

# Too Proud to Beg

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 01 May 2022

Preacher: Stephen Ballingall

[ 0 : 00 ] Stephen Ballingall, a minister in training with us, is going to be preaching this morning from Luke chapter 4. So we're going to read together now in our Bibles Luke chapter 4 from verse 14 through to verse 30. So do turn that up. Luke chapter 4 beginning at verse 14.

And 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.

And he came to Nazareth, where he'd 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.

[ 1 : 26 ] And he ruled 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 from 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 did at Capernaum, do you hear 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 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 drew him out of the town and brought him to the briar 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. Amen. This is God's words, and we'll return to it shortly.

Well, please do take a seat. And if you could have your Bibles open at Luke chapter 4, that would be really helpful as we've studied through this together this morning.

At the end of 2008, we all experienced the credit crunch as the world went into financial meltdown. The financial institutions we all relied upon seemed to line up as they collapsed week by week. Banks caught with bad investments owed more than they owned, impacting life in a number of ways.

Many pension pots were worth half what they were forecast to be worth. Your house value probably had tens of thousands of pounds wiped off it overnight. The banks who seemed to have unlimited streams of cash suddenly and devastatingly found themselves in crippling debt. And to get themselves out of that situation, they needed to be realistic about it and take help wherever it came from, from whoever had good credit. Goldman Sachs, who quite ironically proclaimed themselves to be the masters of the universe, had to go cap in hand to their own government, funded by common taxpaying citizens.

[ 4 : 40 ] The citizens they had treated so poorly so that they could get a life-saving bailout. For these grand financial institutions to get back on their feet, they had to utterly humble themselves, admit their wrong, and beg their governments for the help which they so badly needed.

And that may seem like a problem out there for the careless fat cats and the private jet-owning executives who frittered away billions. But today in Luke, we see Jesus being described as the

ultimate solution to a credit crisis, far worse than anything the financial world has ever seen. This is a crisis which doesn't just affect those in financial institutions, or those in prison, or those who have lived a poor life. But this crisis affects every single one of us. Every one of us in this room is helplessly wrapped up in this because we have a crippling debt owed to God which we cannot hope to pay ourselves. And the solution is only on offer to those who realize just how bad their situation is. And humble themselves by showing favor to the Son of God himself, listening to his voice, and asking for his gracious help. That's what we're going to be seeing this morning as we spend some time looking at this event in Luke's gospel. And this gospel actually takes the form of a rather long letter. Luke is a physician, a doctor, who is writing to his friend Theophilus. And Luke is wanting to give his friend certainty about the things he's already heard about Jesus. Luke has carefully gathered his material together, collating from first-hand accounts, eyewitnesses, people who were in the room when it happened. He stresses how he's taken care to compile everything truthfully so that there is a dependable, reliable account of Jesus' ministry. Which should make chapter 4 a bit of a surprise. You see, Luke in chapter 4 presents this event in the wrong place chronologically. Matthew and Mark both present this event happening later. But that's not a surprise to Luke. He knows what he's doing. He alludes to Jesus having performed miracles in Capernaum in verse 23 of our passage, but Jesus hasn't been there yet.

[7:07] Now Luke hasn't made a mistake, but he's making a point with this. Luke changes the order of events because he wants to place this Sabbath sermon front and center of Jesus' ministry. As this sermon serves as a ministry manifesto for him, this is his ministry, his purpose in microcosm. And what is that purpose?

His purpose is to proclaim the good news of his victory over sin and death and usher in an age where God is holding a great grace period as he is willing to cancel all debts that his creatures, people like you and I, owe to him. But as he goes about preaching that message, he is met with a wide range of reactions, including, as we'll see today, a whole synagogue's worth of people trying to kill him. This gospel message of good news for the poor is a deeply offensive word, for to accept it, we must firstly accept the truth about ourselves that we are morally and spiritually bankrupt with infinitely more debt than any credit we can muster up to try and save ourselves.

That's why we need the help of another, one with perfect credit, who will wipe out all of our debt. And Luke wanted his friend Theophilus, as he reads this passage, to be absolutely certain that the only solution to the world's great debt problem is found in listening to the voice of Jesus. So let's get into this passage we read earlier and look firstly at verses 14 to the first half of verse 22, where we see the year of the Lord's favor. And here we see that Jesus is showing himself to be the anointed, spirit-filled preacher sent to proclaim good news to all people. Now this is the start of Jesus' public ministry and he is emerging from his victorious battle with the devil in the wilderness. So far in Luke's account he's established that Jesus is the fulfillment of all the hopes of Israel, that he is the one anointed by God, that he is the greater son of David, the faithful one who has uniquely defeated the temptations of the devil in the wilderness. You read of that at the start of chapter 4, and then Jesus arrives in Galilee teaching to crowds who, verse 15, glorify him for his teaching. A sense of something really significant happening is building, which leads us to this great homecoming for Jesus, where he's going to be preaching in his hometown, preaching directly to his own friends, his family, his community, as he launches into his ministry.

[10:05] And as the scroll of Isaiah is handed to Jesus, he searches for this section specifically and reads verse 18 of our passage. 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.

So what is Jesus saying here? Well, he's reading from Isaiah 61, and Jesus is ushering in this great promise of the Old Testament that a spirit-filled suffering servant would bring to an end all the people suffering so that the poor, the captive, the blind, and the oppressed would find rescue in this servant. However, there's a great danger that as you read these words, like poor, captive, and oppressed, that we immediately flood them with our contemporary definitions of those words and put people we consider to be oppressed or poor in those categories. And if we do that, then we're going to misunderstand what Jesus is doing here. How we define these words is of real significance, for our definitions of these will shape what we consider Jesus' purpose, and by

extension, the purpose of his church today to be. To understand what's going on, we need to go back and find out what Isaiah meant by these words, to see how Jesus is applying them to the group of people in front of him.

Isaiah 61 comes in the middle of a section that's speaking of a great future hope for the people of God, which is all centered on a Messiah figure whose words and work would bring it to fulfillment, turning the people's mourning into utter joy. Isaiah 59 sets the tone as it makes clear that Israel's sin has separated them from God, that they, by rebelling against his rule, owe him a debt that they are unable to pay. There's nothing that Israel themselves can do about this, but the Lord gives hope by promising to send a redeemer to rescue his people, rescuing those who turn away from their sin and humbly come to the Lord. Chapter 60 then goes on to detail the glorious future in store for those who repent, that they will be part of something majestic, as the Lord will be present with his people again, redeeming them. And chapter 61, where Jesus reads from, changes from the Lord speaking about his people to the servant, this Messiah figure speaking in the first person, as he proclaims good news to the poor, the prisoners, and the oppressed. This servant is the one who will bring about this wonderful future that God has promised, clearing out the debt of those who repent of their sin and fulfilling everything that Israel had hoped for. So what did Isaiah mean when he wrote that?

Well, it would be very odd if this servant were to quite suddenly start speaking about specific health issues, or people's bank balance, or criminal record, because that's not what Isaiah thinks is the people's greatest problem. Now, there were certainly poor people who received Jesus preaching gladly, and it was good news to them. But Jesus also spent a lot of time with the fat cats of the day, tax collectors, people who earned in a month what most earned in a year, and he preached good news to them. Certainly there were people who were blind that were physically healed by Jesus, but he didn't go and set up a hospital, but he preached to everyone, regardless of how healthy or unhealthy they were. And his own cousin, John the Baptist, was in prison at that very moment, stewing away. But Jesus didn't make it his priority to have him released.

[14:11] Jesus' message is absolutely good news for those who are literally poor or blind or any other social or health issue they may have. Luke highlights in his gospel a huge cross-section of society who Jesus preached to. But Jesus is primarily preaching good news to those who are spiritually poor.

They are spiritually bankrupt. They are in huge debt to God. Jesus is preaching to those who are spiritually blind. They are blinded by their own sin, unable to fix their greatest need. Jesus is preaching good news to those who are held captive and oppressed by their own sin, unable to escape it without outside help.

And Jesus is saying that all of humanity has wound up in this. That each and every one of us is wrapped up in this crushing debt we owe to God.

That the rich, the healthy, those who seem to have it all on the outside, and the poor, and everyone in between, have a mammoth debt that we owe to God, our Creator, who's given us everything, down to the very heart that's beating in your chest this instant.

Each of us has sinned against Him, against our Creator, and we are guilty, deserving of punishment for our transgression. Now, we may not consider ourselves to be in debt for many reasons, so in what sense does Jesus say that we are in debt to God?

[16:01] This may seem fairly abstract to you, especially if you're visiting today and you're not a regular at church. You may think that, well, you don't really have a relationship with God in the first place, so why does this concern you?

Well, Isaiah, again, helps us get clear on what kind of debt we're in. Isaiah speaks in chapter 59 in the immediate context of Jesus' quotation of how, exactly how, Israel have amassed this debt.

He says that the people have denied the Lord and turned away from following Him. They have lived as though He just doesn't exist at all.

And who among us could say with all honesty that that's not what we do ourselves? God is the creator and sustainer of the universe.

He's given us everything we enjoy in this life and provided everything we need to glorify Him in all we do. We owe Him everything, but we don't have the means to pay Him back.

[17:07] For what would we give to a God who can speak worlds into existence, who's given us everything we already have? Any good deed we can try to muster up to pay off our debt is like proudly walking into a courtroom where we are in a bankrupt proceeding.

We're millions of pounds in debt and we very proudly throw a few coppers on the judge's bench. That'll do, won't it? When a giver gives a good gift, it at least creates a debt of appropriate gratitude. We have lived in God's world at His expense without giving Him the thanks and worship that He deserves. A life of overflowing gratitude is something that we fundamentally owe to Him, but which not one of us has paid and not one of us is able to pay.

Because we are what is wrong with the world. And we are the architects of our own downfall. Until we realize that we are what's wrong with the world, that the issue is not out there in other people or in institutions or systems as we so often like to think, but in here, in each of us, well, we can't hope to get ourselves out of this mess.

We are held captive by our own sin and our debt, well, it's only getting bigger. We can't hope to pay this off. We need a bailout package.

[ 18 : 40 ] We need to go cap in hand to the very one we have treated so shamefully to beg for help. And it's because our situation is just so helpless that what Jesus says next is such good news.

He says that He's been sent, verse 19, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. He's proclaiming this year of jubilee, a great promise of the scriptures.

Now, we're in a jubilee year right now, and it's quite something to be alive to see your monarch remain on her throne for 70 years. There are a huge amount of festivities planned. Two million trees are apparently being planted in the UK.

There will be parades. Beacons will be lit. There's going to be a big patriotic concert. And most importantly, we all get an extra bank holiday to celebrate. But with the greatest respect to Her Majesty, this jubilee year has nothing, absolutely nothing on the jubilee year promise in the Old Testament.

In Israel's calendar, they had what they called a Sabbath year every seven years. For a whole year, the country would stop working on the land. Everyone would be able to pause and rest, enjoying this as a blessing given by God, showing just how good it is to belong to Him, to be His people.

[ 20 : 01 ] And then after seven Sabbath years, seven times seven, and the year after that, the 50th year, there was to be a jubilee year, a year of God's favor, where things got even better.

After having a whole year off work, they would then be given another entire year off. And crucially in this year, all debts were canceled.

All debts were wiped out. All money owed was wiped away. People who had sold their land so they could survive would get their land back.

Those who had sold their labor themselves to someone else would be free, released from their commitments. And for two whole years, no one had to work the land.

Makes our extra bank holiday look quite pathetic in comparison, don't you think? I'd take ancient Israel any day over this. And this was a wonderful time, which was glorious in itself, but it held a great promise of an even greater time to come.

[ 21 : 10 ] When God would wipe out more than just our financial debts or give us back our property. It pointed forwards to when all of debt, including our great spiritual debt, would be wiped away forever.

And this great promise, Jesus says in verse 21, today, this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.

Jesus is saying that he is the one who is bringing in the year of the Lord's favor. He is the one ushering in this new age.

He doesn't mean that absolutely everything in Isaiah is being fully fulfilled right then and there. But he is ushering in this new age of liberation, where people's debts may be cancelled, their bills may be settled, and everything owed will be forgotten for those who ask the Lord for help.

Jesus has come to preach good news to all who need it, which is surely all of us. We are all spiritually bankrupt and are in great need of someone to save us from our helpless situation.

[ 22 : 29 ] And Jesus, Jesus alone, says that he is the one who will bring about the year of the Lord's favor, this time of cancelling debt, of being rescued by God.

This was Jesus' priority in his ministry. Yet he did many other good works with those struggling with poor health and he showed grace to the poor. But flick to the end of the chapter, verse 43, look at that with us.

I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well, for I was sent for this purpose. Jesus proclaims his ministry manifesto here.

And his main purpose in all he did was to preach the good news of God's offer of grace to a world which needed it desperately because it's the greatest problem that we all have.

And the people, verse 22, all spoke well of him and marveled at the gracious words that were coming from his mouth. They see that this is good news for all the hopes of Israel were being fulfilled in the person sitting among them.

[ 23 : 38 ] But you could see with their own eyes preaching to them in that very moment. They're thinking, all these poor people, all these oppressed people who need help, all those people out there, they will finally receive it.

What a joy, right? But that feeling didn't last long. That's what we'll see as we look at the second half of verse 22 to the end of our passage.

In verse 30, we're presented with the day of the people's fury. Here we see Jesus exposing the proud hearts of those listening in.

And he does so by giving his listeners a history lesson. He takes two stories from their scriptures to show just who will be enjoying the blessing of the year of the Lord's favor.

The people start to question Jesus at the end of verse 22, which, if you're reading it, you could take positively, marveling at a person they know saying what he did. But what follows suggests that this has very negative undertones.

[ 24 : 43 ] Is not this Joseph's son? They're thinking all these promises ushering in this new age of proclamation of the gospel to the world.

How can this all be centered on this young man? They've seen him grow up. He's the carpenter's son. They trust him to make a nice dining table, but not all this talk of the year of Jubilee.

They're only his words. They're just his words. How can we be expected to trust him? It's not wrong for us to ask questions of Jesus.

In fact, we actively encourage it. But this is the questioning of cynical skepticism, of trying to dismiss him, not honestly seeking to understand him.

They want to evaluate Jesus rather than receive his evaluation of them. And Jesus picks up on this mood in the room and he speaks directly into it.

[ 25 : 41 ] Verse 23. Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, physician, heal yourself. What we've heard you did at Capernaum, do here in your hometown as well.

Jesus knows what they want. They want a miraculous sign that he's from God, a miracle, and then, only then, they will believe in him.

But Jesus has no intention of doing that. He does perform many wonders, but not when people demand it of him. He won't be coerced into performing for them.

He's given them his words, and he believes that ought to be enough. And there's a play on words in verse 24. Jesus says that no prophet is acceptable or literally translated favorable in his hometown. It's the same word as used in verse 19, speaking of the Lord's favor. And Jesus is saying that he has the lot of all of Israel's prophets being roundly rejected by the people they've been called to preach to.

[ 26 : 52 ] And there's a tragic irony in that. As Jesus is willing to show favor to everyone who needs it, yet those most in need refuse it by refusing to show favor to Christ himself.

And Jesus shows them just how dangerous treating men in this manner can be by taking his congregation for a trip down memory lane. He shares two stories from Israel's history, both in the book of Kings, that show what happens when a prophet is rejected by his own people.

Elijah and Elisha were two significant prophets in Israel's history and they ministered at a time when the nation of Israel had turned away from God. They weren't living faithfully.

They weren't honoring God as their creator. And since Israel didn't want to listen to God's prophets, he sent them elsewhere. to people who would receive them, who knew that they needed the word of the Lord and his help.

So let's look at these two scenes. Firstly, Jesus speaks of a scene from 1 Kings 17, which is in verses 25 and 26 of our passage. And Israel was experiencing a famine at this time for three and a half years, which was God's judgment on them.

[ 28 : 10 ] And there were many in need of help, but Elijah was not sent somewhere in Israel, but to Zarephath and Sidon, to idol worshippers, people outside Israel.

This poor widow and her son were at death's door with only enough food to scrape together for one last paltry meal. Elijah comes along and proclaims that if she makes him some food with the tiny

portion she has left, with all she has left, then the Lord will provide more for her. She only has Elijah's words to go on. Yet, she knows that she's in desperate need and she does it. She takes everything she has and makes a small meal for Elijah.

She trusts the word of the Lord and the Lord provides for her miraculously as she trusted him to save her. Jesus then goes on to speak of a situation found in 2 Kings 5, which is verse 27 in our passage.

And there were many lepers in Israel, but the Lord did not heal them, only Naaman the Syrian. Naaman was a man of great wealth. He's very different from this widow.

[ 29 : 29 ] He's a commander of the army of the king with many servants. He's loaded, but he had leprosy. A deeply isolating disease without a cure and Naaman was helpless.

He was in a dire situation, but one of his servants said that there was a prophet from Israel who could cure him. So Naaman went to this prophet, Elisha, which was a big journey to undertake. And once he got to Elisha's door, Elisha doesn't even come down himself. He sends the messenger boy. And this messenger tells Naaman to wash in the river Jordan seven times and the leprosy will be gone.

Naaman initially turns up his nose at this. He thinks that the rivers back home are far more pleasant. He acts as though he's been asked to swim in the Clyde. But he has a change of heart when his servant says this, It is a great word the prophet has spoken to you.

So he trusts the word of the prophet. He washes in the river Jordan and then he's cured. The widow and Naaman, as different as they were, both knew how desperate they were and they listened to the words of the prophet.

[ 30 : 53 ] Both stories emphasize those truths, their realization that they desperately needed help and their trust in the word of the Lord spoken by his prophets. If any of us feel beyond the grace of God, beyond saving, then these stories are wonderful encouragements to us.

For even those on the outside, those seemingly without hope, those who are desperate, may receive the Lord's favor if they humble themselves before him and ask for his grace.

Before these Old Testament stories, the average member of the synagogue congregation right now is they're skeptical about Jesus but they still think that the year of the Lord's favor is a good thing. After all, there are plenty of people out there who are in debt who do have great needs so it's a good thing. They hear Jesus speaking about liberation, release from debt for other people but they don't think they need it themselves.

They think it's good news for other people. But this history lesson makes them, verse 28, filled with wrath.

[ 32 : 02 ] And they rose up and drove him out of the town and brought him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built so they could throw him down the cliff. Why did they react so angrily to this?

Israel was always meant to be a light to the nations with the gospel going outside to the whole world. So what makes them this furious? Will they see what Jesus was saying?

As God sent his prophets to those outside Israel, he was taking his good news elsewhere because his own people didn't want it.

Therefore, God is passing them by. If they won't show favor to God, then God will not show favor to them.

And we need to remember who Jesus is speaking to here. He's in the synagogue on the Sabbath. He's not visiting the Galilee prison and giving a talk at the sexual offenders unit. He's speaking to the Galilee in synagogue, the religious people, those who claim to be true descendants of Abraham, the heirs of faith who knew their Bibles and thought they were pretty good people.

[ 33 : 23 ] But they are so blinded by their sin that they cannot see that they are in debt. They cannot see the key way in which they are exactly the same as this widow from Zarephath, a name in the Syrian.

Their need for redemption, for favor from the Lord, is their single greatest need. But they won't accept it. They won't accept that they are as helpless as this poor, destitute widow or this Gentile leper.

And by refusing to accept Jesus, they prove his point. Because Jesus didn't come to save people who, quite frankly, didn't think they needed saving.

Jesus said, those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call those who consider themselves righteous, but sinners. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost. And sadly, the synagogue is too blind to see it.

[ 34 : 36 ] They are so captive to their sin that they cannot see their spiritual poverty. They cannot understand that they are bankrupt, owing a great debt to God.

That's why Jesus' words aren't good news to them, but instead proclaim their judgment, for they have rejected the word of the Lord. Therefore, he will reject them.

And that is where we are to find the favor of the Lord. Only in receiving the words of the Lord Jesus may we enter into the year of the Lord's favor. Only in listening to the voice of Jesus may we have our debts cancelled, our sin wiped away, and be given new life in God.

Friends, as we close, this period of time that we live in right now is the year of the Lord's favor. We live in this period of grace, of amnesty, which Jesus inaugurated in that synagogue where God is willing to cancel out all debts.

He's willing to settle the bills through him providing the credit we so badly need in the form of his perfect son's death on the cross. So, this is the time to be preaching good news.

[ 36 : 05 ] To be extending God's gracious proclamation of rescue for anyone who is willing to humble themselves before him. Rescue for anyone who realizes their situation and comes to God with the empty hands of faith by showing favor to his son.

Worshiping him. Trusting him with everything. Listening to his voice. And that must be our priority as a church. To be preaching the word.

To be proclaiming the voice of Jesus in all we do. But as we share that word, we must be realistic that it will offend people.

We like to fool ourselves into thinking that if we get just the right words and do it lovingly enough that no person could ever hate us for telling them the gospel. I mean, it's good news, isn't it? But we need to remember that Jesus was the best preacher this world has ever seen.

And he is a God of infinite love. Yet he was hated and killed for what he preached. and I don't think we are more loving or a better communicator than the Lord Jesus is.

[ 37 : 25 ] Normal people, the morally upstanding people of society try to kill him repeatedly. And we must see that our mission will follow the same pattern as we follow in the footsteps of the Lord Jesus.

And that's because this message of grace is offensive. It offends those who are so wrapped up in their own sins, so spiritually blind, that they are outraged to be called poor, to be told they need rescued, to be told that everything that they are so proud they have worked so hard for is actually a gift from someone else.

How dare we say they need to be rescued? How dare we say their way of life offends God? How dare we question their identity? They're so blinded by their own sin that they will, with proud hearts, defend themselves to the death, refusing to listen to the voice of the Lord Jesus every step of the way.

This explains the world we live in as we receive opposition for proclaiming good news of great joy, the year of the Lord's favor.

We, as God's messengers today, sharing the voice of Jesus with the world, we will face hatred, opposition, and fury if we are to remain faithful to our Savior.

[ 38 : 56 ] But, this year will end at some point. as Jesus quotes from Isaiah, he actually stops mid-sentence. Listen to the rest of the quote from Isaiah with me.

The Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God.

God. The people listening, they knew their Bibles, and this was a promise that they would have treasured, but never would they have imagined that they were the ones facing the day of vengeance of our God.

And our danger is to sit back and think, well, of course, they were religious hypocrites. They really needed to hear this, but not us. but we may find ourselves guilty of the very same sin.

We may not try to throw him off a cliff, but we are tempted to hear his voice every Sunday, and just nod along politely, and hold him at arm's length.

[ 40 : 10 ] That's what happens week in, week out, at churches all over the world, as people hear the voice of the Lord Jesus in his words speaking to them. And we assume he's talking to someone else.

He must be talking to them a couple of rows along. Jesus is talking to him. We know the struggles he's been having. He must be talking to that friend at school, you know, the one who's got problems at home.

He's talking to those poor people, those oppressed people, those war victims, or those war criminals, those who really need help. Not like me.

we're tempted to think that the voice of the Lord Jesus is aimed at someone else. He can't be talking about me.

I've never done anything that bad. I don't need help that way. There's no way my debt is that big. I know we're all sinners, but I'm nothing like them.

[ 41 : 11 ] maybe you've been thinking along those lines for the last half hour, and the penny is only just beginning to drop.

Well, Jesus is talking to you. Every time his word is opened, Jesus is talking to you, proclaiming good news to people who desperately need it.

We are all in a financial crisis, without any help, any way of getting out of it, on our own. And we need to humble ourselves, going cap in hand to our Savior, the very one we have treated so poorly, and with the empty hands of faith, ask him for a grace.

So will you humble yourself, listen to the voice of Jesus, and receive his offer of good news to the poor. Let's pray together.

Our heavenly Father, we thank you that your son came to preach of good news to all who need it, that that Sabbath day as he stood in the synagogue, reading from the prophet Isaiah, that something wonderful was being fulfilled in that moment.

[ 42 : 52 ] We thank you that that offer of grace extends to us, even us, who are poor in spirit, blinded, and held captive in our own sin.

please Father, help us to always hear the voice of your son, loving and listening to him all the days of our lives.

In his name we ask this. Amen.