

Confidence Luke 4:14-41

We are in the book of Luke this morning. We've begun to look at the life and ministry of Jesus and so far have spent most of our time in the book of John, because he writes about things early on in Jesus' ministry that the other gospel writers don't. But now we're back to Luke and will be looking at part of chapter 4 today.

To give some context for what we will be reading, Jesus is just returning home to Galilee (Picture) after being on a trip to Jerusalem where he went to celebrate the Passover. This was near the beginning of his ministry. On his way to Galilee he stopped in Samaria, which we saw a couple weeks ago, and there was a great response to the gospel – many Samaritans believed in him. And now he's back in Galilee, ready to begin an extended season of ministry in that region.

As I spent time in Luke 4, the thing that struck me was a particular characteristic of Jesus that seemed to really impress people as they were first getting to know him. And it's a characteristic I think we need to see clearly in our relationship with him because I think it will help us to be more confident in living for him and carrying out his mission to make disciples.

Last Sunday, Kent spoke about what a disciple is and what a disciple does and one of the fundamental things a disciple does is make disciples. We are not just to be focused on our own spiritual growth, we're to be focused on helping others grow as well. Jesus told his disciples in Matthew 28:19-20: *"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you."* That's our calling as followers of Christ.

But if you're like me, one of the things you struggle with in this calling is a lack of confidence. I may seem confident when I'm up here preaching on Sundays, but the truth is that I struggle with insecurity when it comes to making disciples. How can I convince anyone to begin to follow Christ? Why would anyone listen to me? How can I inspire someone to grow? These insecurities often prevent me from stepping out in faith to do what Christ has called me to do. Why am I not more confident, and how can that begin to change in me?

The characteristic of Christ that we're going to see today is what we need to see and embrace in order to have the confidence we need to do what he's called us to do.

Read Luke 4:14-15.

¹⁴ And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and a report about him went out through all the surrounding country. ¹⁵ And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all.

You can see that upon returning to Galilee, Jesus jumped right into this season of ministry in that region and went on a preaching tour to the different towns and villages. He would preach in their synagogues according to their customs. In Leon Morris' commentary on Luke, he notes: *"At that time there were no ministers as we understand the term, but the local synagogue authorities would invite people to read and preach."* Jesus was invited because he was already gaining notoriety in that area. John 4:45 says, *"The Galileans welcomed him, having seen all that he had done in Jerusalem at the feast. For they too had gone to the feast."* So he had an open door to preach in their synagogues and that's how he began to minister to the people in that region.

Luke goes on to tell how things went when he preached in his hometown of Nazareth. (Map) We're not going to look at that, but basically it started well and took a quick turn for the worse because he exposed how fickle their admiration of him was and how Gentiles were more open to the prophets than their ancestors were. They didn't like that and took him out to a cliff to throw him over, but it says he just walked right through them and went on his way – perhaps some kind of miracle. He was unwelcome there and never returned.

Instead, he moved to Capernaum on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee, which became his home base for ministry in that region. And as he began ministry he demonstrated something that astonished the people – something much different than what they saw in their religious leaders and that's what I want us to see today. It's highlighted in several ways.

Read Luke 4:31-32.

And he went down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee. And he was teaching them on the Sabbath,³² and they were astonished at his teaching, for his word possessed authority.

“They were astonished at his teaching because his word possessed authority.” When Mark writes about the same thing, he says in Mark 1:22: *“And they were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes.”* So there was something different about his preaching that astonished the people, and it had to do with his authority. That’s the first place we see this characteristic. The next is in the following verses.

Read Luke 4:33-37.

And in the synagogue there was a man who had the spirit of an unclean demon, and he cried out with a loud voice,³⁴ “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.”³⁵ 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.³⁶ 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!”³⁷ And reports about him went out into every place in the surrounding region.

Again we see the people were amazed, and again it had to do with his authority. He had authority over unclean spirits – when he commanded them, they came out. The people were amazed. He had authority in his teaching and authority over demons, and there’s one more way we see it in this passage.

Read Luke 4:38-41.

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.³⁹ And he stood over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her, and immediately she rose and began to serve them.

⁴⁰ 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.⁴¹ 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.

So not only did he have authority in preaching and over demons, but he also had authority over sickness and disease. He wasn't at all like the teachers of the law, and the notable difference that people saw was that he had authority.

I looked up the meaning of the Greek word behind "authority" and it means "a conferred power; delegated empowerment, authorization, operating in a designated jurisdiction." The NIV Study Bible says: "It was Christ's inherent authority that amazed. He did not quote human authorities, as did the teachers of the law, because his authority was directly from God." So when Jesus was doing ministry he was operating with the direct authority of Almighty God. And with that authority, his preaching had power, he commanded demons and they obeyed, and he commanded sickness and disease and it obeyed.

Jesus had authority.

I realized something this week about my lack of confidence and insecurity when it comes to doing what Christ has called me to do. When I feel like that, I ask myself these kinds of questions: How can I convince anyone to begin to follow Christ? Why would anyone listen to me? How can I inspire someone to grow?

I'm filled with doubt and I don't step out in faith because I know the answers to those questions: I can't convince anyone to follow Christ. I can't make anyone listen to me. And I can't inspire anyone to grow. I can't... I don't have what it takes.

But there is someone who does. There is someone who has the power and authority to do all those things and he's with me wherever I go.

At the beginning of this sermon I shared the Great Commission, which is what Jesus calls us to do as his disciples: "Therefore go and make disciples..." But I didn't read the whole story. Here's the whole story...

Read Matthew 28:16-17.

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. ¹⁷ And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted.

This was after the resurrection and right before Jesus ascended to heaven. The disciples saw Jesus – he was right there with them. When they saw him they worshipped him, but it also says that some doubted. I don't think they were doubting whether or not Christ was real or had risen from the dead, because he was right there in front of them. They weren't doubting him, they were doubting something else, and I think it was themselves. By that point they knew that Jesus was going to depart from them. He was going to ascend into heaven, and then what? What were they supposed to do? How were they supposed to continue what he was doing? They doubted, they felt insecure, they didn't have confidence. And this is what happened...

Read Matthew 28:18-20.

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

He called his disciples to make disciples, but that calling was wrapped in the reality of his God-given authority and the promise that he would always be with them. (Next slide) And that's where confidence comes from. The one with all authority in heaven and on earth – with all authority to fulfill his calling – is with us. The one who spoke with authority, drove out demons, and healed the sick, is with us wherever we go.

I've been looking for confidence in the wrong person. Confidence to carry out our mission cannot come from depending on my own strength and abilities. It can only come when we realize that the One with all authority in heaven and on earth is with us wherever we go. I can't make anything happen, BUT HE CAN.

That's something I need to re-train myself to think and if you struggle with the same thing, I encourage you to do the same.