesus' word (proclamation) and deed (miracle) we now come the story of the first disciples. This shows us the appropriate response to Jesus' power and authority. Peter (Simon) upon seeing Jesus' divine agency in his word and deed, responds by falling at Jesus' feet, confessing he is unworthy as a sinner, and inviting Jesus to depart from him—a huge contrast from those who think they have a right over Jesus and want to hold onto him. The ultimate response is their leaving everything to go with Jesus; that is the proper realignment being called for.

Luke then shows Jesus' relationship to the law and it's a fairly ambiguous picture. On the one hand Jesus touches a leper, but on the other having cleansed the leper he commands him to fulfil the law by going to the priest to be declared clean and to offer the appropriate sacrifice. This leads to increasing popularity, but Jesus continues to retreat for prayer where he remains rooted in his identity as God's Son.

Then we see that Jesus' ministry of release is not just physical (healing) or spiritual (exorcism), but is ultimate (eschatological). Jesus forgives the sins of the paralytic and in forgiving those sins heals that man. However, he is able to read the hearts of people so know that the scribes and Pharisees are questioning his authority to forgive sins. To demonstrate his authority he has the man rise and leave showing the healing has happened which demonstrates the authority and power that has been given him. However, this is only the beginning of conflict with these groups.

Jesus goes on to show his ministry is to the poor meaning the marginalized, the ones of low social standing; those on the outside of the community. Also, we see that by release and restoration his work is to bring those on the outside inside to the community. Therefore, it is no wonder that he eats with tax collectors and sinners and insists to the experts in the law that it is his right to interpret the law, not theirs.

Following the conflicts with the scribes and Pharisees, Jesus calls twelve to be his disciples and begins to teach them, with the crowds also listening, what it means to be a part of this new community around him. The emphasis is on how to be a disciple in the face of opposition and the key is to do so with love and joy.

A note about new and old garments and new and old wine

The traditional reading of Luke 5:36-39 is that Jesus is bringing the new while the scribes and Pharisees are holding onto the old. So, you wouldn't cut a patch out of a new garment to repair an old one. First, because the new patch would not match the old garment. Second, because it ruins the new garment—it's just foolish. Then, you wouldn't put new wine into old wine skins because new wine expands when it ferments which would burst the old rigid skins. Instead, you need to put new wine into new wineskins. The interpretation is that Jesus is the new wine and the old forms have to be put aside to hold his new teaching. However, not everyone is going to want the new wine—many will remain satisfied with the old wine alone.

Contrary to this reading is one by Joel Green who points out that the birth narrative, the genealogy, the temptation account, and the inaugural sermon in Nazareth shows us that Jesus is bringing to fruition the ancient purpose of God. So, in that light, he shows the old garment in need of repair but shows how the new cannot repair the old nor should the old be thrown away in favour of the new. He also does not say there is anything wrong with the old wineskins. Rather, he says the new wine can't be put in them. His point is that the old and the new are incompatible. But he uses an axiom known to both Jew and Greek audience that old wine *is* good. In this reading Jesus is the harbinger of the old and the scribes/Pharisees the new since they only go back to the return from exile where Jesus goes back to the beginning of God.

The King Jesus Gospel

Chapter 3

1. In your own description of the plan of salvation how important has the story of Israel been?
2. How have you understood Jesus as Messiah to be the resolution of the story problem?
3. How does equating the plan of salvation with either the Israel story or the Jesus story distort the gospel?
4. Have you or have you heard the gospel be collapsed into the method of persuasion? Why do you think this might be an issue?