

Daily Discipleship

Third Sunday after Epiphany – Luke 4:14-21

Imperatives of Discipleship – *Fix your eyes on Jesus!*

Focus Question: *How can we stay focused on Jesus?*

word of life

“And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him.” Luke 4:20 (NRSV)

Read Luke 4:14-21

The fourth chapter of Luke begins with a description of the Holy Spirit leading Jesus to the wilderness for a time of trial and temptation. Jesus is clearly focused on God and is able to resist the tempter.

1. *What helps Jesus to keep focused on God during this time of temptation?*
2. *How do you connect the presence of the Holy Spirit in the life of Jesus and Jesus’ resolve to be focused on God and the ways of God?*

Filled with the Holy Spirit, Jesus returns to Galilee to teach. People praise him and begin spreading the news about him in the surrounding country. Jesus is well-received by everyone. (Luke 4:15)

When Jesus returns to his childhood home of Nazareth, he attends the synagogue. Jesus is a faithful Jew who actively participates in the local synagogue. As was the custom of his days, the lay male members in a local synagogue have the privilege to publicly read from the Scriptures and offer comments. It is quite possible Jesus knew everyone in the room.

Luke details the scene and describes Jesus standing up, being handed the scroll from the prophet Isaiah, unrolling the scroll, and finding the place to read. It is quite dramatic.

3. *How do you envision that scene?*
4. *What does it mean to return to one’s hometown to begin ministry?*
5. *What expectations might there be?*

The passage read by Jesus is from Isaiah 61:1-2. The prophet Isaiah portrays God’s anointed as one who embodies God’s grace and hope by bringing good news, healing, setting free, and comforting. This person cannot possibly do any of these things without the Spirit of God upon him or her. It is only because the Lord has anointed and intervened that the person has any authority or capacity to proclaim such good news. It is God who sends Christ, the anointed one, into the world on a mission.

6. *What does the phrase “Spirit of the Lord is upon me” mean?*
7. *What is possible if God sends a person?*
8. *Based on this Isaiah passage, what is the mission of Jesus?*
9. *How did Jesus in his ministry fulfill each aspect of the mission as described in Isaiah?*

When Jesus finishes reading, he rolls up the scroll, returns it, and sits down. All the eyes are fixed on him, anticipating his comments. Then, Jesus offers a single sentence reflection, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” (Luke 4:21 NRSV) Today! How bold and audacious! Yet, Jesus is filled with the power of the Holy Spirit and prepared for mission.

10. *Describe what it would have been like to be in that room after Jesus finished his words.*

word *among us*

It was a lovely day for a picnic. The family sat on the patio, enjoying the warm sun, slight breeze, and barbeque. The father looked in the distance as he enjoyed his lunch. Slowly his eyes began to be fixed on some movement in the far tree in the backyard. His eyes squinted to make out the shapes, but he was puzzled by the scene.

His son noticed the sudden stillness of his father and glanced in the same direction of his father's gaze. Together, their eyes were riveted as they stared with fascination and curiosity at the distant object, not yet able to clearly see. Was it a squirrel, bird, or raccoon? Suddenly, they let out laughter. It was a possum who had finally lifted its tail for all to see.

1. *Give an example of fixing your eyes on something until you could grasp its identity.*
2. *When we see some object in the distance, what are other clues to help us with identification?*

Luke 4:14-21 describes a mesmerizing scene as Jesus reads from the prophet Isaiah, sits down, and announces the prophecy has been fulfilled. Jesus is the long-awaited Messiah, God's anointed one. The eyes of all in that room are fixed on Jesus. The listeners try to focus and grasp the meaning of that day.

3. *How do you imagine the demeanor and attitude of Jesus as he sat down after reading?*
4. *How do you imagine the listeners?*
5. *What questions would you have asked Jesus after he announced the fulfillment of Isaiah's words?*

In life, there are many distractions pulling us away from God. Temptations pull our eyes, hearts, and spirits away from Jesus Christ, so we are no longer fixed on looking at Jesus. It is easy to daydream and clutter our lives. Without fixing our gaze and life towards Jesus, we stumble and fall down.

6. *What keeps us from focusing on Jesus?*
7. *How might we daily fix our eyes on Jesus?*

Athletes in competition are often taught to visualize the results of their hard labor. Football player visualize the touchdowns, track stars see the finish line, and tennis players imagine aces. Focusing the energy of an athlete upon a single goal often times becomes the goal of the trainers. In a similar way, Christians are to focus solely on Christ.

8. *What would life be like if we focused on Jesus?*
9. *What can we do this week to minimize the distractions?*
10. *What do you hope to remember from this passage?*

Prayer

Creator of the universe, you have created a marvelous world to explore and discover. Help us to stay focused on Jesus to shape our lives and to give us direction. Amen

Dig Deeper

Isaiah 61:1-2

last word

In order to fix our eyes on Jesus,
stop for prayer this week and draw a cross.
Focus on that cross as you pray.



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