

Wednesday, March 20, 2019 – Lent Midweek III
“Captivity and Freedom”

Luke 4: 16-21

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Dialogical Structure

Adapted from CSL “The Gospel in Seven Words”

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen.

The gospel in seven words. That’s our theme this Lent. That’s our goal this Lent. As we take seriously Peter’s command to prepare ourselves to confess the hope we have in Christ, we’re considering how we might summarize the gospel in seven brief words. As I mentioned last Wednesday, seven words can’t possibly say everything that needs to be said about Jesus. But the hope is that these summaries can capture the core of the gospel, and in doing so instigate further conversation.

Last week we considered what is necessary to confess the gospel. It really only requires two things: a recognition of our sin, and a proclamation of God’s work of salvation for us in Christ.

There’re actually many ways in which we might do this. There are many ways in which the Scriptures themselves proclaim the gospel. As we read the Scriptures we encounter many images and metaphors and descriptions of God and his work of salvation. We read about the Good Shepherd rescuing lost sheep. We read about the Suffering Servant taking on our punishment. We read about God speaking through a prophet to breathe life into dry bones. We read about the Lamb of God reigning on his throne. Such images only scratch the surface. We could go on and on like this all night. We could notice many different biblical themes: themes like sickness and healing, hunger and thirst, deception and truth. We could highlight qualities of God—he is loving, he is faithful, he is forgiving, he is patient, he is strong and mighty, he is pure. Any of these could help us summarize the gospel in seven words.

But what I’d like to do with you tonight (and the next two weeks) is to choose one specific metaphor and spend some time reflecting on it with you. Not just internally, but aloud. I’d like to think with you about this theme, and then identify with you some key words and biblical stories that come to mind. I’ve got my marker with me and I’d like to get your input. I’m going to ask you some questions, and I’ll list key words and stories from the Bible to generate a list of ideas we could use to craft our versions of the gospel. By the end of the evening tonight,

hopefully we'll have some good raw material for crafting own versions of the gospel in seven words. Are you ready? Let's give it a shot.

The theme I'd like to discuss with you tonight is captivity and freedom. And our Gospel reading from Luke will get us started. Luke 4 records the beginning of Jesus's preaching ministry. Here's how it went: "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" (Luke 4:16–19).

"He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives..."

- Describe what it's like to be a captive with single word.
- What do you think would be the worst part of being in prison?
- Can you think of anyone in the Bible who was a prisoner/captive?

Joseph, Jeremiah (Jeremiah 37–38), Daniel, John the Baptist, Paul, Peter

- Besides a physical prison with bars and guards and locked doors, what other types of captivity imprison people today?

Captivity to... Fear

Guilt

Greed

Lust

Unhealthy relationships

Addictive behaviors

Read John 8:34. What does this passage say specifically about captivity?

Anyone who sins is a slave to sin

This means ALL OF US are slaves to sin

Listen again to Jesus words in Luke 4:18–19.

And listen to John 8:36.

And listen to Galatians 5:1.

And listen to Colossians 1:13–14.

- When you think of being freed from sin and death by Jesus, what words come to mind?

Look at the differences between our description of being a captive, and this description of being free from sin in Christ. Let that soak in for a moment. *This*, brothers and sisters, is what God has done for us in Christ! *This* is the good news of Jesus!

In Psalm 34:17–19 David wrote, “When the righteous cry for help, the Lord hears and delivers them out of all their troubles. The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all.”

Brothers and sisters in Christ, the good news this evening is that Jesus frees us from all that holds us captive. Through the might of his word, and because of his suffering and death and resurrection, and for his glory and our good, Jesus frees us from sin and death and the devil so that we might live in him as sons and daughter. So that we might join him in his mission to free those who are still living in captivity.

As you consider how you would summarize the gospel in your own words, keep these words and phrases and people in mind. Spend time this week reflecting on the freedom Jesus has won for you. And rejoice! For he has come to set the captives free! In Jesus’s name. Amen.