

Luke 4:14–21, “A Fulfillment Epiphany”

1/23/22 3rd Sunday after Epiphany

Pastor Alex Amiot

Luke 4:14–21 (NKJV)

¹⁴ Then Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and news of Him went out through all the surrounding region. ¹⁵ And He taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all.

¹⁶ So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read. ¹⁷ And He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written:

¹⁸ *“The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me,
Because He has anointed Me
To preach the gospel to the poor;
He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted,
To proclaim liberty to the captives
And recovery of sight to the blind,
To set at liberty those who are oppressed;
¹⁹ To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.”*

²⁰ Then He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on Him. ²¹ And He began to say to them, “Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”

Where is this leading? How will this end? Something has started, what will be its fulfillment—the end result? When I brought our three-year-old to the Emergency room last week, I wondered how it would end. Some kind of sickness had begun, but what would be the final outcome? His oxygen was low, his temp was elevated, his appetite was suppressed. Was it just a cold that was especially hard on him, or was it something much worse?

We didn’t know, and the doctor didn’t know, so our 8:00 p.m. ER visit ended with a 2:00 a.m. ambulance ride to Fargo for more help and further evaluation. We thank God that he was basically fine by the time we got to Fargo and in the end he just needed oxygen support for some of those evening and late night hours. The fulfillment ended up being a return to home and a restoration to mostly decent health about 24 hours after it began.

There was one point mid-morning in Fargo that the end became clear to me. Even though we were still in the middle of Ephraim’s hospitalization, it was suddenly clear to me and to the doctors how it would end. They had removed his oxygen support and he was remaining stable on his own. The epiphany that struck me at that moment was that we would be going home that night—my son would be fine.

In today's text there's a fulfillment epiphany too. The people were in the middle of their lives, each facing their own trials and suffering, but Jesus said something that suddenly made it clear how all their trouble would end. The troubles they were facing have been around since the Fall into sin. Their loved ones were dying, they were facing temptation and sin, they were troubled by droughts and storms, they were plagued with doubts and fears and sinful pride.

In Luke chapter four, the people were in the middle of all of this, as are we. How will it all end? The Jews had been waiting for the One to come who would be the Messiah foretold by the prophets. Today's Old Testament lesson spoke of the coming Servant of God who would fulfill God's promises to restore everything that had crumbled in creation ever since the Fall.

Isaiah 61 says that the promised Messiah would restore sight to the blind; restore liberty to the captives; restore freedom to the oppressed; heal the broken hearted. Isaiah made it sound like the Messiah would make this world the Garden of Eden again! In the Garden of Eden there was no captivity, oppression, blindness or any other physical infirmity. There were no broken hearts in God's very good creation.

But then sin entered the world, and death through sin. And ever since, there has been a longing for Eden again. Isaiah 61 paints Eden-like images of restoration that will come through the work of God's Servant, the Messiah, the Anointed One..

When Jesus came to the synagogue in Nazareth, that's the part of Isaiah He read from. Much like we do today, He read a sermon text and then preached a sermon. The custom was a bit different then—you stood up to read Scripture, then you sat down to preach.

As He stood, the scroll of Isaiah was given to Him. He unrolled it to chapter 61 and read the description of what the Messiah, the Servant of God, would come to do. Then Jesus gave an eight-word sermon. Luke 4:20 says, "and the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on Him." ²¹ And He began to say to them, "Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

He's basically saying, "You know that promised Servant of God who is coming to restore you? I'm Him!" This was supposed to be a fulfillment epiphany for them. Right in the middle of living their lives in a broken and sinful world Jesus told them how that brokenness would end. He would end what was broken and hurt by restoring it and bringing healing.

In our sin we have broken our relationship with God. As we confess our sins and daily believe in His forgiveness on account of Jesus Christ we are inwardly restored. The external restoration is yet to come though. In this fallen world all creation groans. Jesus came to bring full restoration—to make Eden again when He comes to judge the living and the dead.

Because Jesus entered our brokenness and bore our brokenness in His body on the cross, He can heal our broken hearts. Because He bore the sicknesses and griefs of those whom He healed He can carry us in our trouble. Because He allowed His body to die our death He gives us His life. Because He rose from the dead and defeated death we fear no evil, not even dying. Because He ascended into Heaven we have confidence that there is power in His Name. Because He sent His Holy Spirit we have His presence, His comfort, His guidance, and His revealed

Word in the Bible to direct our hearts always to Jesus and to lead us on a godly path of repentance and faith.

We're all in the middle of our lives and only God knows how much time we have left on earth. Consider what you're facing, and remember who has promised to be there with you through it all. Jesus said, "Behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." And when the uncertainty and worry of life begins to take hold, remember the fulfillment epiphany from today's text where Jesus revealed that He was the promised Messiah. If the end is in Jesus' hands, it's going to be okay. If the end includes Jesus raising the dead and bringing all who believe into life eternal in the new heavens and new earth, then that's something I'm looking forward to.

Peter wrote in 2 Peter 3:13, "But according to His promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells." When Christ returns the dead in Christ will rise, we will be caught up in the air with them, and God will create new heavens and a new earth. That full restoration of Eden will come about because of the work of the Messiah, the Servant of God prophesied in Isaiah 61.

Those who were healed by Jesus and those who witnessed Him heal and restore people were getting just a foretaste, just a preview of the great restoration that He would usher in on the last day. Paul writes in Romans 8 about the future fullness of this restoration and the present longing that we have for it. Romans 8:18–25 says, "¹⁸For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. ¹⁹For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. ²⁰For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; ²¹because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. ²²For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. ²³Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body. ²⁴For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? ²⁵But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance."

While we wait with patience for our faith to become sight, take comfort in the restoration that God daily and abundantly brings about in your soul through His Word. We pray that He would give us peace to guard our hearts and minds from doubt and despair as we see the lack of restoration all around us.

In His short sermon, Jesus directs our eyes to Himself. You might be carrying a heavy load and facing a lot. How will it end? Look to Jesus. He restores your soul now through faith, and He will restore all things when He returns. He is the fulfillment of all the Old Testament promises of a savior, and He will bring about the fulfillment of all His promises to restore your body and soul and make all things new. So may the peace of God which surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.