

**The Rock: 01-16-2022****A year with the Master**

**First reading:** Matthew 28:18-20

**Title:** The Mission

**Scripture:** Luke 4:14-30 (black bible Pg. 807)

**Theme:**

There is no misunderstanding about who Jesus is, how He sees Himself, and what His mission is.

So, who are we and how do we go about fulfilling His calling and mission as a church and as individuals needs to be the same?

**Introduction:**

Coming to a section of scripture like this one, it is easy to tackle too much. Why? There are so many things, so many topics to unpack when we look at Jesus going back home to what looks to me like He's picking a fight.

And we could make that argument given that He doesn't show back up as the hometown hero, excited to be back and sharing in His home church the successes of a start-up ministry.

No, He comes in focused and set to begin what God has been preparing Him for all these 18 silent in-between years.

This passage from the prophet Isaiah which He reads from (chapter 61), is one that God's people clearly understood to be a messianic passage.

One that declared and described the coming King, the anointed one who would lead and save His people Israel:

**-Luke 4:17-20 (ESV)**

"And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him."

A scene that is no different than today, Jesus read the Scriptures as everyone gathered, waiting for Him to preach on what He just read.

I am certain the expectations would have been for Jesus, the carpenter's kid, certainly no highly trained rabbi, to comment on future fulfillment of the coming king and the hope they had in God's promises:

**-Luke 4:22 (ESV)**

"And all spoke well of him and marveled at the gracious words that were coming from his mouth. And they said, "Is not this Joseph's son?"

But He didn't. Instead, He talked about Himself as the one of whom the passage spoke. He opens His message with:

**-Luke 4:21 (ESV)**

"And he began to say to them, 'Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.'"

That's a lot to process, and it doesn't sink in right off. After all no one had ever read the Scriptures on a Saturday in Synagogue and then said to everyone: "Hey, this is me!"

It doesn't shock us too much as we look at it because we know the end of the story, but let's put ourselves there in that Synagogue for a minute.

What would we have thought? Probably the same as we would think today if someone did that. He's a bit off and perhaps at the very least has delusions of grandeur.

The people of Israel had been waiting a life-time, praying for the promises of God to come to pass, looking for their new King, that new David to lead them on to victory.

Instead, who sits in front of them is a carpenter's kid from 1<sup>st</sup> street, the one whose mom had some grand stories about who He was and is to be, but really -He's Joseph's son. A good boy who grew up here.

Now here He is saying: "This passage, well yeah, that's me. Isaiah saw what my ministry would be, he saw me, and wrote about it."

How many of you would be unsettled? Who would get up and leave? We would all probably do so, and very quickly, if something like this happened today.

**The Story:**

Context, remember? They respond as they do because that is how they feel. So, we want to be careful not to look at them and go: "How did you miss this?" They missed it in the same way we would.

It is so interesting for us as we seek to know our mission, to look at how Jesus defined His. It is essential that we do so. Because everything He says has nothing whatsoever to do with worldly power or kingship. Everything they were looking for.

It is most likely why, and with good reason in their view, why His ministry almost ended before it even started. Yet, God's sovereignty and providential care kept everything happening in its time.

I can't help but see that even from the very start, Jesus liked to pick fights, especially with the religious elite, His own people who should have known better, and should have recognized Him:

**-Luke 4:23-27 (ESV)**

"And he said to them, "Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, "Physician, heal yourself." What we have heard you did at Capernaum, do here in your hometown as well.'" And he said, "Truly, I say to you, no prophet is acceptable in his hometown. But in truth, I tell you,

there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heavens were shut up three years and six months, and a great famine came over all the land, and Elijah was sent to none of them but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian."

A pattern we see throughout His ministry which magnifies the mission He declares here. Jesus went out of His way to bring the news of salvation (Gospel / good news) to the poor, the outcast, the social rejects, the foreigner.

Yet, He declared judgement in very clear terms upon those who thought themselves as being better than everyone else because they were "religious" and "obeyed" the Law.

He set captives free, touched the leper who was a lonely outcast of society. Delivered people from demonic possession, forgiving those whom the Pharisees and other religious elites thought of as unforgivable.

They had lost the mission assignment given to them by God. They lost the heart of the law, justice, mercy and the love of God to all people.

He gave sight to the blind, all those things we will see (pun intended) throughout this year. There is no surprise, at least there shouldn't be, at how Jesus ministered and conducted His life.

He declared freedom for the oppressed and suffered for declaring that their deliverer had in fact come, proclaiming the year of God's favor.

But they would have none of it, after all He was just the carpenter's kid from their hometown.

Right away let's remember we remember the verses we've just read; Jesus is reminding them that the mission as always to be bigger than just themselves.

Something we must remember also. Too often we forget that we are here to reach people with the message of Jesus, that God is calling people back to Him. The message.

All people. Not just those we like and are comfortable with, but all people. We tend to fail here more than I want to admit. Not looking at people with the eyes of Jesus and holding out the ministry of reconciliation, instead, it's our ministry of church conformity.

Elijah the great prophet was sent to a gentile widow in Sidon, even though there were many Jewish widows in his time.

Elisha, too was told to heal Naaman the Syrian (the enemy) of leprosy. There were many in Israel I am sure who suffered from that isolating and awful disease, but a pagan is whom God chooses to heal.

The mission is bigger, it's global. Salvation has come for all - that is The Message.

The Mission of declaring all these things was to start with the people of Israel, but it was never to end there. That actually was what we learned two weeks ago when John the baptizer was declaring from Isaiah again, that voice crying in the wilderness -prepare the way...

In their spiritual blindness, their selfish thinking and their nationalistic arrogance as "the chosen ones", it seems they didn't like that declaration:

**-Luke 4:28-29 (ESV)**

"When they heard these things, all in the synagogue were filled with wrath. And they rose up and drove him out of the town and brought him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they could throw him down the cliff."



Picking a fight, or telling the truth? Or perhaps both, because one convicts and we have to choose. For right at the outset here, the truth of the message (The Gospel), offends and divides.

If we cannot admit that we need Jesus, that He is savior King and has come to save us from sin, then we end up fighting against Him.

Sadly, and painfully, it is that simple and that clear. Too often the pulpits across this beautiful country have begun to fall silent in the declaring this message. But not all! In the midst of this sifting and shaking, there are so many more who are becoming that voice in the wilderness. No matter the cost.

So, for us:

The Mission remains clear. The Church, all the way to here in St. Albans VT, our home, is the same. To live and to act in the way Jesus did.

We understand the ground, at least I hope we do and are learning to. Our culture is antagonistic toward this truth, the truth.

The Church, with its "inclusively-exclusive" message of Jesus being the only way is quite simply, offensive. Ok, we get that. So, what are we to do today,

in our corner of the world? Well, I'm glad you asked.

First, let's understand our position, our calling as those who are believers in Jesus, for that, let's look at Matthew:

**-Matthew 28:18-19a (ESV)**

"And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore..."

All the authority which Jesus has to declare that He is the risen king has been given to us, His kids. You and I are to engage with people in the same way Jesus did.

He defined that clearly in Luke 4. You want to be like Jesus, go to all the wrong people, in all the wrong places. Enjoy the parties at the homes of those who are outcasts and seen as unworthy of the church.

Put yourself in places and positions which make the religious establishment angry and disgusted. HOWEVER, do it while declaring that Jesus is the most liberally conservative savior this world has and needs.

He invited EVERY HUMAN BEING to the father's table, no matter what. BUT, He

does so by declaring I AM THE ONLY WAY TO THAT TABLE.

Because of that, not everyone will listen, not everyone will dance and celebrate, but that is the mission and the message.

Church of the Rock is here to make life long followers of Jesus. Write that down. One of our main priorities in discipleship is that -finding the lost, making them whole and as a result -they become life-long followers of Jesus.

That is the first assignment we are given -"GO". That is defined as being beyond these walls, as much as within these walls. (All nations)

A healthy church is outward thinking, asking how we can impact our community with the message. It is through both word and deeds.

Jesus didn't just talk in the synagogue, He went. Out and met with and ministered to people. Many, if not most, did not attend "church on Sunday."

They did after they met Him, I guarantee that. He changed hearts and minds. Becoming followers of this Jewish carpenter.

So, in very practical terms, one of the things we are looking at doing this year as part of our assignment in reaching people, is to have a back-to-school backpack BBQ here at The Rock.

Where, as a church, we want to be challenged to provide a back pack to students, full of all the start of the year supplies they will need.

It is a very practical way to fulfill our mission and provide a way in which we can share the gospel. Meeting basic needs for those in our community, and proclaiming freedom in Jesus.

I say that because that was the pattern of Jesus. He met a need first, but never stopped there. Meeting the physical needs of people always opened the door to the deeper spiritual need.

Our goal should always be both. I always ask the question of why would we do something as a church that the rest of our culture is already doing?

The Church should not be riding the coat tails of the culture, rather we should be defining it. After all, we have the answer to the problems of the world.

So, just to have a BBQ and give away back-packs full of supplies, while neglecting to offer the reason as to why

we would bother doing it, is only half the story.

We do it because Jesus calls us to do it. Not specifically backpacks, but yes, backpacks. Why? It is a practical need in a time where many are struggling and our world is hurting.

Thus, a doorway for the sharing of the Gospel.

One last thing to share as we close this morning, as we will not finish this talk this Sunday. The church, because of your faithfulness to give as God has led, has the ability to help also in a new endeavor downtown.

"That's my favorite subject" tutoring center is a new ministry which has opened right on main street. The Westin's who attend Vibrant Church in Burlington, but live in St. Albans saw a need.

The last two years has created an environment where many students have fallen behind in their learning and are in need of tutoring to help get caught back up.

Church of the Rock has partnered with them by way of a scholarship fund, to help those who cannot afford a tutor.

This way they can get the help they need even if they don't have the means to pay. A practical way to help, and it opens a door for the sharing of the gospel.

These are just two things on our map, as we seek to make life-long followers of Jesus. Are there ways you can step in and help? Perhaps.

It takes a team to create success. We are going to need volunteers for the BBQ, donations, people to set up, grill, serve.

Perhaps there are ways to help with the tutoring center? Looking to see what other needs they may have, and seeing if that is a gift you have and can step into. It is how we become disciples and make disciples.

Becoming life-long followers of Jesus starts here on Sunday morning, but it never ends here. That's why Jesus said - Go.

What we learn here, should be, must be put to practical use in our everyday lives. I see it quite often with those I meet throughout the week.

In quiet and clear ways, many of you go about your day, doing these very things and helping those in your home community.

These events are specific ways as a church we can make an impact as a congregation.

Our mission is the same -our message also never changes. Growing forward as a congregation which God has put here in St. Albans Vt, these two things will never change.

Each year though, they will find their expression in different ways and events as needs change, we can and will help meet them.

Go, make disciples, baptize and teach.  
But those last two will have to wait for next time

Let's pray.