



Luke 4:14–21 (NRSV)

¹⁴Then Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding country. ¹⁵He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone. ¹⁶When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, ¹⁷and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written: ¹⁸“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, ¹⁹to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” ²⁰And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. ²¹Then he began to say to them, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”

Opening

- 1. Pray:** God, we thank you for this space to listen, share, and walk together, even when the world around us looks bleak. Wake us from our complacency, temper our despair with hope, and help us to embody your love in our homes and in our streets. Amen.
- 2. Share:** Who is a person in your life who has best exemplified the way of love? How so?

Dive Into the Text

- Jesus returns to his hometown "in the power of the Spirit." Why is it significant that his first public act is reading a prophet (Isaiah) rather than the legal codes of the Torah?
- Verse 18 lists specific groups: the poor, the captives, the blind, and the oppressed. Why is it dangerous for the church to turn these into "spiritual" categories instead of seeing them as real people with physical needs?
- What does it mean for Jesus to say that this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing?
- Who would have benefitted the most from good news in Jesus' day?

Letter from a Birmingham Jail

I have tried to stand between these two forces, saying that we need emulate neither the do nothingism of the complacent, nor the hatred and despair of the black nationalist. For there is the more excellent way of love and nonviolent protest.

King, Martin Luther, Jr. (Rev. Dr.). *Letter from a Birmingham Jail*. Letter, Birmingham City Jail, 16 April 1963.

Proclaim Good News!

The way of love does not distinguish as the world distinguishes. It does not distinguish based on political affiliation or visa status or immigration status... it is a way that sees each person as needing and earning in God's eyes the love of Jesus.

Heckert, Chris (Rev. Dr.). "Proclaim Good News!" Sermon, Haddonfield United Methodist Church, 18 January. 2026.



Martin Luther King Jr National Historic Site via Flickr user National Parks Service

Go Deeper

1. Dr. King was criticized by "moderate" clergy who told him to "wait" for a more "timely" moment. Where do you hear the call to "wait" for justice in our world today?
2. "We are spiritual beings having a physical experience." How does this perspective change how you treat the physical bodies of those who are suffering (the hungry, the sick, the immigrant)?
3. If the church is "anointed" for the sake of the world, what is one specific "physical" act of service your group could engage in this month to move beyond "do nothingism"?
4. How does the "Methodology of Love" differ from simply being "nice"? Can love be "extreme" or "revolutionary" while remaining nonviolent?

Close in Prayer

Close your time in prayer together.