

# SERMON TRANSCRIPT

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SPEAKER

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SERIES

Sent

PART

2

TITLE

Sent To Set Free

SCRIPTURE

Luke 4:16-30



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Well, good morning, Providence. It's good to see you. My name is Daniel Savage. I'm one of the pastors here at Providence. It's a joy to be here this morning to open the word together. We'll be in Luke chapter four if you have your Bible, and we're going to be continuing our Advent series called Sent. This is a really exciting time to worship together as a church family during Advent as we think about the coming of Christ. It's what Advent means. It means coming. And as we think about why we do all this, why do we put lights everywhere, and we light candles, and we put decorations in our homes. We prepare, we do all these things. We have these countdown calendars all in an effort to create the anticipation of the coming of Christ. All thinking about that first time when he came, when he broke into our world.

And to understand the significance of that, we have to think about the story of the world, God's creation, which we find in the story of the Bible, that God created the world good. He created Adam and Eve, and they were existing in perfect fellowship with him and with one another and everything that God had made was good. And then sin entered the world. In Genesis chapter three, Adam and Eve rebel against God. They sin against him, and darkness and death fell on God's creation like a blanket, and it was dark and it was hopeless. But even then Genesis chapter three, God made a promise that it wouldn't stay that way, that he would send one, the seed of a woman who would come to crush the head of the serpent. And so this darkness that was raining over the world, it stayed, and it stayed dark for a long time.

And there was all this waiting, this anticipating, when would the savior come? Back in 2018, there was a story that caught the world's attention and fascination. There was a soccer team, if you remember in Thailand who had a young coach, a 25 year old coach, and it was 12 players between the ages of 11 and 16. And they decided after practice one day, they were going to go and explore a cave. And so they went into this cave, and they began to explore. And they're in there, I don't know how long, but it began to rain outside, and it began to rain and rain and rain, and the mouth of that cave was taking in water, and it flooded to the point that they couldn't get out. They found a high place in one of the caves and got up on top of a rock, and they sat there, and then they began to wait. And their flashlights began to die, and the cave went completely dark.

And they sat there for nine days in total darkness, wondering if anyone would ever find them, wondering if they would ever see again, the light of day. And as Luke writes about Jesus and writes about him coming into the world, it's a similar scene where the world has for thousands of years been covered in darkness, the reign and rule of death. And there's been all this expectation and all this watching and waiting, wondering if God's promise would be fulfilled. And what we find here in Luke chapter four this morning, as we are going to read this text together here in a minute, is that Jesus comes and says, "I am the one who's come to set you free. I am the one who has come bringing light into the darkness. Hope has arrived." As we think about the context for Luke chapter four, Luke has stated the purpose of his writing is to give an orderly account of all that had happened and present it to us.

He's clearly trying to present it to us in a way that he would present Jesus as the savior of the world. He's been setting the context for Jesus's public ministry. He starts with the miraculous events surrounding the birth of John the Baptist, the one who would come as a forerunner and prepare the way for Jesus. And then he talks about the miraculous events surrounding Jesus' birth. Then he gets to the genealogy of Jesus, the baptism of Jesus, where God the father declares over the son as he comes up out of the water, "This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased."

In the beginning of chapter four is the temptation of Jesus, where he is taken out of the wilderness, out into the wilderness, and he's tempted there and he overcomes that temptation. And now in the middle of chapter 14, Jesus is ready for his public ministry to begin. And he goes to the region of Galilee where he's already started to teach. He's begun to perform miracles, and already a stir is being created. People are wondering who he is, and he's teaching and preaching and moving around. And he comes to Nazareth, which is where we will read this morning. And Nazareth was his hometown, and he comes to Nazareth. And we get this account for the first time of what it is he's been saying. As he's traveling around and preaching and teaching and doing these miracles, what has he been saying? And we're going to find out in the middle of this chapter. Before I read it, let me pray for us. And then we'll read it together.

Heavenly father, be with us now as we read your word. Speak clearly to us, I pray. God reveal yourself to us, help us to see Jesus in all of his glory. God I pray that he would be lifted high and that he would draw us all to himself. We pray these things in his powerful name. Amen.

Luke chapter four, starting in verse 16. This is what it says. "And he, Jesus came to Nazareth where he had been brought up, and as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read. 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. And he began to say to them, 'Today, this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.' 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?' 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 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, Elijah. And none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian.<sup>7</sup> When they heard these things, all in the synagogue were filled with wrath, and they rose up and they drove him out of the town and brought him to the brow of the hill in which their town was built, so they could throw him down the cliff. But passing through their midst, he went away.”

And there’s a lot happening in these verses. The first point I want to show you this morning is that Jesus was sent to set us free. And that’s the first thing that is immediately obvious in these things that Jesus is saying. It’s what he is saying about himself. Jesus goes to his hometown, goes to the synagogue, which was his custom. And he’s asked to read, and most scholars believe that this was a pretty typical practice at this time. Jesus, who already is fairly well known. There’s a lot of curiosity about him and his teaching. And it would’ve been a normal practice for the leaders of the synagogue to see a traveling teacher like that come into their synagogue and invite them to read and then to sit down and give commentary on the scripture that they had read.

And so he’s handed the scroll of Isaiah, and he reads what we know is of Isaiah 61. That’s what he’s reading. So Isaiah 61 was a prophecy about the ministry of the coming Messiah. And it says, “The spirit of the Lord is upon me because he’s anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He’s 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.”

So he reads this section of Psalm 61, which everyone would’ve known was a prophecy about the Messiah. And then he goes and sits down. And it says that all of the eyes in the room were fixed upon him. Now, the reason everyone’s eyes are fixed upon Jesus at this moment is because they’ve heard that Jesus is performing miracles. They’ve heard he’s been doing these incredible things. They’re all expecting a Messiah who they assumed would come and do incredible things. And now he reads this prophecy. He’s handed a scroll of Isaiah. He picks these verses to read, and then he sits down, and they’re all waiting. What is he going to say? And so, what he says is “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” What he is saying to them is, “I am the Messiah. I am the one you’ve been hoping for. I am the long expected savior.”

Because as we think about that, we have to know who is the Messiah? What does that even mean? Well, the Messiah is the appointed one, God’s special anointed. The Old Testament has been pointing forward to an expected savior since Genesis chapter three, which we talked about at the beginning. Since that promise that one would come and crush the head of the serpent, the writers of the old Testament have been slowly unfolding for us the hope and the expectation that one was coming, who would be appointed by God to set his people free. And so Kings and priests were anointed one after another. Prophets would come and they were anointed. And it was becoming clear as we moved through the Old Testament, that one after the other, that’s not him. That’s not him. That’s not him. We’re waiting for someone greater.

The Messiah would be a greater Moses who would be the perfect mediator between God and his people. He would be the son of David, the king of a kingdom that would never end. The Messiah would be a prophet greater than Elisha, who would perform greater miracles and give even more insight into who God was. And from Isaiah, we know that the Messiah would be a suffering servant, who would take away the curse of sin and death through his suffering. In Isaiah 61, we learned that he's coming to proclaim good news to those who are lost and broken. And what Jesus is saying here to the people of Nazareth in his own hometown, he is saying, "I am the promised one. I am the one who has come to set you free. I am here to proclaim good news to the poor. I'm here to set the captives free. I'm here to restore the sight of those who are blind."

In other words, he's saying, "I'm here to bring the kingdom of God. The world has been under the dark reign of sin and the enemy. And I am bringing light into the darkness. I'm going to fix what has been broken. I'm going to reverse the effects of sin in the world. Poverty is the result of sin. And I come to preach good news to the poor. Captivity and oppression are the result of sin. And I come to preach liberty to the captives. Blindness and disease are the result of sin in the world. And I come to give healing to those who are broken." "Behold," he says in Revelation 21, "I've come to make all things new." Jesus brings good news. And that good news is that he is bringing freedom for all people.

So as we think about this proclamation, that Jesus is making, declaring himself the promised one who has come to bring freedom to us all, my question for you is, are you living in the freedom that Jesus brings? Are you living in the fullness of the freedom that Jesus has brought to us? Are you doing what the apostle Paul warned us not to do, which was to give ourselves over again to the yolk of slavery? Are you living in freedom, free from sin, free from the tyranny of death, full of hope that eternal life has come and it's ours. Are you living in that freedom? Are you proclaiming and spreading this freedom? It says multiple times Jesus came proclaiming this good news. He came proclaiming this hope, and he has left it to us to continue to proclaim it. He says, "Go and make disciples."

We are supposed to take this good news and spread it to the ends of the earth. Are you proclaiming and spreading this freedom that Christ has brought into the world? Have you identified four people who are far from God that you could pray for and bless and share this good news with them? Is the light of the kingdom of God spreading wherever you go, where you work, where you live, where you play? Is there a light there because you are there? Everywhere you go there are people who are still trapped in darkness, and you may be their only opportunity to be exposed to the light. Are you proclaiming and spreading this freedom that Jesus brings? Are you rejoicing in this freedom? Let's live in the fullness of the freedom that Christ offers. Let's live in the fullness of the freedom that Christ offers.

The famous hymn, "O Holy Night" says this in the third stanza. "Truly, he taught us to love one another. His law is love and his gospel is peace. Chains shall he break for the slave is our brother. And in his name, all oppression shall cease. Sweet hymns of joy and grateful chorus raise we. Let all within us praise his holy name." Let's rejoice in the freedom that Christ brings. Jesus is telling them that he was sent to set them free.

And now we see their response in verse 22. In verse 22, it says, “And all spoke well of him and marveled at the gracious words that were coming out of his mouth. And they said, ‘Is not this Joseph’s son?’” Now this isn’t an innocent question. As you read it in the text, you might think, oh, they’re just curious. Isn’t this Joseph’s son, but that’s not what they’re saying at all.

And in fact, we get a clearer picture in Matthew and Mark that really what they’re saying is, “This can’t be the Messiah. This is Joseph’s son. This is the carpenter. We know his mom and his brothers and his sisters. This is Jesus. We know him. He’s not the Messiah.” This is a rejection of the proclamation that Jesus is making. He is declaring himself to be the Messiah. And they are saying, “We don’t believe it.” If you’re taking notes, it’s a second point this morning that Jesus is rejected in his hometown. Jesus is rejected in his hometown. He’s come with good news. He’s come announcing that he’s bringing freedom for the oppressed and healing for those who are burdened, but they won’t receive him. They say, “This is Joseph’s son. We know him. We’re familiar with him.” They reject him partly because they were too familiar with who he was.

It’s kind of a side note this morning, but it’s important to note. This can be a danger for us as well as regular church attenders as some of us are that we should fight not to become too familiar with Jesus, too familiar with the gospel, too familiar with Christmas. Ask the Lord to guard your heart that you would never grow too familiar with these incredible truths. You see Jesus’ response to their rejection. In verse 23, it says, “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.’” They wanted him to perform miracles. They wanted him to do these things that they had heard about, but they don’t believe in him.

They are rejecting him. And while you’re at it, they are thinking, instead of doing miracles all over the place, instead of doing miracles over there, why don’t you do miracles here? Why don’t you do miracles among us, among your people? We’re your neighbors. We grew up with you. Do your miracles here. They’re upset with Jesus, and Jesus responds by telling them two stories. He reminds them that Elijah hadn’t helped any of the widows in Israel, but instead he went to a Gentile widow instead. And likewise Elisha, when there was a man who had leprosy, he didn’t heal any of the lepers in Israel, but instead he goes to Naaman, who was a Syrian.

And why does he bring up these two examples? Why does he tell these two stories? Well, what he’s saying to the people of Nazareth, as they’re complaining against him saying, “Why don’t you do your miracles here among us? Why go out there? Why do your miracles over there in that town instead of doing them here?” What he is saying is the kingdom of God is bigger than Nazareth. The kingdom of God is bigger than Israel. He reminds him of the prophets of God that went to people outside of the community of Israel to do their miracles. What he’s saying is that this good news that I’m bringing is for all men to the ends of the earth, and they didn’t like it.

In fact, that's a bit of an understatement. If you read in verse 28, "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." Now, how did these people go from marveling at his gracious words to filled with wrath? How did they turn so quickly? What are they so upset about? What is leading to this response? What is stirring in them? The more I thought about it, the more I thought it must be their pride, their own self-centeredness. They don't want to hear about the needs of those outside their community. They don't want to hear about a global plan of God to save people. They want the plan to be focused on them. They want Jesus to do miracles where they tell him to do miracles. Jesus comes making this free offer of grace and forgiveness and restoration, but pride and self-centeredness lead many to reject him.

These people in Nazareth are not unique. We all know people who have rejected Jesus because they think they can do it on their own. I don't need Jesus. I can do it on my own. I want to be in charge. I want to decide what I can do and what I can't do. I want to be in control of my own destiny. I can do enough good works to earn my way into heaven. I am my own master. You see receiving the freedom that Jesus is offering requires us to humble ourselves, confess our sin and receive his pardon. We must recognize that we are the poor in spirit. We have nothing to bring to the table. We are the captives to sin and death. We are the blind who cannot see. We are the ones who are helpless and without hope.

And yet our pride leads us over and over again to reject him and to think that we can do it on our own. And Jesus told a parable in Luke chapter 18 about people who think they can earn God's favor. It says in verse nine, "He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves, that they were righteous and treated others with contempt. Two men went up into the temple to pray. One a Pharisee and the other a tax collector, and the Pharisee standing by himself prayed this way. 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week. I give a tithe of all that I get.' But the tax collector, standing far off would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner.'"

I tell you this man went down to his house justified rather than the other, for everyone who exalt himself will be humbled. But the one who humbles himself will be exalted." So let's consider this morning how we might be rejecting the freedom that Jesus is offering. Let's consider this morning, how we might be rejecting the freedom that Jesus is offering. Is there pride in your heart that keeps you from receiving the gift that Jesus brings? Is there a pride in your heart that says, I can overcome this? I can do enough good to overcome the bad that I've done. I can earn his favor. Do you need help this morning? Then cry out for mercy. Do you need freedom from the enslaving power of sin? Do you need freedom from your past, freedom from hurts and pains? Then ask him for help. Cry out to Jesus for mercy. Lord have mercy on me, a sinner.



The crowd is stirred up and angry, and they grab Jesus. And they take him to a high place where they intend to throw him down. They intend to take his life, which is a shocking turn of events in this story. Jesus reads from the scroll of Isaiah. He's been honored. They've invited him to speak at the synagogue. And he reads from Isaiah, and they're marveling at the gracious words that are coming out of his mouth. And then they switch to anger and not a small amount of anger, a blinding anger, where they become so enraged that they, as a group, they get him and take him to a high place where they intend to throw him off a cliff.

They're enraged. The last thing I want you to see this morning as we think about this scene is that Jesus alone has the authority to lay down his life. Jesus alone has the authority to lay down his life. You see that in verse 30, the crowd has scooped him up and they've taken him to this high place. And in verse 30, it says this simple sentence, "But passing through their midst, he went away." Now we think about this scene. It's important for us to remember that these people did not forget where Jesus was. They didn't lose focus as a group and get distracted and start thinking about other things. They were as a group moving towards throwing him off a cliff. They were enraged together, and he just passes through their midst, and he escapes them.

This is a miracle. Jesus exerts his divine power, escapes the crowd. In John chapter 10, Jesus is describing himself as the good shepherd. And he says in John chapter 10 that he's the good shepherd because he's the one that's going to lay his life down for the sheep. Listen to what it says, John chapter 10, verse 17. "For this reason, the father loves me because I lay down my life that I may take it up again." Listen to this. "No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge, this authority I have received from my father." Jesus escapes the crowd because it's not yet time for him to die. When the time comes, he will not be forced to die. He won't be trapped and led away to death against his will. He's not at the mercy of the crowd or the high priest or Pontius Pilate or the Roman government.

No, he will willingly lay down his life because he alone has the authority to lay it down. What does this have to do with Jesus being sent to set us free? Well, Jesus evades death here, but the time will come when he lays his life down of his own accord. And it's by laying his life down that he will deliver on this promise of freedom that he's making here. You see, Jesus was bruised so that we could be healed. He became poor so that we could be made rich. He was cast out so that we could be brought near. He was rejected so that we could be accepted. And the crowning accomplishment that fulfills his promise of freedom is that he died to take our place. This is why he was sent.

He was sent to set us free. As we think about this scene and think about the people of Nazareth and how they rejecting this promise of freedom, it begs the question. What will you do with Jesus? Will you reject him in pride and look to yourself or something else for salvation? Or will you receive him? The Bible says in the book of John chapter one verse nine, "The true light, which gives light to everyone was coming into the world. He was in the world and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name,



he gave the right to become children of God who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”

Jesus went to his own people in Nazareth, and they did not receive him. But this promise is ours to all who do receive him and believe in his name. He gives you the right to become children of God. So let's receive Jesus and believe in his name. Let's receive Jesus and believe in his name. Are you fully trusting in Jesus? Is he your only hope in life and death? And what would be keeping you from living in the fullness of this hope and freedom? If you are not a Christian, would you look upon him and trust in him today? Would you believe in his name and receive him as your Lord? He lived a life that you could not live. He was perfectly obedient. He lived a life of complete righteousness, and then he died the death that you and I deserved to die. And he did so, so there could be an exchange, his righteousness given to us and our sin placed upon him so that we could be accepted by God.

And we could be called children of God. Will you believe in Jesus Christ this morning? If you are a Christian, you've believed in him, you've accepted this freedom, but sometimes we don't live in the fullness of this freedom that he's given us. You might be subjecting yourself again to the yoke of slavery because you've been believing that sin is better. You need to be reminded this morning that what Jesus is offering us is far better than what the world has to offer. In Psalm 16:11, it says, “There are pleasures at his right hand forever more.” There is fullness of joy to be found in his presence alone. You might be distracted by temporary things. And this Christmas season, you need to be reminded that freedom, this freedom that Jesus has delivered to you is worthy of your attention and worthy of worship.

Maybe you've become too familiar with these precious truths. And you need to ask God to open your eyes that you might see wondrous things in his word. Hope completely in the freedom of Christ, rejoice in the freedom that he has come to bring us. After nine days of total darkness, 12 teenage boys and one young soccer coach were wondering if they would ever see the sun again, wondering if they would ever play soccer again, wondering if they would ever see their families again, wondering if they would live. And if you can imagine their hope had to be fading. As they were far beneath the Earth's surface, wondering would anyone ever find them, it seemed impossible.

And then all of a sudden, two British divers emerged from the surface of the water and the light from their headlamps filled the cave with light, and those 12 boys and their coach knew all of a sudden that hope had arrived, that they were going to be rescued, that they would get to live. After thousands of years of waiting and looking and expecting and prophets and priests and kings rising only to fall. Then in a sleepy town one night in Bethlehem, light entered the darkness. And the angels said in Luke chapter two, “Fear not for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.” And they announced to shepherds on the side of a hill that a savior was being born, that light had come and they could hope in Jesus. Jesus was sent to set us free.

Will you receive him? Will you rejoice in him and live in the freedom that he has offered? Let's pray together. Heavenly father, thank you for your promise for the fulfillment of that promise in Christ. Thank you for the promises that remain that you will complete the work that you've started in us, that you will return to get us. God, I pray that we would be a people filled with hope, that we would live in the freedom that you bring, that we wouldn't submit ourselves again to a yoke slavery, but we would live in the freedom that Christ has delivered us. God, I pray that we'd be a people filled with faith, looking to you, rejoicing in you. God help us not to put our hope in other things, but to hope in you and in you alone. I pray these things in Jesus name. Amen.

This morning, we're going to celebrate the Lord's table together. There are elements for that in the back. If you didn't get some, you can grab some now. And what we're going to do as we take the bread and the cup together is we will proclaim the Lord's death. We're instructed to do this, and we do it by faith. And we're going to examine our hearts here in a minute, but I'll say this is a time for us as a family of believers, that because this is a proclamation of faith and the body and blood of Christ, it's only for those who have put their trust in Jesus. And so, as we prepare to take the elements, I encourage you to take a few minutes to confess your sins to God and rejoice in his forgiveness as we think about his body and blood. Let's do that together now.



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