

**I HAVE A DREAM!
Luke 4:14-30**

I. INTRO

- A. On August 28, 1963—Martin Luther King, Jr. stood on the steps to the Lincoln Memorial and gave his “I Have A Dream” speech that electrified the world with its vision and courage. It was so crystal clear, so right. And the power of what Martin Luther King said that day has never diminished—because his dream was right and good and fair and just. His dream connected with our hearts—and still does—because **everyone** has a dream. You have a dream, too. And Jesus had a dream—it was God’s dream for all humanity. -Jesus’ ***I Have A Dream*** speech is recorded in the book of Matthew—and we’re going to study it at length. Jesus started with the shocking words—that all the people who were once considered unblessed—the poor, the oppressed, people with gaping holes in their hearts—those kicked around and shoved to the side—are now blessed because all of Heaven—all the goodness and peace and joy and life was open to them!
1. Jesus said, “I have a dream of people who will be a city on a hill—who will bring flavor and light to the world because of their good influence!
*I have a dream of people who will let go of their anger and frustration—and graciously reconcile with enemies!
*I have a dream of people who will value those of the opposite sex for more than their bodies—whose souls will grow together in a deep, satisfying life-long commitment.
*I dream about a people who gladly keep their promises—when it’s right, but **not** convenient!
*I dream about a people who gladly do the hard stuff of love because it’s right—even when it comes to people who hurt them!
*I dream of people who are spiritually authentic—who give, pray and fast, even when no one knows about it!
*I dream of people who will live for **more** than the next paycheck—and find a Father Who dispels all the anxiety they feel about the future!
*I dream of a people who don’t have to power up, judge and condemn to make themselves feel important!
*I dream of a people who really **do** believe that their Heavenly Father gives really, **really** good gifts!
*I dream of a people who, by the way they treat others—show the world that God is good to the core!
*I dream of a people who walk their talk! Who live out the fruit of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, kindness, goodness—with humility!
*And I dream of a people whose lives don’t collapse when trouble comes—because they’re built on truth!
 2. And then Jesus publicly **lived** that dream out in flesh and blood until his death on a cross 3 years later. Some believed Him—some believed it was possible. Some didn’t.
- B. I have to confess that my dreams have so often been self-centered; you know, some narcissistic vision for life that honors and exalts me in some way. Sometimes I would be ashamed to tell others what my dream is. When our dreams center around ourselves—they’re not too big—they’re too small!

-You have a dream! What is it? If you were to stand on the steps of some famous place and give your "I Have A Dream" speech—what would it be like? Martin Luther King Jr.'s dream is memorable—because it linked up with Jesus' dream! Does yours?

II. THE DAY JESUS GOT THROWN OUT OF CHURCH!

- A. It's hard to believe that Jesus would ever get thrown out of his culture's version of a church, isn't it? I can remember some of the stuff I pulled as a kid—and *I* should've gotten thrown out! Like dropping a steel ball bearing during a service—and having it clank and roll the whole way to the front; like accidentally dragging the tank lid off the toilet tank and smashing the toilet. See, you had to stand on the tank to jump and swing on the bathroom stall door! and accidentally smashing the toilet.

-Yep! We should've been kicked out! But not Jesus. And yet, that's apparently what happened in the little synagogue he'd attended all his life.

Then Jesus returned to Galilee, filled with the Holy Spirit's power. Reports about him spread quickly through the whole region. He taught regularly in their synagogues and was praised by everyone. When he came to the village of Nazareth, his boyhood home, he went as usual to the synagogue on the Sabbath and stood up to read the Scriptures. The scroll of Isaiah the prophet was handed to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where this was written: "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, and that the time of the Lord's favor has come."

He rolled up the scroll, handed it back to the attendant, and sat down. All eyes in the synagogue looked at him intently. Then he began to speak to them. "The Scripture you've just heard has been fulfilled this very day!"

Everyone spoke well of him and was amazed by the gracious words that came from his lips. "How can this be?" they asked. "Isn't this Joseph's son?"

(Luke 4:14-22 NLT)

1. This story actually starts off pretty good. News about Jesus' teaching and miracles was hitting the front page of that culture's version of the *National Enquirer* every day. Of course, when that happens, home town people say things like, "I know that boy! His Daddy was my best friend. He made the table in our family room." Yep! I remember him when he was just a little tyke—playing tag in the streets.
-Then Jesus comes back to his hometown—and attends the synagogue as he apparently had done every Sabbath for 30 years. The Synagogue leader says, "Rabbi Jesus, son of Joseph, why don't *you* read from the Prophets for us?"
-So he does—and strategically turns to this passage in the Isaiah scroll, reads the prophecy about the coming Messiah. He sits down to speak to them—as Rabbi's did and, in essence, said, "This prophecy just got fulfilled today—in *me!*"
2. At first, people are saying, "Wow! Impressive! Small town boy makes good—makes Mom *proud!*" I would guess that Mary was there, along with Jesus siblings watching this whole thing go down. But, suddenly things got funky. Listen to their comments,

"How can this be?" they asked. "Isn't this Joseph's son?"

(Luke 4:22 NLT) You know what's going on, don't you? Anyone here had someone you know really well, went to school with—or, even worse, *dated*—who

made it big? You hear people crowing about them, and there's something inside you that says, "They're not such hot stuff!"

-It's this small town jealousy and skepticism that wants to say, "Oh yeah? Prove it! Go ahead, Jesus—like we knew you when you were still trying to learn how to use a saw! Why don't you walk across my swimming pool—or create a house by snapping your fingers!"

3. Jesus is brilliant. He picks up on this funky, jealous attitude—and says, "Uh, by the way, I **know** you're going to eventually quote the proverb to me—**Physician—*heal yourself!*** Meaning? Well, do more miracles here--and maybe...**maybe...**we'll believe!" Then Jesus delves into a part of history they weren't all that interested in. That some of the greatest miracles done by God through Elijah and Elisha were done to help outsiders to Israel. Pagans.
 - a. Now, it's really important to understand, at this point, **why** Luke is including this story in his narrative. Luke was very likely a Greek—the only non-Jew to write part of the New Testament. And you see this sensitivity all through his writing. He's writing to a Greek—Theophilus, and his point again and again is, "Good news has come to everyone—not just God's people, the Jews. The engraved invitation is for everyone—pagans, blue-bloods, half-breeds—even the scandalous!"
 - b. So, imagine what goes on here. Jesus said, "You won't accept me—and you'll miss out on the best news of all time; that **God's anointed** has shown up. But that's okay! The pagans, the outsiders, the people who eat pork and bacon and ignore the Sabbath—**will** believe!"
 - c. And **that's** when Jesus got thrown out of the synagogue—the equivalent of excommunication. But it went further than that. Let me read how this ends: **When they heard this, the people in the synagogue were furious. 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, but he passed right through the crowd and went on his way. (Luke 4:28-30 NLT)**

-The headlines instantly went from, **Local Boy Makes Good** to **Local Boy Gets Mobbed!** All these people Jesus had grown up with, worked with, worshipped with, helped and loved—grabbed him and took him by force to the edge of a cliff—and there are a **lot** of them in Nazareth—and were about to throw him to his death—probably right in front of his entire family. We don't know **how**—but Jesus just walked out of the mess. "Not today. **Some** day this will happen...on a cross. But **not today!**"
- B. It's very important to understand how the people at the synagogue that day would've understood the words Jesus read from Isaiah.
 1. The first is the whole concept of **Shalom**. Most of you recognize that word as both a greeting and a farewell—typically among the Jews. In fact, the city of Jerusalem literally means, "City of Shalom/Peace." But the meaning is **much** broader. It means:

...Completeness, wholeness, health, peace, welfare, safety soundness, tranquility, prosperity, perfectness, fullness, rest, harmony, the absence of agitation or discord.

-When people in Jesus' day heard this word—and called out to **Jehovah Shalom**—it brought every picture from every prophet to mind—of a Day when God would bring absolute peace. A day when there would be plenty for everyone. No

more tears; no more disease; no more dying. The lion would lay down by the lamb. A child would play right by a den of cobras—and not encounter their fangs. To bless someone with **Shalom!** was literally the finest blessing you could lay on them! It meant to have a happy, full, satisfied heart; to live without fear and anxiety over the future.

-That's the imagery Jesus brought to people's minds when he said that, "**...the time of the Lord's favor has come.**"

(Luke 4:19 NLT)

2. But there was another image these words brought to mind. Very simply put, when God laid out the plan for this new people to Moses, He told them that every 50th year, they were to celebrate a Year of Jubilee. Leviticus 25 says that, on this year, among other things, all property returned to the original owners, all the debts got cancelled, and all the slaves got freed.

-This was an **amazing** plan—and the point was to prevent economic and social injustice from getting passed down from family to family. Imagine how legislation like this would've changed history! Where people who have been at an extreme disadvantage—all of a sudden get set free in every way.

-And that fits the language of what Jesus is saying here, doesn't it?

"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, and that the time of the Lord's favor has come."

Luke 4:18-19 NLT

3. I think this gives us tremendous insight into both the heart of God—and the heart of Jesus' mission. Notice where the priority is—

Good News to the poor. The Good News is that God has come; their lot, their position in life has totally changed. God is offering **Himself--Heaven** to everyone who will accept. Now—question. Why does Jesus say that He is bringing the Good News specifically to the poor? In the light of what the world has—and what we have—I don't consider myself poor. Is there no Good News for me?

-Of **course** there is! It's just that God has this soft spot for the poor; the disadvantaged—the people who get left behind—shoved around. Fact is, they're usually the most responsive to the Good News. For the **haves**, status quo works best for them. But when the Spirit of God works grace and compassion and mercy and justice into **their** hearts—that's good news for the poor, too!

-Jesus cares about the immense suffering that goes on in our world every single day. He is good and kind and **just**—and He wants the world to know that! He wants all slavery to end—forever—whether it's slavery to human masters or addictions. His compassion includes the 40 million blind people in our world—and the many, **many** more who are blind to what matters...and **who** matters! He wants the people who are crushed by circumstances, crushed by sin, crushed by the cruel ways they've been abused or shoved aside—to get picked up and loved the way **He** loves them! He wants people oppressed by fear and by darkness and by discouragement to find **hope!** And Jesus mission...is now **our** mission!

- C. I find it fascinating that Jesus Christ got thrown out of church and rejected by His people. Doesn't that blow your mind? But that wasn't the last time he got thrown out.

-Another mob on another day grabbed him, kicked him around—and showed the same skepticism and contempt. And this time when he got walked up the hill, he didn't walk

through the crowd. He died. And when he died—in suffering and weakness and blood—He actually made a way for this world to **become** the place—and for its inhabitants to **become** the people—we were created to be. God’s power became available to ordinary people. Death was somehow disabled—it no longer makes the final claim on us. And even if poverty, slavery, blindness and oppression never end for us in this life—there’s a life that stretches into eternity where **none** of that stuff exists!

-And **then** Jesus handed his mission—to **us**. His followers. He said, “Go throughout the world—oh, and as you’re **going**—make disciples—you know, like I did with you. Baptize them—like I did you. And then teach them all I taught you. Start right **here**—and spread outward—like **I** did. And His mission was—preach the Good News to **everyone**; heal blind eyes, release those held captive, and free the downtrodden from their oppressors.”

1. But still people throw Jesus out. Sometimes by people who claim to belong to Him—who have crossed at the front of their churches and quote the Bible!

-The Church in the Middle Ages talk about Jesus and Christianity a **lot**. But their real thing wasn’t Jesus; it was all about power and control. What they did to the people around them with their slaughter and torture had absolutely **nothing** to do with Jesus!

-Lot’s of people have claimed to follow Jesus—and then done the **opposite** of what He stood for. They’ve bought and sold slaves; they’ve claimed land in Jesus name—and cheated or butchered the people who lived there. Jesus has been thrown out of seminaries—who have denied everything He taught.

-And today, Jesus is routinely thrown out in favor of some version of the American Dream or the Canadian dream—the **Jesus Plan** that makes you healthy, rich—and gives you Heaven, too!

2. I have this really strange idea. What if Jesus’ plan is that our dream for our lives should look more like His dream—the one He gave us in His **I Have A Dream Speech**--than the **Canadian** dream or the American Dream? What do you think?

III. LET’S GOOD NEWS THE WORLD!

A. A couple of years ago, I heard a speaker make the comment that—if the Good News isn’t Good News for **everybody**, it isn’t Good News for **anybody**. Think again about what Jesus read from Isaiah—and applied to himself:

“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, and that the time of the Lord’s favor has come.” (Luke 4:18-19 NLT)

-Was this Good News for **everybody**?” Absolutely! It’s **awesome** news! When God’s goodness and God’s compassion and God’s love and God’s generosity and mercy start leaking into every corner of the world—that is **Good News!**

1. One of the biggest struggles today in following Jesus is when you associate yourself with the words, **Christian Church**, that immediately creates a barrier for many people. How many of you think the church would have this credibility problem if we’d have been out on the front lines of **BEING** Good News to the poor, the slaves, the blind and the oppressed? If people were to mutter under their breath, “Man, these Jesus people are weird with a capital W—but I always seem to find them sacrificing—going beyond themselves to help others out of messes!”

-Unfortunately, we became known for criticizing and condemning others—something Jesus specifically warned us to stay away from!

2. If doing this kind of amazing stuff is Jesus’ mission—how did we get **off** mission? I mean, today when people hear someone like me say, “The church is the Hope of

the world” they’re just as likely to snicker and say, “The church is more like the **joke** of the world!”

-Why? Well, it’s not because of Jesus. Jesus has **huge** respect in most of the world. I think part of it is the **privatization** of Jesus. Most of you have heard the phrase, “Is Jesus your **personal** Savior?” And that’s not a bad thing at all. It’s speaking of the intimacy of knowing Jesus—as a Friend, as One who loves you—gives His life for you.

-But when that’s **all** Jesus is—this personal contract between you and God that doesn’t have a lot to do with Jesus’ Good News for the world—that’s a problem. Jesus gave the Spirit—not just to transform the interior or our lives; not just as a kind of industrial strength cleaner to get the gunk out of our hearts and give us whiter teeth, fresher breath and bouncy hair.

-When Jesus gets into the interior of our lives—His intent is to expand that space; move us outside ourselves—and take us to the outsiders; use us to bring Good News to the poor, sight to the blind, freedom for the captives and hope for people squashed by life.

-When our faith becomes this internal thing—that **really** doesn’t change the way I do my business, and the way I use my power and the care with which I treat my world—and my engagement with people who need my help—what’s **that** about? It’s not what Jesus died to give us? It’s not what countless Christians who got slaughtered for their faith in those first years of the church lived for!

-Remember the phrase, “If it’s not **Good News** for everyone—it’s not Good News for **anyone.**” Friends—please hear me out—the Gospel—the **Good News**—is the best thing going on this planet! It’s this radical movement of love and grace where God somehow works through ordinary slobbs like me—and you—to **transform** the world—one person at a time!

-And when you truly hook up and engage in the power of the Spirit—what happens is better than any deal you’ve ever cut and any experience you’ve ever had. Know why? Because it brings something that every single person on the planet is looking for: **MEANING!** Life is **more** than collecting more stuff; stashing more cash—trying to create a safe, predictable, cool life. The worst thing I can think of is to die as a **safe** believer in Jesus—with the power to change our world—**Be** Good news—capped off and smothered!

B. I’ve done a **lot** of weddings over the past 29 years—and I’ve done them just about anywhere you can imagine—in gardens, wineries, backyards, living rooms—at a yacht club, on a schooner, in hot-tubs. Just kidding on the hot-tub thing. Oh, yeah—and in churches!

-After doing all the stuff that goes on before hand—counseling, rehearsals, working with the VIP of every North American wedding who would be...? The **mother of the bride-zilla**—there comes this stunning moment where all that stuff fades into the distance. Anyone know when that is? It’s when the Bride makes her entrance. There’s a pregnant pause in the music—everyone turns—the Groom is craning his neck—and then she steps into the doorway, or into the sunlight—and there’s this gasp. She’s **gorgeous!**

-The Church—the gathered followers of Jesus—have been called the **Bride** of Christ—intended to be as breathtakingly beautiful as **any** Bride. Jesus’ dream was not about well-oiled machinery—where a church runs like a really good business. Jesus dream was not about huge tall buildings and institutions and regulations and ordinations and confirmations and robes and candles and bands and cool people.

-His dream was about **real** people who don't need all that junk to prop up their lives. People whose character and whose actions and whose values are transformed. See, transformed people are people who turn away from the greed and lust and pride and self-preoccupation and need to judge and pretense and spin and broken promises and all the other crap this world runs on.

1. The first part of that is the transformation of the heart—and that happens through the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross—where our sins are forgiven—and we become forgiving people. Where God chooses not to judge and condemn us—and **we** choose not to judge and condemn others. Where God offers peace to our lives—and **we** then offer peace to others around us. Where God offers us reconciliation—and **we** then offer others reconciliation.
 - Where God shows mercy and compassion—and **we** show mercy and compassion. Where God sets us free from our addictions to money and stuff and pride and appearance and substance abuse—and where **we** engage to set others free. Where God heals our blinded eyes so we can see sin and this corrupt world system sin for what it is—and **we** engage in bringing sight to the blind and being the light of the world. Where God gives us meaning and hope in life—and then **we** pass on that hope to others.
 - See how it's intended to work? We just pass on what we receive from God. That's why we need to understand what we've received. We're simply conduit. Teapots with spouts—and handles. And if we make it all about ourselves—and try to dam it up inside and keep it between us and God—you know, "my faith is a **personal** thing"—then what we've received cools, coagulates—and begins to stagnate and rot.
 - And **that's** when people who hear us talk about Jesus look at us—look at Christianity as a whole; then they compare it to what Jesus taught—sigh, and say, "I'd hoped it would be real. I'd hoped that what Jesus taught about the goodness and power of God to change lives was true. I'd hoped that what Jesus taught about a whole new ways of life—the way of radical love and compassion and grace and restoration was more than just eloquent talk—but it's the same ol' same ol'!
2. Right now there are around 2.5 **billion** people in our world who claim Jesus' name and who pledge some allegiance, anyway, to the cross. It's called the **Church**. And, as Rick Warren has described it—the church is a sleeping giant. What if this sleeping giant woke up—and repented. Said, "We need to re-think **everything!** We need to sign up again for the dream Jesus had—and give His Spirit absolute authority to bring it about!" And **what if that happened!**
 - What if we were to lay aside our obsession with jobs and money and activities for our kids and appearance? What if we were to put all of our grudges in a black garbage bag—tie it tight—and **let it go!** What if we were to all humble ourselves, give up our pride and our anxiety about what others think?
 - What if we were to really see the "It's all about me" attitude we tend to live by for how contaminated and scummy it really is—and trade it in for, "It's **not** about me!" What if we were to give up this attitude that we should be served and loved and given special allowances—and decided to serve and love Jesus and others—and make special allowances for **them**?
3. Let's dream a little. What if we were to take the dream of Jesus seriously? What if we at The Olive Branch were to determine together, "Jesus said he was anointed to give the Good News to the poor. How can we carry that on? How can we make

sure that this message of **Good News** gets to the poor—the people who will respond?

-What if we were to say, together, we need to make sure that slavery of all kinds ends and that those who are caught in it—whatever it is, drugs, porn, pimps or owners—that we make **some** impact on this mess that should **never** be!

-What if we were to say, “Our plan is that, like Jesus said, the **blind** would see. Whatever that blindness is.

-And what if we were to say, “The people who are broken-hearted, the people who are oppressed because of their gender, age, race, handicap, or economic status—will know that we care—and be released—**one person at a time!**

-If that happened—if our pride and self-interest got small; if our faith got real in our lifestyle—in the way we treat others—in the priorities we live by and the compassion and generosity we show; is it possible that that people may once again gasp and say, “Wow! Wow! That’s **beautiful!** There’s something going on and I need to find out what it is!

IV. CLOSING

- A. Jesus still makes His offer to everyone. He says to us, “You can **be—I want you to be—I will give you the power of HEAVEN to be**--Good News—wherever you go. Even when you stumble and screw up. Even when you feel small. Even when you suffer and get stepped on. Even when you get thrown out of your families...and your churches. If you stick **together**, if you pursue my dream—live under my leadership—you’d be surprised at what I can do when my church, my gathered people—are **my** Body—backed by the authority of Heaven.”
- B. This morning I want you to project out from where you are and what you’re doing right now—and think, “What if nothing changes with me. Really! What will I have if I live out 20, 30, 50, 70 more years of **this?** An existence? More money and stuff? Or...**or...** a legacy of good—of changed lives. Friends—**time** is the only tangible stuff we have to create an eternity out of. We aren’t guaranteed how much we will get. Jesus dream was about people who use this valuable, limited resource called time—to live His dream—a dream where **everyone** wins!