



A Compelling Life: A Compelling Purpose

January 10, 2016

Last week's message was on "A Compelling Person." We would agree that Jesus was not "A" Compelling Life – but "THE" most compelling life who will ever live. Not only was Jesus a human being, but Jesus Christ is God. Amazing!

Context of Luke 4 is spiritual warfare. The chapter begins with the devil tempting Jesus and ends with demons being cast out.

He's "Jesus of Nazareth" as Nazareth is Jesus' hometown. The town had a poor reputation. Nathanael, called to be one of Jesus' disciples had this to say about the place: "*Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?*" John 1:46

Jesus appears in the synagogue. He gets off to a great start. He's popular and amazing. He's ACCEPTED!

Jesus appeals to scripture to describe His Mission. He knows who He is and Why He came. He is passionate about it.

Luke 4:14-21 *Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside.¹⁵ He taught in their synagogues, and everyone praised him.¹⁶ He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. And he stood up to read.¹⁷ The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:¹⁸ "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed,¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."²⁰ Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him,²¹ and he began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."*

Jesus' public ministry is beginning. First, He thwarted the tempter. Then He returned to his hometown and made His initial public offering. But now, something is about to change. He will be REJECTED.

Luke 4:22-30 *All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips. "Isn't this Joseph's son?" they asked. Jesus said to them, "Surely you will quote this proverb to me: 'Physician, heal yourself! Do here in your*

hometown what we have heard that you did in Capernaum." "I tell you the truth," he continued, "no prophet is accepted in his hometown. I assure you that there were many widows in Israel in Elijah's time, when the sky was shut for three and a half years and there was a severe famine throughout the land. Yet Elijah was not sent to any of them, but to a widow in Zarephath in the region of Sidon. And there were many in Israel with leprosy in the time of Elisha the prophet, yet not one of them was cleansed — only Naaman the Syrian." All the people in the synagogue were furious when they heard this. They got up, drove him out of the town, and took him to the brow of the hill on which the town was built, in order to throw him down the cliff. But he walked right through the crowd and went on his way.

One year when I was in Israel, our tour guide suggested while we were in Nazareth that we go to "Mt. Precipice." I agreed. As we were walking to an overlook, the guide suggested I read this text from Luke. I'd never read this text before. It seemed very odd!

Jesus said hard things. He ruffled feathers. It seems Jesus intentionally provoked them. But what did he say which upset them so much? Why did they go from speaking well of him and being amazed at his words to wanting to throw him down the cliff? What kind of a nerve did He strike?

They had some questions about his ancestry. *"Isn't this Joseph's son?"* How could the Messiah come from such a humble figure? We sense both their approval of what Jesus was saying, yet their questioning of his credentials. Jesus has 3 references here:

1) **'Physician, heal yourself!** Though Jesus is healing people, He's inferring that they think there's something wrong with Him. That He's maybe not quite "all there." Maybe Jesus needs some sort of treatment, Himself.

2) **Do here in your hometown what we have heard that you did in Capernaum. No prophet is accepted in his hometown.** Prophets were often rejected in their local places in the Old Testament.

3) **Elijah and Elisha.** This had been a very difficult era for the Israelites. Things didn't going well for them then. But the problem that gets Jesus into such difficulty is His analogy that the Gentiles (the Jews didn't like them) were more worthy of God's miracles than the Jews. The widow from Zarephath was a Gentile as was the Syrian General, Naaman. Great reversal here – like Beatitudes – those who are "in" are "out" and those who are "out" are "in." He's telling them that the Gentiles are closer to God than they are. They'd had enough. The good citizens of Nazareth rose up to throw out Joseph's son, one of their own.

John 1:11-13 He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave

the right to become children of God— children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

The most receptive people to the gospel are often those in the greatest need. The hardest to believe the gospel are those people who consider themselves pretty good in comparison with the rest of humanity.

There was a prestigious Baptist congregation in London which developed 3 missional congregations which were located in rough parts of the city. It became their custom on the 1st Sunday of the New Year to gather the 4 congregations together and share in communion. On one such occasion, a man who'd been converted after having been convicted for crime, knelt at the communion altar next to the judge who'd sentenced him to prison for his crimes. The Judge and the Pastor spoke after the service. "Did you notice who was kneeling next to me at the altar?" "Yes, I did! It's a miracle of grace!" The Judge agreed. But then he asked the pastor: "But to whom do you refer?" The pastor said, "To the former convict." The Judge said, "I wasn't referring to him, but to me." He explained to the surprised pastor: "It's not surprising that the thief received God's grace when he left jail. He only had a history of crime behind him. When he heard that Jesus would forgive him, he seized the message of salvation, hope and joy. He knew how much he needed that help. But look at me – I was taught how to be a gentleman, to say my prayers, go to church, my word would be my bond. I went to Oxford, obtained degrees, passed the bar, and became a judge. I was sure I was all I needed to be, though in fact, I too, was a sinner. It was God's grace that opened my heart to receive Christ. I am the greater miracle."

A Compelling Purpose

1) **Jesus** was on a mission - neither praise nor criticism would deter him. Their response didn't dictate His message. He kept on mission to PREACH/TEACH and ACT. You sense His passion about this. He had to do it. He knew who He was and what he was to do – and He did it.

2) Jesus Mission became the pattern of the Early Church. **Acts 2:42-43** *They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles.*

*John Wesley quoted this text on the date he "considered himself to be more vile, and proclaimed in the highways the glad tidings of salvation" (open air preaching)

We have to be open to different structures and ways of communicating the gospel. The message was not going to change, but the way the message is presented will always be changing.

Jesus' church is to be a fulfillment of that.

3) As Disciples or followers of Jesus, **we** are on Mission, too. Being a Disciple of Jesus means we must KNOW something and DO something with that knowledge. There's the sense of "HEAD" knowledge, and there's a sense of "HAND" activity. But I think it also involves the HEART. We can know facts and we can have activity – but we also need compassion and concern, else we become arrogant in our knowledge and judgmental and harsh in our service. Pride is the great sin.

Note 3 things about Debbie Young in this Video: She began with Prayer. She made herself Available to God. She began Intentionally Looking.

That's exactly what Jesus did. He was a man of prayer. He was available for God to use. He was intentionally seeking opportunities. He reached out and cared for other people. He discovered and met peoples' needs. He also had limitations. He couldn't do everything for everybody. Not everyone would be won over. But the naysayers from Nazareth didn't stop Him. He simply moved along. The next verse says He went to Capernaum.

I think our natural bias is to turn inward and forget about what God wants us to do with our lives. That's why prayer, availability and intentionally looking for opportunities is so important. When a ship loses its moorings, it's not loud or noisy. It just silent drifts away. That's what happens to us, spiritually. Over time, we just sort of drift away. We miss a little bit here and a little bit there and before we know it, we've gone a long way. We've got to really pay attention.