

Weekly Study of Sunday's Message

January 18, 2026 "The Platform of Jesus. Jesus reads the scroll at the synagogue"

I Intro.

We're slowly moving into the new year. Things are starting to gear back up. You'll want to keep up with everything that's happening at NCC. Stay connected through our social media to keep up with everything that's going on. Welcome to our companion devotional to Sunday's message. It's just a part of all we have to offer to you. Whether you were able to participate in this service or not, this devotion is free-standing. We hope you find this tool helpful on your spiritual journey. We don't want you to miss out on anything. We consider you part of our community. We have many ways you can plug into life at NCC. You can find all those through our website, app, and social media sites. Our app is the best way to livestream our services, but you can also livestream on FaceBook and YouTube. You can revisit past services, sign up for events and even give. We're encouraged by your presence when you gather with us. New and familiar faces join us every Sunday. If you join us online, we appreciate your presence. We are fully committed to our virtual attenders. We are your church family, and if there is anything you need, prayer, or anything else, please let us know.

II Recap.

It's an election year, and we're going to find ourselves getting pulled to places, emotions, because we feel like we're right. Chasing things that are going to tempt us to compromise some of our deeper values, because we want those things we feel 'right' about to get done. This will cause us to overlook, not condemn certain things, because we're swayed by the deep desire to see what we believe in, to happen. Worse, it'll affect our walk with Christ. And blur our ability to determine what 'feels' moral and what is actually right. So, we need something to attach ourselves to so we won't be whipped around. We need to be moored, anchored to what is solid. Protecting us from drifting, finding security, by maintaining a connection to be held in place. We need to be grounded in what it means to be a follower of Jesus during this upcoming year. To be grounded well, we're going to look at moments from the beginning of the ministry of Jesus to help us see what was important to him. Because what was important to Jesus, should also be important to us. And that should ground us also. ***"The platform of Jesus"***.

III Sunday.

Let's start with a couple of odd questions.

IF– you were running for office, what would be things you would promise to change?

What are important issues, needs in our society, problems we need to address and you would work to solve?

We started with these questions to help us realign ourselves with the ministry of Jesus. Historically, the church has gotten locked into a couple of things Jesus talked about, and fixated on just a few of them. And the church missed a lot of things that seemed to be important to Jesus. We're talking about the work of the church staying focused, committed to the work of Jesus. Religion constantly fights the draw of earthly power, and gets caught up in things that don't have anything to do with the ministry of Jesus, and ends up chasing really unimportant things. Losing sight of the real mission Jesus gave us.

Jesus at the synagogue. We're talking about the first events in the life of Jesus. This is one of my favorite stories about Jesus. One, because it's just a mic drop event. *"Remember that promise we received from God over 700 years ago— TA DA! It's me!"* Two, this passage has been the center of a 2,000 year old intense theological debate. The question— ready? *"Did Jesus change the text, or was it a different version than what we have?"* Scholars are ridiculous like that.

Luke 4:14-21 Then Jesus returned to Galilee, filled with the Holy Spirit's power. Reports about him spread quickly through the whole region. He taught regularly in their synagogues and was praised by everyone. When he came to the village of Nazareth, his boyhood home, he went as usual to the synagogue on the Sabbath and stood up to read the Scriptures. The scroll of Isaiah the prophet was handed to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where this was written:

"The Spirit of the LORD is upon me, for he has anointed me to bring Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the oppressed will be set free, and that the time of the LORD's favor has come."

He rolled up the scroll, handed it back to the attendant, and sat down. All eyes in the synagogue looked at him intently. Then he began to speak to them. **"The Scripture you've just heard has been fulfilled this very day!"**

Seems that Jesus intentionally chose this specific passage out of a text he was given. Talk a little about the context and nature of this passage, then dig into some of the really interesting things about what he read specifically— and what he didn't say.

1. The context of the day. There was no freedom for Jews under Roman rule. Anyone could be put to death for not supporting the government, and what they were doing. There was economic exploitation through taxes, and suppression of business. Jews were not allowed to have the same rights and privileges as Roman citizens. They paid taxes, but could not share in the benefits of living on their own land. They had to keep a low profile, not draw attention to themselves, and just submit to the power and authority of the state. They were conditioned to suffer in silence, and to stay hidden. Constant threat of having everything taken away, and people just 'disappearing'.

2. This is a Jubilee text. Jesus read from Isaiah 61, and it draws heavily from Leviticus 25. If you read Leviticus 25 you'll see teachings about; Sabbatical rest, the Jubilee Year where unequally, unfairly, accrued wealth (wealth tends to pool in the hands of a few) was redistributed. This Jubilee in Leviticus was actually referred to as; *"proclaiming liberty"*. All slaves and servants were to be set free, and returned to their families. Debts that had built up were allowed to be settled. All of this was done because God said; *"Everything belongs to the Lord, and he gets to decide how it is shared."* This may shock you, but there is no record of the Israelites or any Christian group who claims the O.T. as sacred scripture EVER practicing ANY of these. This is radical stuff.

This message by Jesus wasn't about control, power, or judgment. This reading of Isaiah was the announcement, proclamation, of liberation, freedom. The structured reworking of power and relationships so that everyone would be treated equally. Jesus was saying; this work God instructed the Israelites to practice regularly, Isaiah said they were in exile partly because the Israelites didn't practice this, that he would actively be about putting this work back front and center.

3. Finally— this work is to begin TODAY. Jesus was telling the people what his ministry would be about. His baptism, and the temptations, were an alignment with what had already been taught, and

his preparation for ministry. This was specifically about the work he would be doing. This work, which we've repeated several times from Mary's song, through the preaching of John the Baptizer, and it is repeated again here, is the message of the intent of God for all of his creation. Nothing new. Simply a reinforcement of God's design for the world. But we need to hit the really interesting part of all this.

The Isaiah passage. But before we can understand what Jesus was saying here, we have to understand what he didn't say. Reread Luke passage. And then read where it came from.

Luke 4:18-19 "The Spirit of the LORD is upon me, for he has anointed me to bring Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the oppressed will be set free, and that the time of the LORD's favor has come."

The passage Jesus read in the scroll was from Isaiah 61. Let's read that.

Isaiah 61:1-2. The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is upon me, for the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to comfort the brokenhearted and to proclaim that captives will be released and prisoners will be freed. He has sent me to tell those who mourn that the time of the LORD's favor has come...and with it, the day of God's anger against their enemies.

Did you notice any difference from what Jesus read?

They're slight, but very significant. People who had heard this passage from Isaiah before, would know exactly what it said— and what Jesus left out. Seems Jesus intentionally leaving specific things out, made it even more clear what he would be doing that was different from what God had been doing in the past. Same work— but some important things are missing.

Two things Jesus didn't include. He only read one section from the scroll. (There were no verses back then. It was just one long continuous thought). I mean if you wanted for people to take you seriously, to make a point, to increase the activity on your post (negative posts get more comments and likes) why wouldn't you include this?

1. Comfort those who mourn. Which is a really tough aspect to accept that Jesus didn't include this.

Why wouldn't you mourn with those who mourn? Why wouldn't you meet and embrace a people who were under the control and occupation of an invading power?

Jesus wasn't denying the significance and reality of grief. In The Sermon on the Mount, Jesus "*mourns with those who mourn*". Here Jesus is removing our tendency to use grief, hurt, pain, as an excuse to justify revenge. "*Look at what you did to me!*" This is born out of the announcement to the shepherds of the birth of Jesus. "*I bring you good news of great...joy.*" Seems the work now was to create another kingdom within this brutal nation state that would subvert the power and authority of the state. It was learning to build this alternative Kingdom... of God, within this earthly kingdom. Mourning is for a period of time, and focuses on what is lost and the pain that comes with it. The pain is still there, it's still bad. But it's time to be transformed through it. When you're injured, you pick yourself up, dust yourself off, and get back in the game. There wasn't time or the need for mourning now. It was time for action. And Jesus spelled out what this action would be. Liberation and freedom. The same message God had for the Israelites in Leviticus 25.

2. God's anger towards his enemies. The second thing Jesus left out from the Isaiah passage is even more intriguing. Not only wasn't God going to mourn with the people in distress. God wasn't going to bring anger towards his enemies. I honestly kind of struggle with this. But Jesus intentionally

left out the part of Isaiah where God was going to express, show, 'smite' his enemies with his anger. There are no enemies in God's eyes anymore. Which seems to mean that if God once did this, Jesus left it out—intentionally, then maybe the time of God's anger towards his enemies is now being expressed differently. It appears Jesus didn't come to bring judgment or condemnation.

John 3:16-17. "For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him.

Jesus didn't come to condemn, judge the world. He came to save it. This wasn't about payback for those who had hurt, and traumatized Israel. Time for retribution is over. This story of Jesus at the synagogue seems to be a declaration of restoration. Economic, social, and relational. Jesus was about real life issues. Money, power, our dignity, and the importance and holiness of freedom and liberty. This is deeply disruptive in a state that worshiped and practiced the brutal exertion of power and control.

God's reign seems to be about liberation and freedom, not vengeance. Because Jesus also said; *"When you have seen me you've seen the father. We are the same. What I am proclaiming is what God is doing in the world."* It's not about making our enemies pay for what they've done. It's not retaliation. It's about restoration. I'm not about this in any way. I want to be like James and John when Jesus ran into opposition. ***"Lord, should we call down fire from heaven to burn them up?"*** I say yes—in abundance. **Do you have this justified theology about people different from us?** Jesus turned, rebuked them, for this wasn't what he came to do. THAT'S why Jesus left off the reading of the scroll of Isaiah about God's anger. The ministry of Jesus was about something bigger than just punishing his opponents. It was a bigger and different work.

IV Challenge.

In this series; ***"The Platform of Jesus"*** we see a continuation of the same work that John was preaching in preparation of the coming of The Christ. That Mary sang when she was told she would be carrying The Messiah. The savior. The same message Isaiah was promising the exiled people of Israel 700 years before the coming of Jesus. And—the very same message God tried to give his people when he chose to rescue them in the exodus. Jesus is reclaiming the prophetic role of speaking for God. To address real everyday problems people have. But this has been the plan and work of God from the very beginning. Unfortunately, like we always do, we get distracted, and sidetracked. We weaponize our hurt, fear, pain into a justification to exact retribution. To pay back people who we call our enemies. Anyone who uses retributive language is speaking in opposition to Jesus. I want us to realign ourselves so we can stay particularly focused and active.

Where can we be at work proclaiming liberty and freedom?

Where can we be at work to bring Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the oppressed will be set free?

Justice, Godly justice, is never about revenge or paybacks—retribution. It's not about defeating our enemies, but restoring humanity. It's about focusing our energies, and attention, and resources, to move past our pain, hurt, trauma, to help build this world Jesus came to establish.

Where do we need to fight our urge, fed by politicians, to bring retribution, vengeance, and condemnation?

What do we need to do to be constantly reminded our work is about healing and restoration?

This is the world that God has always wanted for us. And we get to be about the work of bringing it about. Let's fulfill this work, ***"The Platform of Jesus"***, this very day.