

Title: The Dawning of the Messiah's Ministry

Text: Luke 4:14-30

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Proverbs 2:12 tells us that *"if we seek after the words of the Lord and receive understanding from him. He will deliver us from the way of evil and from men of perverted speech."* And so if you have your copy of God's word with you today, and I hope you do please turn to Luke 4. Luke 4 we're going to be looking at Luke 4:14-30 which begins on page 1021 of your pew Bible in front of you if you'd like to look on there.

But here in Luke 4:14-30 we have come to a very important passage of scripture. A very important moment, and I would say that this moment described in this passage is important for three main reasons. That is because it initiates something, it anticipates something, and it illustrates something. First it initiates something. The passage that we're going to look at today before us marks the beginning of Jesus's public ministry. A public ministry that is divided in Luke's gospel into two main parts as we're going to start seeing this morning from chapter 4:14 on into chapter 9:50. Jesus ministers throughout all of the region of Galilee located in northern Israel, demonstrating time after time after time his power and authority through his words and his deeds until eventually his disciples are able to confess in chapter 9:20 that Jesus is the Messiah, the Christ of God. Until they have at last finally begun to come to know him love him and serve him. And then from chapter 9:51 on the end of the gospel we're going to see Luke turn his face towards Jerusalem in order to accomplish his great salvific work upon the Mount of the Lord. And so, the gospel of Luke is divided up in those two main sections. So, this passage before us today is important because it initiates something. It initiates the beginning of Christ's public ministry.

Second this passage is important because it anticipates something. As I was studying it, it struck me that the passage before us today is a foreshadowing in fact of Christ's entire public ministry. Which is why Luke I think places that at the very beginning of this gospel. What we're going to see Jesus' experience in this one moment is going to anticipate what he's going to experience over the next three and a half years of ministry. And so, this account is important because it prepares us for the journey that Jesus is about to go on. It anticipates. So, this passage is important because it initiates, it anticipates, and finally this passage is important because it illustrates something. It illustrates what type of reception we as believers will likely experience here on earth as well.

You see the high point of Jesus's ministry here in this first half of his ministry is going to climb actually in Luke 9:23 when Jesus tells the crowds there, *"If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."* And so, to be a believer in Jesus Christ means that you're going to have to learn how to walk along the same path to glory that Jesus walked and that's going to be what we see all the way through Luke 9. And though this path is eternally worth it since we obtain through faith in Jesus Christ eternal forgiveness and eternal life and eternal joy and eternal peace and every blessing the heaven has to give. Even though it's worth it this path is not easy. And that's what we'll see illustrated this

morning as we discover why Jesus's experience here in this passage goes from fame to fury in a very short time. And so, this is an important moment because it initiates something, it anticipates something, and it illustrates something for us, and I hope to highlight all of those truths for our benefit beginning today in our study.

And just to help us work our way through this passage because it is a rather lengthy one, in a way that highlights all those truths, we're going to look at this passage in a series of five points all of which parallel experiences that Jesus has in the rest of his ministry. So, first in verses 14-15 we're going to see a prelude of fame as the way that Jesus lived and spoke developed, we're going to see an initial interest in him. Then in verses 16-21 we're going to see a proclamation of fulfillment as Jesus declares that he's way more than just a good teacher he is the fulfillment of all of God's saving promises. Third in verses 22-27, we're going to see a priority of faith as Jesus makes it very clear that you're not grandfathered into the saving promises of God you have to receive them by faith. Then in verses 28-29, we're going to see a predicted fury. Just as Simeon had forewarned as those who hear Jesus's words respond in anger to his message of salvation by faith alone. And then finally in verse 30 we're going to see a providential fearlessness as Jesus goes on his way in total peace knowing that he is safely kept in the providence of God to continue his ministry until God's appointed day. So, we have a prelude of fame, a proclamation of fulfillment, a priority of faith, a predicted fury, and a providential fearlessness.

This is the dawning of the messiah's ministry that prepares us for what's to come and we'll just have time to cover those first two points this morning. And so, with that in mind if you're able please stand with me out of reverence and attention to the word of God as I read our passage today.

From Luke 4 starting verse 14 on into verse 30 Luke under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit writes these words for us today, *"And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and report about him went out throughout all the surrounding country. And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all. And he 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 out of 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 do in 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 for three years and six months, and a great famine came over all 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 Elisha, and none of them were cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian.' When they heard these things, all in

the synagogue were filled with wrath. And they rose up and drove him out of 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. But passing through their midst, he went away."

This is the word of God who uses our afflictions to lead us back into keeping of his word.

Let's pray.

Dear Heavenly Father, we thank you so much for the passage that is set before us today. We thank you for how it shows us the glory of Jesus Christ and we thank you for how it shows us the reality of the world that we're living in. Father, I pray that you would equip us by your spirit through your word to be better followers and worshipers of Jesus. Father, I pray that if there's someone here today that has not trusted in Jesus Christ as their salvation, they would find in him the fulfillment of all your promises and that they would trust in him the ever faithful one.

We ask this in Jesus' name, amen.

You may be seated.

All right, so Luke introduces us here to the beginning of Jesus's public ministry by highlighting for us in verses 14-15 a prelude of fame. In verses 14-15 Jesus enjoyed this at the very beginning. It says, *"Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and a report about him went out throughout all the surrounding country. And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all."* Now there is a lot that is contained in those two verses that we simply do not have time to look at today. For example, we see the place of Jesus's ministry, which is Galilee the northern region of Israel, where Mary grew up, where Jesus grew up, and where the prophet Isaiah had long predicted that the great light of God's salvation would first dawn upon the world.

Second we see the power of Jesus's ministry here that everything that Jesus did is by the power of the Holy Spirit who if you remember had anointed him and empowered him for ministry back at his baptism in chapter 3:22. We can also see here third the priority of Jesus's ministry and that is that even though Jesus could perform miracles and do signs and wonders his primary ministry, if you see here, was preaching the gospel. The good news concerning himself from the pages of the scriptures throughout all the synagogues the Jewish centers of worship at that day. And we see an example of him doing that in the passages before us but for our time this morning and to reflect Luke's I think primary emphasis here I just want us to see the initial popularity of Jesus's ministry. Verse 14 tells us here that when *"Jesus returned in power to the region of Galilee, a Report went out about him throughout all the surrounding country."* In other words, everyone in Galilee was talking about him. Jesus was becoming famous. If anyone had ever asked in that day, can anything good come out of Nazareth they would have said yeah, Jesus did. Right. That's what they would have said. Jesus was rapidly becoming the local hometown hero as this report was going out throughout all the surrounding countryside. He is the one who will put us on the map.

And then as the end of verse 15 says, we're told that as Jesus by the Holy Spirit taught the word of God to everyone in their synagogues, it says that *"he was being glorified by all."* In other words, everyone who heard Jesus loved him. No one ever spoke like this man. Unlike the other teachers in Israel Jesus's teaching was clear. It was convicting. It was bold. It was biblical. Now, of course though this response as Luke records here is positive. I need to state right up front that we'll see very soon it's not good enough in and of itself. You can appreciate a message and you can even enjoy how it is delivered and yet not be moved to respond to it at all. It's exactly what God warned the prophet Ezekiel about back in Ezekiel 33:30-32 when God told Ezekiel there, listen, the people are talking about you Ezekiel. I mean you're becoming famous, and he says hey, they're saying even let's go and hear the word of the Lord. Let's go to church, right? That's what they're talking about.

You should really hear this guy. Ezekiel is something else. But be warned God says, *"though they are coming to you as people come, and though they are sitting before you as my people would, they will not do what you say."* As Ezekiel 33:32 says, *"behold, you are like to them like one who sings lustful songs with a beautiful voice and plays well in an instrument."* In other words, you're nothing more than just entertainment to them. *"For they hear what you say, but they surely will not do it."* And that's where this crowd was in Jesus's day if you want to understand what's going on. They would come and hear Jesus. No one ever spoke like him. You should really come to the synagogue. He's teaching this Saturday. It's great! They would sit down, and they would listen to him speak. They would praise the gracious words that were coming out of his mouth but that was as far as it went. They would not believe, and we'll see that soon. They would not obey and that's what I want you to see right here up front. This superficial prelude of fame that starts off this entire passage.

A prelude of fame that really parallels the beginning of Jesus's entire public ministry as a whole. See we're going to discover that for the first year and a half of Jesus's ministry, as we walk with him over the next several chapters, we're going to see that people are intensely interested in Christ's ministry. The four gospels recorded entire cities and regions of Israel would come out to listen to Jesus speak. In fact, at the high point of his ministry when Jesus fed the crowd by the sea of Galilee with five loaves and two fishes it is estimated that over 20,000 people were present in that one moment and listening to him speak all at once. That is insane. As Matthew 14:21 tells us *"5,000 men plus women and children."* So, Jesus's work received a lot of attention.

As Paul reminded King Agrippa in Acts 26:26, *"none of these things has escaped your notice, for this,"* that is the life the miracles and the teaching of Jesus, *"has not been done in a corner."* So, there was a prelude of fame when it came to Jesus's ministry, and we see that even laid out in our world today. There are many many people who as long as they know a little bit about Jesus will praise him a whole lot. They'll trot him out for their party platforms. They'll talk about him as if he's the most wonderful person you've ever met on planet earth who always agrees with them by the way. And there's this initial prelude of fame. Jesus is a very interesting person. He's very dynamic. Why his presence has changed the world. He has some very interesting teachings. But if that's as far as you get in life, you've missed it all. You've missed it all and that's what this crowd is going to find out.

So, there was this prelude of fame when it came to Jesus's ministry, but all of that started to change once Jesus actually started to declare who he was. And that's what we're going to see next as we see Luke described for us here a proclamation of fulfillment in verses 16-21. It says in verse 16, *"And he 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."* So, here's Jesus coming back to his hometown, right. Coming back this famous person who's speaking like no one else has spoken and he's going to the synagogue that he grew up in and he's ready to teach. Everybody's there as was his custom as a righteous man he was there to worship God on the Sabbath day. And I'm sure that this synagogue was packed out with standing room only. Here's Jesus the hometown hero going to deliver a very important sermon for us the people who really know him. We're special. He came from us, right?

And it's helpful to know a little bit about how that worship service would have looked like as they gathered. The congregation was started off by singing a selection from Psalms 145-150. Followed by a recitation of the Shema. Which is, *"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all of your soul, and with all of your might."* That would have been followed up by 18 benedictions. Similar to the ones that started off our service this morning. Blessing the Lord God for his character and his work and his faithfulness. After which time there would have been a reading of the scriptures. A Jewish leader would have taken out a role of scripture that was requested by the reader and he would have laid it open. And once that portion of scripture was read it would ceremoniously be rolled back up and put away and then there would be a reading from one of the prophets. And then there would be the sermon.

And then listen to this, this is going to be important for later. At the end of it all, after the sermon, the service always closed with the Aaronic Blessing from Number 6:24-26 which was affirmed by the congregation by a series of amen's. In other words, the ending of every service would have sounded like this, the Lord bless you and keep you amen, the Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you amen, the Lord turn his face towards you and give you peace forever amen. It's important to remember that this is how every synagogue service would have closed because the service that we're about to look at over the next couple of weeks doesn't end with that blessing. Because as we're going to see they reject Jesus in unbelief and to do that is to turn your back on all the blessings of God. But anyway, this is how a typical Jewish service in the synagogue would go. And so, Jesus who had talked with the synagogue leader and likely requested that Isaiah specifically chapter 61 be his reading from the prophets that morning. With all of that arranged Jesus stands up at the appointed time to read the selected passage, which is given in verse 17. It says, *"And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. And 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 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.'"* Now that was from Isaiah 61:1-2. But what's significant about this reading that Jesus gives here is that Jesus stops reading the passage mid verse. In fact, he stops reading it mid-sentence leaving off the entire last part of Isaiah 61:2 which has everything to do with the final judgment of the Lord.

In other words, if Jesus had ended his reading in Isaiah the way Isaiah 61:2 actually reads, he would have said *"to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our Lord."* But Jesus doesn't say that. He abruptly stops mid-sentence and because of that he has grabbed everybody's attention. And it says in verse 20, *"And he rolled up the scroll and gave it to the attendant and sat down."* In other words, he took the posture of a teacher preparing to teach and they would sit in that situation. And notice end of verse 20, which means they could teach way longer than I do. Just kidding. End of verse 20, *"And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him."* Man, you could have heard a pin drop in that moment. They were silent. Jesus had all of them captivated as he stops the reading mid-sentence. And then it records in verse 21, *"And he began to say to them, 'Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.'"* In other words, and really in the way it is in the Greek, it is being fulfilled right now and will continue to be. Now notice two things should be immediately obvious by this.

First Jesus is saying that the consolation and the comfort that was promised to Israel is going to be fulfilled ultimately through him. In other words, Jesus is saying I'm the Messiah. I am the one who accomplish everything that I've just read. And then second Jesus is saying that although there is a final day of judgment and vengeance coming, the day of God's final vengeance is not today. Today is the day of God's salvation. Today marks the beginning of God's grace being unleashed through me. That is unbelievable and in light of that Jesus goes on to explain to them the scriptures that he's just read. Verse 21 it is just a summary opening line you could say to an entire sermon that Jesus likely gave that day. We know that Jesus said more than *"today the scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing,"* because verse 22 says that *"they were amazed by the gracious words that were coming out of his mouth."* He was explaining what he had just read. And so, Jesus continues to speak, and he explains he would have explained to them the four metaphors of that text in Isaiah 61. Four metaphors that communicate the spiritual characteristics of those who actually obtain blessings through Christ Jesus. And this is going to be important as we come to the future weeks in the gospel of Luke understanding.

First Jesus says here that he was anointed by the Holy Spirit from above uniquely to do something. To proclaim good news to the poor. And this is a spiritual metaphor I need to make clear. This is describing those who are spiritually poor not economically poor. We know this because this is how Luke actually uses this word later on in Luke 6:20-22 where the poor are equated with the prophets with those who hear and believe the word of God. Whereas the rich are equated with the false prophets those who refuse to believe the word of God. And so, Jesus is not preaching some kind of social gospel here right. One that contains economic deliverance for those who are economically poor. No, Jesus is preaching the good news of spiritual deliverance for those who are spiritually poor. For those who know that they are sinners, and spiritually bankrupt before God. Just as Jesus says in Matthew 5:3, *"Blessed are the poor in Spirit for they shall receive the kingdom of God."* And that is great news by the way that you would want proclaimed to everybody because whether you have a lot of money in your bank account or whether you don't even have one Jesus is coming with his perfect person and his perfect saving work is good news that should be proclaimed to you.

This is a universal good news. And so, Jesus is saying I've come to preach the good news to these types of people. To the desperate people of the world, the people who recognize that they're not standing in a

righteous position before God in heaven, I have come to preach good news to people who understand they are spiritually bankrupt. And needing to pay a dreadful wage to their creator because of their sin. I have come to preach good news to them whether they be paupers or whether they be kings. Jesus is good news for them. And then Jesus says that I have come to proclaim liberty to the captives, and this is how we know for certain that Jesus is using spiritual metaphors. You know why? Because I don't find in any of the gospels that Jesus went around Galilee conducting prison breaks. He's talking spiritually in a metaphor. He's speaking metaphorically about a spiritual liberation that he has come to achieve on behalf of his people. He's speaking. He talks about here captives which are those who have been taken captive and exiled by war.

We might use the word prisoners of war. And although there is no doubt in eschatological importance to what Jesus is saying here. Jesus is referring in this moment to those who are in bondage to sin, who are ensnared by the power of the devil. He is referring to those who are bound in bitterness, bound to violence, bound to lust and sensuality, bound to hatred. He is even referring to the state of the Jewish people exiled no longer having their own nation living under the pagans. And he's sitting there thinking how did you get to this place? Sin. I have come to preach good news to you. Good news to these types of people. People who realize that they are inescapably shackled into the dark prison house of sin. That they're dead in their trespasses and sins. To those types of people Jesus says I've come to break you out to deliver you from the dominating power of sin. And that's why we as a church often sing songs that have words like this: he breaks the power of cancelled sin and sets the prisoner free; his blood can make the foulest clean, his blood availed for me. For those who are captive Jesus has come preaching freedom and deliverance. He brings hope preaching good news. He brings freedom proclaiming liberty.

He says next that he also has been sent for *"recovery of the sight to the blind."* What a wonderful spiritual promise is, that to be utterly lost in darkness only to have your eyes fully opened. And that's exactly what salvation is. It's to have the eyes of your understanding open to the eternal truths of God and to his word. And that's exactly what salvation is. It's like when Paul recounts Jesus's words at his conversion in Acts 26:18. When Jesus said, *"I am sending you to them to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God."* There's something about salvation that's like having your eyes finally opened.

Recognizing Jesus is everything he's always said. Jesus is worthy of worship. Jesus can be trusted with my life. *"This is eternal life, that you may know him, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent."* Before coming to Christ in faith, you didn't know God and what did you do? You feared him. But now after Christ you do know God and now what happens? You love him. Your eyes have been opened. You have tasted and seen that the Lord is good. And that is why Christ came: to proclaim good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty of the captives, to impart the recovery of sight to the blind.

And then finally he said, *"to set at liberty those who are oppressed."* In other words, Jesus came to this earth for you and for I, for those of us who are oppressed and are weighed down by the circumstances of life and our own spiritual condition. And let me put it this way. Are you this morning just sick of it all burdened and weighed down, despairing, discouraged? Jesus is your good news. He's the one you must

come to know and sit at his feet and learn of. He has come to cast off those burdens. He has come to those who are broken in pieces, shattered, crushed, and he offers them freedom. *"Come take my yoke upon me for I'm gentle and lowly in spirit and you will find rest for your souls."* This is why Jesus came. And what do you call all of this? You call all of this grace. Grace; divine unmerited favor. And that is the season that Jesus declares to that synagogue that day. That if you would but recognize your greatest needs in life, you would but see that I am the greatest solution.

These were promises that Jesus read that were given 700 years before he was ever born. And that day in Capernaum with everyone's eyes fixed upon him, Jesus says something that no mere human could ever say. He says, *"Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."* It's all about me. Your time of waiting is over. The time of fulfillment has come. I'm the one who's been promised. I am the one you've been waiting for. I am the one who will both announce and accomplish God's salvation for sinners. I am the saving sovereign of all. And that's what Jesus is saying I'm the fulfillment of all God's saving promises. And so, this is a proclamation of fulfillment. And I want you to know that it is a proclamation of fulfillment that Jesus gave throughout the rest of his public ministry. In Matthew 5:17 Jesus says, *"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law and the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to,"* what, *"fulfill them."* In other words, he is the one who will bring to fulfillment all that scripture testifies of. He is the one, not us, him. And again John 5:39-40 Jesus says, *"You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; yet it is they that bear witness about me."* In other words, Jesus is the focal point of all scripture. He is the fulfillment.

Can you imagine someone saying that? God's word it's all about me. And again, in John 4:25-26 the Samaritan woman says you know *"I know that the Messiah is coming."* And Jesus immediately replies, *"I who am speaking to you am he."* This was Jesus's message from the very beginning. Long ago it had been promised that there would be someone who would come out of the seed of a woman who would crush the serpent's head. Long ago it had been promised that there would be a seed of Abraham who would bring blessings upon the world. Long ago it had been predicted that out of Isaac would come a descendant who would occupy the gates of his enemies. Long ago it had been promised that there would be a suffering servant who would reign overall and of his kingdom there would be no end. Long ago it was foretold that our transgressions would be placed upon him. And that he would see the travail of his soul and he would see the reward of which he'd accomplished through his death and resurrection. Long ago it had been foretold and Jesus is saying I'm here your time of waiting is over. As Mark 1:15 records it, *"The time is fulfilled, the kingdom of God is at hand; repent therefore and believe the good news."* What you're believing right now, not good news, believe the good news.

We see in Jesus a proclamation of fulfillment that he was the very epicenter of God's saving purposes in this world.

We will have to look at the rest of this passage the next time that I'm with you but in conclusion I want you to think about this. Just think about this proclamation of fulfillment for one moment. The truth that Jesus is at the center of all God's saving purposes. What kind of response does this proclamation of fulfillment demand from us? Because if Jesus is telling the truth and he is then this change is absolutely everything. If he is the one who is promised by God, the one who proclaims good news to the poor the

one who gives liberty to the captives, the one who imparts sight to the blind, the one who gives freedom to the oppressed, then he is not just one teacher among many he is the savior sent from God. The one that you must know and listen to. Which means that the moment that's described in this passage isn't just an historic fact even though it is. It is a present invitation. Jesus stood before his own hometown and said, *"Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."* In other words, the day of salvation is not someday. It's today and the question is how will you respond? It is the question he puts before his hometown as we'll see clarified in future weeks and it's the question I want to put before you.

How many times have you heard the gospel and never done anything about it? I know there is someone here today that could tell me the gospel and has yet not submitted their heart in faith to Jesus Christ. I want to call on you today to trust in Jesus because the only way to his blessings is through faith in him. You're not grandfathered into God's saving promises. They come through Christ. He is the fulfillment. I urge you to respond in faith. Acknowledge your spiritual poverty and unrighteousness before God today. Admit that you are a sinner in bondage to sin. Confess to the Lord your blindness, your brokenness, and your need of forgiveness. And if you will, God stands ready. Jesus stands ready even now to proclaim righteousness, freedom, forgiveness, and peace over your soul today. Because we have a promise. Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved. I encourage you don't delay, don't harden your heart, don't say maybe tomorrow. Jesus says today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing. Today is a day of salvation. What a shame it would be to walk into a service like today and someone responds in faith, and you walk away in unbelief when Christ is the fulfillment. Today is the acceptable day. Today is the year of the Lord's favor and I call on you to call on him and believe in his power to save and receive his grace and be set free.

This is the good news. Jesus Christ saves. And this is the word of God from Luke 4:14-21 which I've considered a great privilege to have been able to share with you today and which I now commit to your further study and your faithful obedience until Jesus who is the yes and amen and the fulfiller of all God's promises returns.

To that end as the men come forward to celebrate communion together today let's pray.

Father, I thank you so much that this one whom the prophets longed to know the time and place in which he would come this one has been revealed to us. To us upon whom the ends of the ages have come. That we might know the one who is to save his people from their sins and his name is Jesus. Father, I thank you for his coming. That there is hope in his name and that to hear the name of Jesus is good news for those who have trusted in him. Father, I thank you for the freedom we have in Jesus. That no matter what earthly circumstances we live in we can live with joy and peace and love and steadfastness because we are set free from the bondage of which we once enslaved, and we have experienced new life in Christ.

Father, I thank you for the encouragement we have in Jesus. That we who are weighed down by cares and concerns can come to him who is a faithful high priest and cast all our cares on him for he cares for us. Father, I thank you from beginning to end that Jesus Christ is our good news. And father I thank you that you open blind eyes to behold his glory and to trust in him. I pray that if there's someone here that has

not trusted in Christ that they would confess to you their faith in him this morning. Or if they need help that they would talk to another believer here today. And then Father, I thank you that you do open blinded eyes because we're about to celebrate communion. We recognize that we were once dead in trespasses and sins, darkened and blinded in our understanding, hating you and hating one another and yet by your grace you opened our eyes to behold your son Jesus Christ so that this morning we can confess that we have trusted in him. And we have communion, union with you and union with one another through Christ. Thank you for this mighty awesome saving work that Christ has accomplished on our behalf. And we pray that he would be honored and glorified in these next few moments.

We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

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