

Inauguration and Confirmation

Luke 3:21-4:13

We are going to start a new preaching series today as we continue to seek to grow as disciples of Christ and follow him in the mission he's given. After walking through 1 Corinthians and Exodus this past year I wanted to change things up and focus on one of the gospels and the life and ministry of Jesus. So I've decided to preach mainly from the book of Luke and some from the book of John and focus on Jesus' three years of ministry leading up to his death on the cross.

This is a big portion of Scripture and I'm planning to preach through it in 3 to 4 waves to go along with different phases of Jesus' ministry. So this summer we're going to look at the first part of his ministry that takes place primarily in and around the northern region of Galilee, up by the Sea of Galilee. (Picture) This was Jesus' home area where he grew up and started his adult life as a carpenter. He also started his ministry there. Later on he went to the central regions of Israel and toward the end he was in and around Jerusalem which was in the south.

Today we're going to look at the first writings that tell us about Jesus' adult life, and they describe his final preparations for entering ministry. I was reminded of what my final preparations looked like. I began full time ministry as a Youth Pastor in January 2001 and as I look back I can see about a year and a half of final preparations that took place. It actually began with a time of struggle and depression that I can see God brought me through to break me of some deep-rooted sins that would have ruined me in ministry – sins of pride and self-exaltation had to be broken and I had to be humbled so that I wouldn't use ministry to seek my own glory. It was a painful time of about 9 months, but very important to prepare for ministry.

After that I entered into a more formal classroom preparation where I had intensive classes that were directly related to ministry training. At the end of those I did a 6 month internship where I actually moved here for the first time and did youth ministry under the oversight of the Sr. Pastor. Those were some of my final preparations.

Jesus' preparations looked a bit different. He was about 30 years old at that time and even though nothing is written about his adult life leading up to that it is presumed that he was a carpenter in Nazareth. He was the oldest son of Joseph

the carpenter, who had died, and Jesus likely took over the business with his younger brothers. We don't know the details of his ministry training as a teen and young adult other than he was very interested in the things of God and grew in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man.

The first things recorded about his adult life speak of two preparations just before he began ministry – one was his baptism in the Jordan River and the other was a time of fasting and temptation in the wilderness. I want to look at these two experiences this morning so we can see more clearly who Jesus is and admire him and want to become like him.

Luke chapter 3 talks about a man named John who came out of the wilderness and called the people of Israel to repent and be baptized to prepare for one who would come after him. The people were wondering if this would be the Messiah. And it's during that time that we get the first look at Jesus as an adult. Matthew records that Jesus came from his home in Galilee to where John was baptizing in order to be baptized by him. When John saw him he said it should be the other way around – he should be baptized by Jesus. But Jesus insisted and said, "Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." And John consented. Luke picks it up from there...

Read Luke 3:21-22.

Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heavens were opened, ²² and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form, like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."

I see this as a kind of inauguration into ministry, and there are three parts to it. The first was that he identified himself with the people he would be ministering to. He did this by being baptized in the first place. John was preaching a baptism of repentance and everyone who felt led to repent was baptized as a sign of their repentance. Jesus had no need for repentance and thus no need to get baptized for that reason. Yet he insisted. The reason he gave John was that it would be fitting to "fulfill all righteousness." The Reformation Study Bible says, "In order for "all righteousness" to be fulfilled, Jesus had to be identified with his people as the bearer of their sins." So by being baptized, he was identifying with his people – he would be their representative as he eventually died on the cross and rose from the dead, which is what John's baptism pointed to.

The second part of this inauguration into ministry was his anointing by God to be set apart for his Messianic ministry. This happened when the Holy Spirit descended upon him like a dove. It was a visible sign of God's anointing, affirmation, and empowerment for ministry. We just got done studying the ministry of the Tabernacle and the priests and everything that was used in that ministry had to be anointed with oil to be set apart and holy for God's service. I see that happening when the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus after his baptism.

The third part of Jesus' inauguration went along with this. As the Holy Spirit descended, a voice from heaven declared: *"You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."* And I see this as a public affirmation by God the Father.

So in this inauguration, Jesus transitioned from his role of carpenter in Nazareth to ministry as the Messiah. He identified with the people he came to save, was anointed by the Holy Spirit, and publicly affirmed by God the Father.

You might look at it like a pastor's ordination. Here's a picture of my ordination where the district superintendent, elders and other key men in my life laid hands on me and Amy and prayed for us as they publicly appointed me to pastoral ministry. Jesus' baptism was a type of ordination, only much, much more important.

That's the first of Jesus' final preparations for ministry. The second is much different. After being inaugurated into his new ministry role, the Holy Spirit led him into the nearby wilderness for his final preparation.

Read Luke 4:1-2.

And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness² for forty days, being tempted by the devil. And he ate nothing during those days. And when they were ended, he was hungry.

So he went from an uplifting, heavenly experience to a time of suffering and difficulty in the desert during which he would have become very weak and vulnerable. The author of Hebrews tells us that he had to be made like us in every way and took on a body of flesh, just like ours. So he had a human nature with its weaknesses and limitations as well as its susceptibilities to human desires and cravings. Would the Son of God be able to overcome the temptations and

weaknesses that we all experience and succumb to at times? Could he be a worthy human representative to carry out his role as Messiah and Savior of the world if he was clothed in a human body?

I look at Jesus' time of fasting and temptation in the wilderness as a proving grounds prior to entering ministry – not that there was some doubt as to whether or not he could fulfill his calling or had to prove himself capable before God would let him begin ministry – but that God could use the wilderness experience to prove to the heavenly realms that Jesus of Nazareth was worthy to fulfill his calling. So I see the this time in the wilderness as Jesus' confirmation to the role of Messiah.

One of the highest offices in the United States government is that of a Supreme Court Justice and nominees must go through a careful confirmation process to prove they are fit for the position. They are first sent to the Senate Judiciary Committee for consideration. The committee collects all necessary records about the nominee from various sources and then holds hearings. During the hearings, witnesses present their views. Senators question the nominee on his or her qualifications, judgment, and philosophy. The Judiciary Committee then votes on the nomination and sends its recommendation to the full Senate. The full Senate also debates the nomination until they finally vote. The whole process is to confirm that the nominee is qualified to fulfill their role.

And I think that's what God was doing with Jesus in the wilderness – his confirmation as the Messiah. So with his human body and human nature, after fasting for 40 days and being weak, vulnerable and incredibly hungry, Satan is allowed to take his best shot at getting him to fall before he even begins his ministry. Satan tries three different times. Here's the first...

Read Luke 4:3-4.

³ *The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread."* ⁴ *And Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone.'"*

Here, we're obviously dealing with Jesus' hunger and desire to eat. I have no idea what hunger is like after not eating for 40 days, but it must have been terrible. I also see Satan tempting him to prove himself when he says, "If you are the Son of God" kind of like, "If you really are the Son of God, prove it by doing a miracle." It

can be assumed that God made it clear to Christ that it was his will for him to fast in the wilderness, so for Christ to end the fast prematurely in order to satisfy his hunger or prove his power as the Son of God would have been to disobey God's will. Another aspect to this temptation was the unauthorized use of divine power for his own desire and will and not that of the Fathers. So there are a lot of things going on here.

Jesus' response shows you what was on his mind. *"It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone.'" Matthew records that he also said: "but by every word that comes from the mouth of God."* This is a direct quote from Deut. 8:3 and I think Jesus had in mind the context of that verse. Moses was telling the people of Israel to remember how God led them in the wilderness for 40 years to humble them by testing them to know what was in their hearts, whether they would keep his commandments or not. He humbled them by letting them hunger and then by feeding them with manna that he might make them know that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.

So by quoting that verse I believe Jesus was declaring that his time of hunger in the wilderness was intentional for him to humble himself before God and walk in obedience to him and trust him, even when we was desperately hungry, weak, and suffering. Therefore he would not eat or turn stones into bread – not unless the Father told him to. I see this as an awesome demonstration of who Christ was – completely humble, submissive, and obedient to the will of the Father.

So, Satan tried again.

Read Luke 4:5-8.

And the devil took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, ⁶ and said to him, "To you I will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will. ⁷ If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours."⁸ And Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve.'"

Here Jesus is tempted with an offer to have the authority over the world. God had temporarily given that authority to Satan and Satan was offering to give it to Jesus if he would worship him. One of the greatest temptations of man is the desire for power, control, and authority and in his flesh, this would have been appealing to

Jesus. He wouldn't have to suffer or go through the agony of the cross to be receive authority, he could just have it.

But Jesus responded by quoting from Deut. 6:13: *"You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve."* In that context, Moses again is speaking to the people of Israel and tells them that when they came to the Promised Land they would be given good cities that they didn't build, houses full of things they didn't fill, cisterns they didn't dig, and vineyards and olive trees they didn't plant. He warned them that after having all their needs met by God, they were to be careful not to forget him. It was he alone that they should fear. He alone they should serve. By his name alone they should swear. They should not go after any other gods.

By quoting from that passage it shows me that Jesus recognized God alone would give him authority over all the earth, not Satan, and he would never forget that by accepting Satan's offer and worshipping him. He would trust in God and worship him and serve him only. Here again is an awesome demonstration of Christ's total submission and devotion to God alone.

Satan made one more attempt.

Read Luke 4:9-13.

⁹ And he took him to Jerusalem and set him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, ¹⁰ for it is written, 'He will command his angels concerning you, to guard you,' ¹¹ and 'On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.'" ¹² And Jesus answered him, "It is said, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'" ¹³ And when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him until an opportune time.

This temptation seems to be looking for Jesus to fail in the area of pride and presuming upon the promises of God in order to prove himself. Like the first temptation, Satan seems to be questioning Jesus' position as the Son of God, calling him to prove it by jumping from the pinnacle of the temple. He actually quotes Psalm 91:11-12 in his challenge, which was a promise of God's protection. "Prove you're the Son of God by jumping, because God promised he would command his angels to save you. Maybe you're not really the Son of God?"

Jesus didn't fall for it. Instead he quotes Deut. 6:16 right back at him: "You shall not put the Lord your God to the test." In that context the people of Israel put God to the test by expecting him to provide water for them in the desert. They wanted God to prove himself by telling Moses, "Is the Lord among us or not?" Trying to manipulate God by using his promises to get something. God is not a puppet. He cannot be manipulated. He is to be trusted, obeyed, and submitted to. And that's exactly what Jesus would do in the wilderness.

So every attempt Satan made to get Jesus to fall failed. In each of these temptations, when Jesus was at his weakest, most vulnerable state as a human – a state in which all of us would probably crumble and give in – he didn't even flinch. He proved before Satan and all the heavenly host that he was worthy to begin his ministry as God's anointed.

Thus, Jesus was inaugurated and confirmed for ministry. The final preparations were complete and in the next sermon we will look at the beginning of his ministry.

I don't know about you, but reading these things and seeing the strength, humility, and obedience of Christ makes me love him more and more. This is the one we've been called to follow. He identified with you and me, was anointed and approved by God, and he proved his worth even in his weakest state. Seeing what he was like makes me love him more and want to become more like him. And today we see that he was humble before God and completely obedient. He surrendered his will to the will of the Father and was willing to do what God called him to do and trust him completely.

Is there one of these ways that you need to grow to become more like him? Let's pray and ask the Holy Spirit to empower us to do so.