

## Walk the Talk

Luke 4:31-44

### Introduction

**Fake Musicians:** Politician ran on a platform of helping the poor, he made more than \$360,000 and gave \$1,100 to charity (.3%). It's easy to talk the talk but it's hard to walk the walk. It's easy to look the part without actually being the part (e.g., guitarist with fancy pedalboards vs. real guitar players like Bobby).

**Use My Walk:** In the BeeGees' iconic disco track, "Stayin' Alive" ("ah, ha, ha, ha stayin' alive, stayin' alive") the Gibb brothers say, and I quote, "Well, you can tell by the way I use my walk, I'm a woman's man: no time to talk." To paraphrase, "it's not about chatter; it's about action." Often we relegate faith to something we discuss over coffee rather than something we actually live.

- Jesus doesn't have this problem. Jesus, standing in the synagogue in Nazareth (James' sermon two weeks ago) proclaimed that the prophecy of Isaiah was fulfilled in him that, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon [him]" that he was "anointed... to proclaim good news to the poor... liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, [and] to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor" (Lk 4:18-19; Is 61:1-2).
- His simple explanation of his Messianic identity was enough to get driven out of his hometown. They wanted to kill him (Lk 4:29-30).
- This week's passage proves that he didn't just make audacious claims, he proved everything he said.

**Flesh and Blood:** God's love is not an abstract idea, but a proven reality. The **miracles of Jesus** prove his **authority**, demonstrate his **compassion**, and explain his **purpose**. In these miracle stories, Jesus proves he is the promised one he says he is.

<sup>31</sup> And he went down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee. And he was teaching them on the Sabbath, <sup>32</sup> and they were astonished at his teaching, for his word possessed authority. <sup>33</sup> And in the synagogue there was a man who had the spirit of an unclean demon, and he cried out with a loud voice, <sup>34</sup> "Ha! What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God." <sup>35</sup> But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be silent and come out of him!" And when the demon had thrown him down in their midst, he came out of him, having done him no harm. <sup>36</sup> And they were all amazed and said to one another, "What is this word? For with authority and power he commands the unclean spirits, and they come out!" <sup>37</sup> And reports about him went out into every place in the surrounding region. <sup>38</sup> And he arose and left the synagogue and entered Simon's house. Now Simon's mother-in-law was ill with a high fever, and they appealed to him on her behalf. <sup>39</sup> And he stood over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her, and immediately she rose and began to serve them. <sup>40</sup> Now when the sun was setting, all those who had any who were sick with various diseases brought them to him, and he laid his hands on every one of them and healed them. <sup>41</sup> And demons also came

out of many, crying, “You are the Son of God!” But he rebuked them and would not allow them to speak, because they knew that he was the Christ. <sup>42</sup> And when it was day, he departed and went into a desolate place. And the people sought him and came to him, and would have kept him from leaving them, <sup>43</sup> but he said to them, “I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well; for I was sent for this purpose.” <sup>44</sup> And he was preaching in the synagogues of Judea.

## 1. The Undeniable Authority of Jesus

**Broad-Ranging Authority:** Notice how wide-ranging Jesus **authority** is. His teaching was authoritative (v. 32). He has the authority to rebuke (ἐπιτιμάω) and command this demon. He also rebukes the illness of Simon (Peter)’s mother-in-law (v. 39).

- He essentially tells the demon who is using his loud voice (aka his megaphone, lit. φωνῆ μεγάλῃ) to shut up (be silent) and leave (come out of him) (v. 35).
- He rebukes demons again in v. 41.
- In the gospels he proves his authority over the supernatural and natural, over weather, disease, death, demons, and Satan himself.

**The Demons Tremble:** When Jesus taught in this synagogue, notice the demon’s response: “Ha! What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God.” That word translated “ha!” (ἔα) is an emotional outburst expressing surprise and displeasure (e.g., gasp of surprise when you’re parent walks in the room as your hand is in the cookie jar). The demon has a nervous outburst at the arrival of Jesus. He is feeling threatened because he knows who has authority! “Why are you here, Jesus? Are you going to destroy us? Please don’t hurt us.”

- His authority is both **positional** (e.g., king) and **functional** (e.g., accomplished expert like Superbowl-winning quarterback or respected surgeon).
- If the demons know and accept the authority of God, shouldn’t we?

**Demonology Denied:** Demons are not something we like to talk about much, and if you talk about them too much, you clear the dinner party. It is more acceptable in our culture to believe in God than believe in the devil and demons. People can get behind heaven but hate the idea of hell.

- The abundance of demonic activity in the gospels reminds us that there is an invisible realm that is equally as real. A cosmic battle is going on in these moments. We are such thoroughgoing materialists that we want to believe everything has material causes, so we often miss it.
- Demons are real enemies of God who instigate sin, attack God’s creation, and fight against God’s plan. There are systems and behaviors in our world that can hardly be described as anything less than demonic (e.g., abortion, racism, human trafficking, etc).
- Be careful, however, that you don’t fear demons. They are not equally as powerful as God. They are finite in number and power. They are not omniscient, omnipotent, or omnipresent like God (remember Satan in the wilderness). This isn’t a fair fight (e.g., Yin and Yang, Star Wars Light and Dark, etc.). The demons know this!

- Demons only function under the sovereign permission of God.
- We ignore demons at our peril (they're real), but we also fear them at our peril (they're limited). When we fear God, we need not fear the powers of this present darkness.
  - The best tactic for Satan to trick you is the element of surprise, to trick you into thinking he isn't real. He operates through subtle philosophies and shiny lies, not just Exorcist style possessions.
  - But every difficult circumstance, unpleasant emotion, and temptation isn't a demon. Don't give them too much credit. When you submit yourself to God [and] resist the devil, he will flee from you (Jas 4:7).
  - Demonic power is real and dangerous and can feel impossible to break, until you see the power of God at work. In His presence, what once seemed an insurmountable force crumbles; for against Jesus, no darkness can stand.

**A Simple Word:** A simple word, a command, and demons flee. A simple word and storms stop. A simple word and disease is banished. A simple word and the dead are raised. This is the power and authority of Jesus!

- If he *doesn't* intervene, then he has another, better plan. **He is strong enough to save and good enough to trust.**

**Less Saturated:** Why are there fewer demons (apparently) today? There might be more people, but there aren't fewer demons (so maybe their case load is higher). **(1)** I think we see less demonic activity because we aren't looking. Our focus on materialistic explanations *can* blind us to the reality of spiritual warfare. **(2)** I think we see more demonic activity in the gospels because it is the front lines of the cosmic battle between Jesus and the forces of darkness. You're going to see more bodies and bullets on the front line of the battle than back at the command HQ.

**What About Miracles?:** One of the reasons we see more miracles *per capita* in the gospels is because they serve a particular purpose in a particular place in time. They are **#1 evidence of the divine authority and validation of the messianic identity of Jesus** (e.g., WA storying, he speaks with a word to the wind and the waves, he doesn't pray to God). The Messiah was coming and his ministry was accompanied by restoration of all creation (e.g., disease, tears, suffering, etc.).

- One reason we might see less conspicuous or, at least, frequent miraculous activity is because Jesus has already proven himself to be the promised Messiah by the ultimate miracle of rising from the dead (e.g., we just celebrated Easter). **He has nothing left to prove!**

His miracles are not simply raw proof of his power but also a reminder of his genuine compassion.

## 2. The Unbelievable Compassion of Jesus

**Protect the Possessed:** Have you come to destroy us?... And when the demon had thrown him down in their midst, he came out of him, having done him no harm. The demon is trying to take the man with him (hence destroy us). But even in his deliverance, the man is healed without being harmed.

**Mother-In-Law:** <sup>38</sup> And he arose and left the synagogue and entered Simon's house. Now Simon's mother-in-law was ill with a high fever, and they appealed to him on her behalf. <sup>39</sup> And he stood over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her, and immediately she rose and began to serve them.

- Simon (Peter) was married (undeniable even by Roman Catholics, yet confusing why they make the current pope stay unmarried).
- There is no correlation between demon possession and mother-in-laws. I'm brave, not stupid.

**Weakness:** Where others come to Jesus with their ailments, she is so sick she can't even get out of bed. Jesus comes to her. **What a picture of salvation** (e.g., Eph 2, life-to-death, *Hitch 90/10*). She can't get out of bed. God can go anywhere he wants and he goes to the bedridden, the needy, the sick, the weak (e.g., "rock bottom"; the strong don't think they need a savior, it's why wealth is a greater hindrance to God than poverty). Think about it! God doesn't have to intervene at all. He doesn't have to heal anybody. He doesn't have to save anybody. The fact that he miraculously intervenes is an act of grace.

- "No one escapes this broken world unbroken."
- We all need Jesus to heal us. Which is why the greatest miracle is our salvation (don't get used to the miracles of salvation we've personally experienced and witnessed).

**Compassionate Savior: Jesus can't help what he is, his compassion leaves a trail.<sup>1</sup>**

**Compassion is central to his identity.**

- "The cumulative testimony of the four gospels is that when Jesus Christ sees the fallenness of the world all about him, his deepest impulse, his most natural instinct, is to move toward that sin and suffering, not away from it" (Dane Ortlund).
- When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd (Matt 9:36).
- When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them and healed their sick (Matt 14:14).
- And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him (Lk 15:20).
- Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest (Matt 11:28).
- Jesus sees us, and has a tender heart of love for us. He knows our sin and our suffering and he cares for us.
- He is not disinterested or disconnected. He is not annoyed that you messed up again. He is not bothered that you have come asking for help again (e.g., doctor loves to see sick people).
- Throughout the Bible God sees suffering people and responds with mercy and love.

---

<sup>1</sup> "Jedi cannot help what they are. Their compassion leaves a trail" (Grand Inquisitor).

- Jesus had a personal touch for every person in Capernaum. He laid his hands on every one of them. “Jesus attends to each of the sick individually, an act that shows his concern and compassion... with a personal touch” (Bock). Laying on of hands is the touch of personal and blessing.
- Another purpose of the miracles of Jesus **#2 are to demonstrate his compassionate character.**

**What About My Problems?:** Jesus sees your suffering and has compassion for you. This requires faith and hope, not anchored in wishful thinking, but in trust that the powerful God who loves you knows what’s best for you.

- **(1)** He’s given you the best thing (i.e., salvation, adoption, eternal redemption).
- **(2)** Ultimately, he will restore all of creation. If your suffering isn’t over then we’re not their yet. Keep waiting, keep trusting.
  - These miracles remind us of the original creation and his future kingdom, how it was meant to be and as it will one day become, a kingdom of shalom. In Jesus’ miraculous ministry we get a glimpse, a foretaste, of future glory.
- **(3)** Sometimes what we want is not what is best for us. In Scripture he promises to give us “good things” not all things. We have to consider it possible that our understanding of good and God’s understanding are different!

So we wait with trust and hope, knowing that we don’t deserve anything yet God gave us the best thing in his Son. Everything else is just a bonus.

His miracles are not simply a reminder of his compassion but an invitation to embrace his mission.

### 3. The Unstoppable Mission of Jesus

<sup>42</sup> And when it was day, he departed and went into a desolate place. And the people sought him and came to him, and would have kept him from leaving them, <sup>43</sup> but he said to them, “I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well; for I was sent for this purpose.”

**People Don’t Get It:** One of the great sadnesses of this passage is that, even with the miracles, the people of Capernaum don’t seem to get it.

- They didn’t want him to go. **They want Jesus for themselves.** The text doesn’t tell us the exact motivation of the people but it isn’t too hard to imagine. There was hardly a sick person left in Capernaum!
- They have their cash cow, their own miracle worker. They don’t see the needs of others, or broader mission of the Kingdom of God, they see their personal comfort.
- **How often are we the same way? We love the benefits of God for ourselves but not for others.** We’re worried that their isn’t enough blessing to go around.
- Jesus didn’t come to be their regional deity or personal mascot. He is the God of every tribe, nation, people, and tongue and he came to bring his kingdom to the whole world, not just their town.

**Even the Demons Get It:** I know who you are—the Holy One of God (demon 1, v. 34). And demons also came out of many, crying, “You are the Son of God!” (v. 41).

- Two quick points: **(1)** Knowing who Jesus is is not the same thing as surrendering to him in faith. **Even the demons believe** (Jas 2:19). **(2)** It’s not a good look for demons to recognize the truth of Jesus before you do.
- Jesus wouldn’t let the demons speak up to proclaim his identity: he rebuked them and would not allow them to speak, because they knew that he was the Christ (41). I think he wanted these people to surrender out of faith not pressure.

**Different Rejections:** Comparing the reactions in **Nazareth** (previous passage, two weeks previous) and **Capernaum** is interesting. These different groups have similar reactions for different reasons. They are both **amazed** and both **miss** it (though for different reasons).

- In **Nazareth** they are **amazed** at his audacious claims and authoritative teaching but they reject Jesus in skepticism that this hometown kid couldn’t be who he said.
- In **Capernaum**, they are **amazed** at his powerful miracles and certainly want more of them.

But **amazement isn’t enough**. In **Nazareth** amazement was not enough to overcome disbelief and in **Capernaum** amazement is not the same thing as accepting Jesus’ true identity. The search for spectacle blinded them to the essence of his mission.

- I think both serve as a **mirror** of different ways we can miss Jesus.
- There is more than one way to disobey Jesus.
- You can outright reject him like **Nazareth** or you can happily try to hoard him for your own purposes like the **Capernaum**.
- **Are we like Nazareth, rejecting Jesus because he doesn’t fit our preconceived notions?**
- **Are we like Capernaum, marveling at his works but missing the deeper call to discipleship?**

**Capernaum Conundrum:** (Won’t re-preach James’ message; focus on Capernaum)

- Jesus’ mission is bigger than our personal comfort.
  - It’s an unstoppable mission, so you can either fight it to your frustration or accept it to your joy (e.g., baby Jackson and bathtime).
- There is a difference between comfort and purpose. One values personal preference, the other values the mission. The people of Capernaum wanted the miracles, not the mission. They wanted Jesus’ handiwork, they didn’t want him.
- Jesus enjoyed popular acclaim with the people of Capernaum (which must have been nice after his vocal rejection in Nazareth). He could either settle into that comfort or be compelled to fulfill his divine mission.
  - **Have you ever been compelled to do something? I remember, as a child being compelled to do things by my parents. They offered very compelling reasons (\*wink wink\*).** This is not a forced compulsion but a deep, internal love that compels Jesus.
- He **must** go! One of the most important words in Luke is **must**: **I must** be in my Father’s house (2:49), the Son of Man **must** suffer... be killed, and on the third day be raised

(9:22), he **must** suffer many things and be rejected by this generation (17:25), [to Zacchaeus] I **must** stay at your house today (19:5), this Scripture **must** be fulfilled in me (22:37), the Son of Man **must** be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise (24:7), Christ **must** suffer these things and enter into his glory (24:26, *para*), everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms **must** be fulfilled (24:44).

- **If he must go, we must go.** The mission of Jesus is bigger than **his** personal comfort and it's bigger than **our** personal comfort.
- "Most church members see themselves as the mission of the church. But you are not the mission. You are the missionary" (Ted Kersh).
- We serve a missional God who invites us to join him in that mission.
- For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised (2 Cor 5:14-15).
- "Every Christian is either a missionary or an imposter" (Spurgeon).

## Conclusion

### Miss the Sign: #3 The miraculous ministry of Jesus is ultimately a sign calling us to faith and discipleship.

- Miracles are never the end goal. They are a gift, not the giver. The call of Jesus is to *follow*, to become his disciples and make disciples. These miracles are intended to **get your attention** and call you to respond to Jesus (e.g, siren will get your attention).
- Miracles don't exist merely to show off or fix a problem (though they have these side effects); they are meant to demonstrate Jesus and call you to follow him.
- They prove he is who he says he is, and if he is who he says he is, then you must respond. You can't ignore it, *agnosticism* is not an option.
- Imagine your driving down a dark country road and you see flashing lights. They are flashing to get your attention, the road is closed! Do you keep driving, ignoring the sign? This to your peril? Or do you pay attention and adjust to the truth in front of you?

We have a God of miracles but miracles, *by definition*, are unusual. If they weren't unusual, they wouldn't be miracles they would. **It's why we should pray for miracles but not expect them.**

- Think of Jesus on the cross. He *could* miraculously summon a legion of angels but, instead, embraces suffering and death. The goal is not miraculous deliverance but fulfillment of God's perfect plan, which is **the great miracle**.
- Miracles point to the cross, rather than circumvent it.

Are you like the people of Capernaum who want the miracle but miss the Messiah? You are if...

1. You only pray to God when you need a miracle, never just to spend time with God.
2. Your prayers are only cries for help and never words of gratitude.
3. You get mad that God doesn't bless you with the things you think you need when you think you need them.
4. You get jealous when others receive God's blessings.

5. You see every difficulty as a sign of God's absence rather than an opportunity to pursue his presence.