

## Jesus Shares His Message (Retreat part 20)

Scripture for the week: [Luke 4:14-20](#), [Matthew 25:31-46](#), [John 15:1-17](#), [Matthew 21:12-17](#), [Matthew 23:1-39](#), [John 11:45-57](#)

This week we seek to know Jesus more intimately by entering into the depth of his words and begin to contemplate the effect they had in his life. When Jesus' turn comes to read in the synagogue in his hometown, he picks up the words of the prophet Isaiah, which must have been part of his prayer for years.

“The Lord’s Spirit has come to me, because he has chosen me to tell the good news to the poor. The Lord has sent me to announce freedom for prisoners, to give sight to the blind, to free everyone who suffers, and to say, “This is the year the Lord has chosen”” (Luke 4:18–19).

When Jesus begins his preaching in Matthew’s Gospel, he looks out and sees the crowd that gathers to hear him. They are not the spiritually rich. They are weary and they are full of mourning. Justice is something they can only hunger and thirst for. And they are the ones reviled and rejected by self-righteous religious folks. Jesus announces to them that they are truly blessed by God. We can’t help but fall more deeply in love with Jesus as we see how his mission takes him to the heart of our life’s struggle.

We also now begin to contemplate how all this is played out in Jesus’ life. We begin to feel the tension developing with the religious leaders as Jesus speaks more and more prophetically. Jesus sees through the hypocrisy and names it. The fear of reprisal doesn’t deter him from denouncing injustice.

This week we want to enter into the tension and the freedom. We want to keep asking to be drawn to him as we let him show us this prophetic part of his spirit. He is the teacher, the healer, and the one who calls for justice, even at the cost of his own life.

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### Pray in these or similar words...

Dear Jesus,

In prayer I picture you on a hillside talking to us in the crowd. You came and brought your message to the poor — to them — but I can see the poor you are talking to and I am one of them. Now you are offering us life, a life with you. You see us, not as a crowd, but as individuals, each struggling to be freer people, poor in spirit and wanting something more — wanting to be closer to you. And you give us an answer to that desire. You offer us yourself, your friendship, and ask us to join in your life of serving the poor — others like ourselves.

Dear Jesus, you see me as a captive who needs to be set free of my limitations, my selfishness, and my seeking of the easy way out. I feel you there for me, next to me, as I begin to sense how I want to serve you and how I need to be free to do that.

I feel you accepting of me, with all of my limitations, all of my shortcomings. I am so aware of them all, and yet right there in the midst of my weaknesses, you accept me and love me and ask me to join with you. I feel the pull of your invitation and I feel my love for you growing deeper. Your care and gentle manner are so attractive — how could I turn down your invitation? Yes, I want to go with you. But inside I feel the voice asking, “What will it cost me?”

As I watch you, dear friend Jesus, I grow in love for your strength and the freedom you have in the way you serve God. I am so drawn to that. I want that ability to serve God unencumbered by all of my fears. You seem to have such a sense of who you are and how you are being called by God to serve. I want so much to be courageous enough to confront the structures and authorities I see that are wrong. But Jesus, I’m afraid. Confronting brings back frightening memories that need healing, and I need to feel your love and freedom to serve as the core of my own. I’ve never been a fighter, only someone who slinks from conflict. But as I stay with you this week, I see that the constant confrontations with the authorities seem to give you a sense of greater peace and firmer resolve. It’s as if it is becoming clearer to you exactly who you are and what God is calling you for.

Thank you for sharing so much of your life with me. I feel my love and my connection with you increasing as I get to know you each day. Thank you for inviting me to be with you on this journey. Give me the courage I need to walk it as you do.