



## Release

Pastor Alex Himaya

It's great to be back with you again today. In fact, the more I'm with other pastors, the more grateful I am for healthy ones and you happen to have one of the healthiest ones I've ever met in Ted. Believe that or not, you have one of the healthiest pastors and his wife and his family. I just want to say thank you for being a church that allows that to happen. Sometimes pastors are unhealthy because the church won't allow for them to be healthy, so I want to thank you for that. In fact, in his absence... He doesn't know I'm saying this. I really want you to pray for him if you don't already. You need the practice and he needs the prayer. If you would do that on a regular basis... In fact, it ought to be a daily routine for the children of God in a faith family to pray for the pastor and the pastor's family and to pray for God's favor on them.

At Woodland Hills, if you are a member or a guest, Woodland Hills loves to give, so today, we are going to give an offering, our tithes and offerings to the Lord. There are baskets at the end of the row. If you would go ahead and pass those at this time, and bless the Lord not just with your presence, but with your treasure. Jesus said your heart will follow your treasure. So, when you want your heart to get into the things of God and into the kingdom of God, the fastest way for that to happen is for you to take your treasure and put it in the kingdom of God.

Sometimes I talk to people and they're like, "I don't know what all the fuss is about the stock market." I ask what they mean and they say, "I don't care." I say, "Put money in it and you will care what happens in the stock market." The same thing is true with the kingdom of God. That principle plays out because it came out of the mouth of Jesus. "Where your treasure is, your heart follows it." So, where you want your heart to be, put your treasure there and your heart will chase after it.

Last weekend, for three days, I was in Pigeon Forge, Tennessee, preaching to this massive youth conference. There was literally a clock right there on the stage. If I wasn't walking off the stage when that thing hit zero, I wouldn't make it to the next event. They used four convention centers and I walked right off the stage and into a car and they drove me to another stage and literally as I walked into the building, the worship leader was saying, "And welcome Alex Himaya..." and I walked out on the stage. They were just back to back, all weekend long, Saturday, Sunday, and Monday.

But, as I drove through Pigeon Forge, I thought the City Planners of Pigeon Forge and Branson must be related. There are family blood ties there. It's like a replica... Their road scenario is a little bit better than Branson. Their highways are wider. They didn't try to just pave where the cow walked and try to run cars over it.

I love Christmas season. I take several weeks off at Christmas because we do a gazillion Christmas Eve services at our churches in Tulsa. So, following that, I take a few weeks off. I don't travel at all; I just hang out with my family. We have some rite of passages that play out. Several years ago, I introduced my boys to all of the Rocky movies. We watch all the Rocky movies on Christmas Eve because it's Christmas Eve. We watch all of those movies and we get excited. Star Wars is kind of in our world now and we saw Rogue One. How many of you saw Rogue One? It's fantastic, right? They did a great job at tying that back to the 1977 movie.

This year, we had another rite of passage where I introduced some of my children to one of my favorite movies of all time. It's the movie dubbed the greatest movie of all time not to have won Best Picture of the Year, nor Best Actor of the Year. The reason it didn't win either of those awards – though it was up for seven awards that year – was because it was just bad luck that it came out the same year as Forest Gump. Any other year and it would have swept all the motion picture awards, but that year Forest Gump stole all of them and so Shawshank Redemption now is an unawarded movie.

How many of you love this movie? We love it so much that TNT knows that and they play it every hour on the hour all year long. I'm suckered into it every time. If I'm flipping channels and come to it, I just stop and watch. So, I introduced some of the kids to it. They didn't want to watch a movie from 1994. I said, "It's not all that long ago. I was married in 1994 and so we are going to watch this movie." They loved the movie.

If you don't know that movie, you need to grow up. Morgan Freeman is the main actor in that movie, but there is another main character who was falsely accused and put in prison. But, there's this side character who's not a main character in the movie. His name is Brooks and he was in his 70s. He had been in that prison for 50 something years. I don't remember the details of this story, but it was 50 something years. He ends up being released. He had a pet bird, a baby bird he nursed back to health. He ends up being released. And that little sideline theme in the movie... It's not a main theme, but the sideline theme in that movie has this elderly gentleman bagging groceries at the Food Way. He had been in prison for 50 something years, so he had seen a few cars before he went to prison and then he comes out and cars are everywhere. One of the lines is, "The world has gone and gotten itself in a hurry."

He ends up writing back to his friends in prison and he says to them, "I think maybe I'll just rob the Food Way and maybe even kill the boss man, so that they will put me back where I'm comfortable." While I was watching that movie with my kids, it was as if the Holy Spirit spoke to my heart in that moment and said, "He's forgiven, but he's not free." I thought through that statement and I wrote it down because I really sensed it was from the Lord and then the Holy Spirit followed it up and said, "A lot of my people are forgiven, but are not free."

Today, I want you to know the truth of the world that you and I live in. It is that the churches are filled with men and women who are forgiven, but not free. They're filled with men and women who are redeemed, but not free or released. I just want you to know that today your heavenly Father wants you not just be forgiven; he wants you to be released and he wants you to be set free.

Today, I want us to look at a passage of scripture. If you have your Bible, we're going to go to Luke 4, but there are all kinds of places in the gospel where Jesus tells us why he came and tells us his purpose for coming onto Planet Earth. There is one place in Luke where he says, "I came to seek and save those that are lost." In fact, the name Jesus means Jehovah saves.

There is another place where Jesus said that he came not for the healthy, but for the sick. There are all kinds of prophecies in the Old Testament that talk about why Jesus would come and what Jesus' purpose would be when he came upon this earth. But, there's this one passage in Luke 4 where Jesus, in that passage, goes back to his hometown, goes back to his home church or back to his home synagogue and he stands up to read the scriptures. It's a phenomenal passage of scripture.

I just want to read it to you beginning in verse 17 of Luke 4. **17 The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him.** By the way, Isaiah is the longest scroll in the Hebrew Bible. It is this massive two-roll scroll that is very difficult to handle. It was handed to Jesus. **He unrolled the scroll and found the place where this was written: 18 "The Spirit of the Lord is on me...** If you write in your Bible, circle that phrase. We're going to come back to that phrase in just a minute. **...for he anointed me (1) to bring Good News to the poor.** If you write in your Bible, number these things that Jesus said that were going to happen in him and through him. **He has sent me (2) to proclaim that captives will be released...** Circle that word in your Bible that the captives would be released. **...(3) that the blind will see, (4) that the oppressed will be set free, 19 and (5) that the time of the Lord's favor has come.**

Do you believe that today? Do you believe that the Lord's favor has come and that's the time you and I are living in? As the children of God, we need to declare that as inaugurations are happening, as marches are happening and as protests are happening. We need to declare that Jesus has said this is the time of the Lord's favor. In fact, let's pray together this morning.

Father, in this place, we ask for your favor. I ask for your favor on the preaching of your word. I ask for the favor on the hearing of your word. Father, most of all, we ask for your favor on the response today, that your favor would come and that we would truly believe that today we do live in the time of the Lord's favor. In Jesus' name, we pray, Amen.

Now we started in Verse 17, but I want to back up just a minute and get a running start into this passage that we just read. In Verse 14, it says, **Then Jesus returned to Galilee...** That's where he was hanging out and living, around the Sea of Galilee. It's at the Northern part of Israel and he goes to Galilee and now look at that next word **...filled with the Holy Spirit's power.** He was filled with the Holy Spirit's power. That's what I want to talk to you about today. I want to talk to you about this release of the Holy Spirit's power in us and through us, that we may be all that God wants us to be and that we wouldn't be just forgiven, but we would be released. In order for you to be released from the oppression and the attack on your life, what you need is a release of the Holy Spirit's power in your life.

It's funny to me because I speak in all kinds of churches. I speak in Pentecostal churches and I speak in Independent Baptist churches and they are not alike. They're not alike at all. And the diversity in the Church of Jesus Christ today, as it relates to the Holy Spirit, is unbelievable, in fact, it's humorous it's so unbelievable. You've got Christians on one side of the equation who are terrified of the Holy Spirit and

his power. In fact, he's a ghost to them. They would call him the Holy Ghost. And they don't want anything to do with that ghost. Then you have people on the other side who are just flat crazy. If you just mention the Holy Spirit, they want to run laps around the worship center. I am for the synergy, by the way, of getting worship and workout all in together and just combining my schedule because I can't get it all done every week.

When I was a kid... I don't know if I told you this before, but when I was a kid, there were only two groups of people talking about the Holy Spirit at all. Only two groups of people ever mentioned the Holy Spirit. With one, all the females wore jumpers and they churned their own butter and they wore no makeup at all and they did it in the name of the Holy Spirit. Then there was another group that had a lot of makeup on and really crazy hair and jewelry like costume jewelry, right? And yet they did it in the name of the Holy Spirit. Both groups did it in the name of the Holy Spirit. For the record, I would say to you I think you should wear some makeup, but I think putting it on with a putty knife is a little excessive.

We're talking about the Holy Spirit and the release of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Before we move forward in Luke 4, what we really have to do is go backward. We have to go find that place in the scripture where we find out how and when and where Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit. In this case, you don't have to go far. In fact, if you just flip back one page to Luke 3. In Verse 20 or 21, I think it is, you find this story where this guy named John the Baptist is hanging out in the Jordan River and he's baptizing people. Occasionally, I will meet people who say to me, "I'm Baptist because John was." I just think *how ignorant, bless your heart, right?* Baptist was not his denomination, that was his hobby. He was a baptizer. He was baptizing people in the Jordan River, so we called him John the Baptist because he baptized people. We do the same thing in our culture all the time. Cedrick the Entertainer entertains or he tries, right. Chance the Rapper raps. Larry the Cable Guy... It doesn't work with all of them, but we have these things and John is this baptizer and he's baptizing people.

Jesus shows up in the scene in Luke 3 and he says, "John, I need you to baptize me," to which John said, "No way. I need you to baptize me. You're Jesus. I'm not even fit to tie your sandals." And Jesus said, "No, I want you to baptize me."

As it turns out, Jesus knew what he was talking about. The Bible says that in that story, John put him in the water and took him under the water and when he came out of the water, the Holy Spirit descended on him like a dove and it was filling his life. At that moment, I think in Verse 22, there was this voice, which is such the remarkable part of that story. The voice of God the Father spoke and all heard it. He said, "You are my son. You are the Son of God and with you I am well pleased." This is God the Father speaking over his Son, saying "You are the Son of God."

Then you keep reading in Luke 3 and you get to that part which is the genealogy. We always skip it. In every devotional book, we skip it, right? The genealogy is so and so begat so and so begat so and so and the father and the son and it just takes you through the generations in the bloodline of Jesus Christ.

It's funny that Luke puts it here because Matthew puts it right at the beginning of the gospels, Chapter 1, Verse 1. It's not the way to begin a book, right? If you're trying to get people to read your book, the first paragraph has got to be good. A lot of it can sink after that, but the first paragraph has got to be

good. Matthew starts out with this begat, begat, begat. You're paragraphs into it and your thinking he's not a gifted author. Your walking through this whole thing and he's giving the bloodline of Jesus.

By the way, in Matthew's gospel, the bloodline of Jesus is incredibly interesting because he lists females. And maybe there was a march or something in Matthew's town, but he felt the pressure to list the females in the bloodline and you didn't do that in that situation. You didn't that in that day. In fact, I'm half Middle Eastern. My dad is Egyptian and we have a church in Cairo, Egypt where we're leading hundreds of people to Christ in a Muslim state, which is unbelievable and fascinating to watch. But, Middle Easterners, even today, treat females like they are property. They can't own property in much of the Middle East today and their name can't even be on a deed. And yet, Matthew, thousands of years ago, is listing these women.

You've read that story before and you've looked at these women before. Three of the four of the women are not pure as the driven snow. You've got Tamar. You should ask Ted to preach on Tamar. All of you just submit it today. Tell Ted you want to hear on Tamar. You will never find a Sunday school curriculum for children on the story of Tamar. Nobody has the guts to do that. That story is rated XXX and it's in the Bible.

Then you come to Bathsheba. You remember Bathsheba, right? She was the one bathing on the roof and King David saw her and got her and bowm chicky bowm bowm, right? And sin is now in the camp. She's listed in the bloodline of Jesus. And then you've got Rahab. Rahab is listed as the prostitute or the harlot. It doesn't even try to mince words about it. It says that's who she was, the prostitute in Jericho and the people of God were coming to Jericho.

Years ago, in Springdale, Arkansas, where I was a youth pastor, I was teaching that passage of scripture and I said, "And she was a Harlot." I asked if anybody knew what a harlot was? The youth ministry in Springdale was very diverse. It looked like heaven. There was every skin color, every social economic background; kids from all kinds of places. One Wednesday, I looked up in our youth ministry in Springdale and thought *where are all those kids from*. I went and met this whole section of kids. They were Marshallese kids and they had migrated to Springdale, Arkansas. We had kids from all over the place and it was just so beautiful.

We ran busses into some neighborhoods to bring some different kids in. These two brothers came in. One of the brothers' names was Jamal. Jamal and his brother had zero church background. In fact, I'll never forget talking to Jamal and his brother about it. They said they didn't know one person in their whole family tree who had ever been to church... ever. So, they didn't know any of the rules and they didn't know any of the manners. So, when I asked the question: Does anybody know what a harlot is, from the back of the room, Jamal goes, "A ho."

And I have to tell you that there are two sides to me. There's this youth ministry side that thought it was hilarious and there was this legalistic Baptist side that was like *uh oh, we're going to letters and notes are coming*. So, I'm feeling that war happening within me.

I said, "Jamal, we would say prostitute."

He said, "I say ho."

There are seven or eight hundred teenagers and he and I are dialoging. I said, "Jamal, this is not the time for you and me to have a conversation; we'll do that later. Be quiet."

He said, "Brother Alex, it sounds like they were all hos."

I said, "Jamal, I would never say ho. You say ho because your mother hasn't taught you better. I would say prostitute."

He said, "I say ho."

I just said, "Jamal, shut up. I'm trying to get on with the message and in the process, he says ho one more time to which I looked at him and I said, "Jamal, I want you to look at the Bible because your ho, ho, ho led to a very merry Christmas and the birth of Jesus. Please shut up."

This genealogy stuff is unbelievable in scripture. Matthew starts right out of the gate with it, but with Luke, it's like he forgot it. He should have put it in the Christmas story in Luke 2, which is the best of all the Christmas stories, by the way. Luke 2 is the gospel we go to at Christmastime and he should have put the genealogy there, but it's like he got so carried away talking about the baptism that he forgot and then realized he had to stick it in and he stuck it here.

It's like that happened, but I don't think that's what happened because you have to remember Luke was a physician and Luke was a scholar and there are no two words out of order in Luke's gospel. He tells the baptism story and the very last phrase of the baptism story is God the Father saying over Jesus, "You are the son of God." And then Luke starts right into the genealogy. Then you get to the very end of the genealogy and in the very last phrase in the genealogy it says the exact same thing: "The Son of God." It's as if Luke is making this point. Even in the silly begats that we all skip, he wanted you to remember that no matter what you forget and no matter what you skip over, do not forget Jesus is the Son of God. He's speaking to the subject of identity here.

Now we've crossed back over into Chapter 4 in the Gospel of Luke and this is really important. Look what it says. ***1 Then Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit...*** Circle that in your Bible. ***...returned from the Jordan River.*** Where he was baptized. ***He was led by the Spirit...*** I would encourage you to write in the margin of your Bible these two words: full and led. That's because as it relates to the Holy Spirit, that's what we need. We need to be full and led, full and led, full and led. ***...in the wilderness, 2 where he was tempted by the devil for forty days.***

Now I meet Christians all the time in the variety of churches that I get preach in, who have this theology where the devil can't touch them and the devil can't tempt them and the devil cannot even interact with them and the devil can't get to them. I just have to say to you that if that's your theology, you've got to explain that one to me.

The Holy Spirit led the Son of God into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. You've got some explaining to do if that's your theology to say the devil can't touch you because you're a believer or the devil can't touch get to you because of who your granddad was or the devil can't get to you because you go to church. That's actually pretty ludicrous when you look at the scripture and you read it. You have some explaining to do if that's how you interpret the scripture. And if Jesus himself had to take on the devil, what makes you think that you get a pass. And if Jesus himself needed to be filled with the Holy Spirit of God in order to overcome the devil and be released from the temptation, then you and I need to be filled with the Holy Spirit and we need to be led by the Holy Spirit.

It's very interesting to me, by the way, when I read this gospel, how Satan attacked Jesus. When you study warfare and you study principles of war, it's interesting to me how Satan comes out of the chute and attacks Jesus Christ. Look at the very first sentence that the devil said to Jesus. **3 Then the devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God..."** **IF** you are the Son of God. And God the Father had just declared twice "You are the Son of God." And now the devil comes attacking and he leads with the word **IF**. If you are the Son of God, then... Do you see what he's doing there? He's attacking the identity of Jesus as the very Son of God.

Listen to me, church, and hear me today. The attack of the devil on your identity as a son or a daughter of the heavenly God of all gods is perhaps the greatest attack that the enemy has in and on the lives of Christians today. He tries to convince Christians they are not saved. If you aren't saved, he tries to convince you that you are saved. In fact, his whole MO is confusion. He wants to confuse people and he's trying to confuse the children of God.

As you look at these texts, his only goal, according to Jesus about the enemy, is that he only comes to kill, steal, and destroy. The key word in that whole phrase... I've never heard anybody preach on this word and that phrase. The key word in that whole phrase is *only*. In other words, if the devil comes, he's coming only for one of those three things: kill, steal, or destroy. He's not coming to be your friend. He's not coming to meet a need in your life. He is coming only to steal, kill, and destroy. Now, he not stupid; he's going to disguise it in a thousand different ways, right? He's going to make you feel like he's meeting a need in your life. He masquerades is what the Bible says. He puts a mask on so that he looks like an angel of light, but he is coming, make no mistake about it, to steal, kill, and destroy.

Now, how does he kill, steal, and destroy? He does it with lies and accusations and manipulation. He will lie to you in order to steal your identity. And when you abandon who you are in Christ, then all of the sudden you don't act like you are in Christ and you don't live like you are in Christ. You and I both know people in churches that we've been a part of who act like Christians, who say they're Christians, who even read the word and can talk the talk, but if at the end of the day they don't act like Christians, what's going on there. Could it be perhaps that the enemy has attacked their identity. If they no longer believe that they are in Christ, or he has attacked them to the degree that he says, "You don't need to try because you're always going to fail, fail, fail, so you don't need to try to walk with God," the devil has them bound up and locked up in chains of doubt and chains of lies and chains of accusations and chains of false identity.

The only way to be released is through the power of the Holy Spirit of God, not by keeping all the rules. If you think keeping all the rules is the way that you are released, then you need to read my book *Jesus Hates Religion*. We're not released by keeping all the rules. In fact, the whole point of most of the rules is for you and me to come to the conclusion of "I can't do that. I can't do that all the time. I can't do these things."

Sometimes people say, "Pastor, what about these obscure passages?" I'm not concerned about the part I don't understand; I'm really concerned about the part I do understand and don't do. That's where my concern is – love your neighbor as yourself. I'm still working on that one. In fact, I moved to where there are no neighbors to try to avoid this passage altogether, if I'm just being honest with you. So, I'm not nearly as concerned about those things I don't understand.

Where does Jesus go after all of this? The Bible says he went to Galilee. Why did he go to Galilee? That's because it's his home. But he is on mission. I'm going to read again his mission, but I want you to understand he was on a release mission. He was going to release people. John 15 tells us that the Holy Spirit came for two reasons. The Holy Spirit came to convict the world and to convince the church. Of what? Of sin and of righteousness. We get conviction of sin. We understand that one. In fact, if there is another word that you would marry with convict, it would be sin. We understand that; the Holy Spirit does that for us. But he also comes to convict of righteousness. What does that mean? That means to the very children of God, he wants to convict you that you are righteous. That is the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer to declare over you that you are righteous, you are the children of God, you are a co-heir with Jesus. And we need to let the power of the Holy Spirit reveal his truth to us. And we need to let the power of the Holy Spirit impart his righteousness to us and then he will release us from the prison that we got ourselves into.

When you look at the story after Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit, after he confirmed his identity by the Father, after he overcame Satan, then he went to go tell others. Why? Because he wanted them to experience the same thing he was experiencing. He wanted them to be full of the Holy Spirit just like he was full of the holy spirit. He wanted us to know our identity just like he knew his identity. He wants us to overcome the enemy just like he overcame the enemy. At the heart of our release is the power of the Holy Spirit of God. Jesus knew that and you and I need to know that.

Now, here we are, back in Verse 14 where we started. Jesus returned to Galilee, filled with the Holy Spirit's power. He's still filled with the Holy Spirit's power. By the way, he didn't think *Okay I finished temptation, I finished the trials, so I can put the Holy Spirit over here and now I can coast in my life*. Absolutely not. Jesus knew he needed the power and the authority of the Holy Spirit every season and every day of his life. Just like you and I need the Holy Spirit every part and every season of our lives.

Look what the Bible says. ***Reports about him spread quickly through the whole region. 15 He taught regularly in their synagogues and was praised by everyone.*** In other words, people started talking about his teaching. Why? Verse 22 and Verse 32 tell us it's because he taught as one with authority. He taught with great authority. In a moment, I'm going to pray over you and teach you to pray with great authority.

In Verse 16, it says, ***When he came to the village of Nazareth, his boyhood home...*** Remember I told you he went to his hometown, to his home church, to his home synagogue and he's reading the scriptures. ***...he went as usual to the synagogue on the Sabbath and stood up to read the Scriptures.*** As usual, he went to the synagogue and he read the scriptures. In other words, there were some very clear patterns in Jesus' life, patterns of being in the scriptures, patterns of being in fellowship with the children of God.

There need to be patterns in our lives and you need to be in the word of God. I'm more concerned about the church today being in the word of God than I have been in the last 20 years of pastoring. I'm so concerned that I joined 51 other pastors this last year and we put together this little devotional – a 52-week devotional called *Grace, Hope, and Love* to help you be into the scripture every single day of the year. In fact, in our church, I've written one of these every year for the last five years. Our church does this all together and there's something powerful about 7,000 people being in the same passages and in the same scriptures and the same prayers and praying the same thing.

I brought this today. If you don't have a tool to help you get into the word of God on a daily basis, you need to find a tool. Whether it's this or something else, you need a tool that will put you there in the patterns. You can't dabble with Christianity and expect to be forgiven and free. You don't visit Christianity a week here and a week there for camp time or whatever time... "I'm going to visit and play with the things of Christianity." If you dabble with Christianity like you dabble with other things in your life, I don't know how you ever expect to walk in the power of God.

Jesus stood up to read the scriptures. Look at Verse 17. Here we are where we began right out of the chute this morning. ***17 The scroll of Isaiah the prophet was handed to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where this was written: 18 "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he has anointed me to bring Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the oppressed will be set free, 19 and that the time of the Lord's favor has come.***

By the way, I don't think Jesus is being redundant here. I don't think he's saying the same thing over and over in different way. I think he's listing some things that are going to play out in his life and through his life. One of the things that the church, for whatever reason, doesn't talk about is the captives being set free. By the way, some people believe that's about salvation and I think maybe you could apply it to salvation, but I don't think in the context of that verse. Being set free is only for believers if you think through that. Only believers can be set free from the enemy. Only believers have a chance of being set free from the enemy. Unbelievers are possessed by the devil. They are owned. That's what that word possessed means. They are owned by the devil. They are owned by the enemy. They are not going to be set free until Jesus is a part of their life. But when Jesus is a part of your life, then you have the option of being set free from the enemy.

There's a passage of scripture, this really strange passage of scripture where Jesus encounters this Syrophenician woman who has a boy who is demon possessed. She brings the boy who is demon possessed to Jesus and asks him to heal him. Jesus engages with her in this conversation and he says to her, "I don't give my bread to the dogs." Such a fascinating... You look at that and you think that sounds so rude. How do you read that any way but rude? But we know the heart of Jesus. It wasn't rude when

you study the context of it because the woman looks back and responds to him with, "Even the dogs get the crumbs that fall on the floor underneath the table." When you study that passage of scripture, this woman is not talking to Jesus about anything other than her boy being set free from a demon. And Jesus is clearly referring to her conversation and the bread refers to nothing other than setting his people free from the demons and from the attack of the enemy. Jesus says it's only for the children of God. In other words, only the children of God can be set free from the enemy. Only the children of God can be set free from being captives. It's only for them. One of the things that happens in the presence of the Holy Spirit is we are released.

Look at Verse 20. ***He rolled up the scroll, handed it back to the attendant, and sat down. All eyes in the synagogue looked at him intently. 21 Then he began to speak to them.*** In other words, he has them right where he wants them. He's a master communicator and he has them right where he wants them and he's about to lay it on them. ***"The Scripture you've just heard has been fulfilled this very day!"*** In the 2017 version, it says he dropped the mic and walked out of the synagogue. He dropped the truth on them and he laid it on their laps.

When you read this passage of scripture. Let me just tell you again where I began this morning. I'm more convinced, after 20 years of pastoring, today than I ever have been in the previous 20 years that the churches are filled with people who are forgiven yet not free. They are saved, but they are not released.

When you think about the people in Jesus' home town, they should be the very ones who were the first and fastest and most dedicated followers of Jesus Christ, but they weren't. In fact, it says, ***"How can this be?" they asked. "Isn't this Joseph's son?"*** In other words, "Didn't he build our chair." "Didn't his dad build our table." "Aren't they the carpenters?" "How is this happening in and through them?" In other words, familiarity can breed contempt. You can be around the things of God and never actually encounter the things of God. You can be so familiar with the things of God that you never experience the things of God. Familiarity can breed contempt and you can think you have it, but you don't have it just because of where you've been.

Mark 6 talks about this hometown dilemma with Jesus. Jesus ends up saying no prophet has honor in his hometown. He goes on to say that Jesus could only heal a few colds and sniffles in his hometown. Think through that for a moment. This is Jesus who gave sight to the blind. This is Jesus who gave speech to the mute. This is Jesus who gave hearing to the deaf. He put the limbs back on the lepers. This is Jesus who took a dead man and healed him and lifted him right up out of the grave. And in his home town, he could heal a few colds. Why? The scripture is very clear it's because of their unbelief.

Why are so many Christians today bound up in pornography and bound up in drugs and alcohol and this addiction and that addiction? Why? Could it be because of unbelief. Could it be they don't believe the scripture, they don't know the scriptures? You know the scripture that says "you shall know the truth and the truth will set you free." We know this passage. Earlier in John, Jesus says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life, and no man comes to the Father except by me." And then, "You shall know the truth and the truth will set you free." Do you know what happens in that passage right after Jesus said that? They argued with him.

The context of that passage is the very people of God argued with him and said, "We don't need to be set free. We are the children of Abraham."

To which Jesus said, "Nope. The children of Abraham are those who have put their faith in me and those who sin are slaves."

And they said, "We're not slaves."

Think through that for a moment. The Israelites said, "We're not slaves." They had never been anything but slaves. Clearly Rome was ruling their world in that day when Jesus was talking to them and yet they're saying "We're not slaves; we're the children of Abraham." They could not see that even as the people of God, they were bound up and they were slaves. If you can't admit that you're bound up and you can't admit that you are a slave, you will not be set free; it will not happen in your life.

Look back to Luke 4 - **28** *When they heard this, the people in the synagogue were furious. 29* **Jumping up, they mobbed him and forced him to the edge of the hill on which the town was built. They intended to push him over the cliff, 30** *but he passed right through the crowd and went on his way.* They took Jesus, moved him to the edge of the hill there in Nazareth... I've been on that hill. They were going to push him off the hill and kill him, but the Bible says that he slipped away and as he slipped away, he went on his way.

The very next story in the Bible... I don't have time to preach this today, but let's just look at it in Verse 31- **Then Jesus went to Capernaum, a town in Galilee, and taught there...** I want you to see this. **...in the synagogue every Sabbath day. 32** *There, too, the people were amazed at his teaching, for he spoke with authority. 33* **Once when he was in the synagogue, a man possessed by a demon—an evil spirit—began shouting at Jesus...** In my Bible, I just draw a figure 8, an infinity sign around phrases and attach them together. In the synagogue there is a demonized man. In other words, the demon was after the church people and Jesus set him free and he was released. **36** *Amazed, the people exclaimed, "What authority and power this man's words possess! Even evil spirits obey him, and they flee at his command!" 41* **...shouting, "You are the Son of God!"**

I want us to pray together today. If you would, just bow your heads and in your own words, I want you to begin to speak to the Holy Spirit this morning. Would you just speak to him and would you just say, "Holy Spirit, I believe in you. Holy Spirit, I need you." And invite him to speak to you. Just say, "Holy Spirit, would you speak to me?" Then ask the Holy Spirit if he would bring to your mind some sin or sins that have created bondage in your life that he wants you to be released from, that you need to repent of.

What the Holy Spirit may do today is to put a name on your heart, somebody that you need to repent to and speak to and be willing to share and bring it into the light. I don't want us to play church this morning, I want us to be the church. I just want to ask you if the Holy Spirit has already brought something to your mind when you asked him to... By the way, if something comes to your mind after you say, "Holy Spirit, would you bring to my mind," you can bet on the fact that it's probably from the Holy Spirit. So, if the Holy Spirit has put something on your heart or on your mind already or when he

does, I want to invite you to stand up, heads bowed and eyes closed. If he begins to speak to you, begins to put something on your heart, or begins to put something on your mind that's creating a bondage that as a child of God, you have no business being under... It has put handcuffs on you that as a co-heir with the King of kings, you're not supposed to wear. As he speaks, just stand up.

I'm going to lead you in a prayer and I'm going to pray over you. Even if he hasn't spoken something to you, if you want to be included in the prayer, just go ahead and stand if you would. I just want you to repeat after me. Father, I ask you to forgive me for all my sin. Will you release me from every bondage in Jesus name? And now, by the authority given to me, I want to pray over you. The authority given to me by your pastor today to teach and by the authority of the name of Jesus Christ. I have no authority in and of myself. I don't carry it; it comes from the very name of Jesus.

So, today, in the name of Jesus, I pray over your children, God, my brothers and sisters in Christ. I pray over them that you would meet them right where they are and to any evil spirit that has attached itself to them, to any demonic spirit that has come because of sin, because of bondage that has held my brothers and sisters in Christ in Jesus name and by his authority, I say that you have to leave. They have been bought with the blood of Jesus, the lamb of God. They have overcome by the word of their testimony. The word of God is living; it's active; it's sharper than any sword, sweeter than honey, and purer than gold. His name is the very name of God and by the blood of the lamb and the word of God, I command you to go today.

I take authority this morning over every spirit of bitterness and over every spirit of unforgiveness and every spirit of resentment and every spirit of hate and every spirit of malice and every spirit of envy and every spirit of jealousy. Today, I rebuke every spirit of insecurity or inferiority or fear, every spirit of rejection, every spirit of self-pity, of self-hatred, of self-destruction. Today, in this place, over every one of the children of God, I take authority over every spirit of suicide, every spirit of rage and anger and murder and violence and lawlessness, over every spirit of sexual immorality, sexual impurity, over every spirit of adultery and lust and pornography and fornication and all forms of sexual immorality.

Today, I take authority over every spirit of pride, every spirit of lying, every spirit of rebellion, every spirit of deception and manipulation and control, over every spirit of judgmentalism, criticism, arrogance, prejudice, racism, every spirit of greed, materialism, selfishness, covetness, and selfish ambition, every spirit of depression and anxiety and worry, every spirit of addiction, alcoholism, drunkenness, drugs, gluttony, every spirit of legalism on the church today, every spirit of false pride and heresy and religious pride and false doctrine, every spirit of stealing and slothfulness and laziness and unbelief and rebellion to authority, every spirit of guilt and shame and embarrassment and humiliation and sickness and disease and infirmity and chronic health issues and witchcraft and blasphemy.

I break every word, every curse, every spell spoken against my brothers and sisters in Jesus name. I break every generational curse, every ancestral sin line to the fathers of the third and fourth generation. Every single demonic spirit that has held my brothers and sisters in bondage, I command you to go in the name of Jesus. In the name of Jesus. Would you just say to the Holy Spirit this morning, "Fill me. I want to be filled by you and I want to be led by you."