

# **GOD DREAMS: Jesus' Dreams**

January 9, 2022

**Overarching Theme:** 2022 – *The Year of the Lord's Favor* (Luke 4:19)

## **Instructions:**

When using this material as teacher, feel free to pick and choose the point you want to emphasize in the lesson. *The format of the curriculum is designed to have an abundance of information in which to refer as desired.*

## **Core Point:**

As the world awakens from almost 2 years of pandemic stupor, the words of Jesus proclaiming "the year of the Lord's favor" is a dream whose time has come. This passage from Luke 4 harkens back to the 'year of jubilee' of Leviticus 25 and Isaiah 61, a year of a fresh start, a clean slate and reset for everyone who can dream God's dream.

## **Reflect on this Scripture: Luke 4:14-30 NRSV**

*<sup>14</sup> Then Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding country. <sup>15</sup> He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone. <sup>16</sup> When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, <sup>17</sup> and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:*

*<sup>18</sup> "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
because he has anointed me  
to bring good news to the poor.*

*He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives  
and recovery of sight to the blind,  
to let the oppressed go free,*

*<sup>19</sup> to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."*

*<sup>20</sup> 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. <sup>21</sup> Then he began to say to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." <sup>22</sup> All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth. They said, "Is not this Joseph's son?" <sup>23</sup> He said to them, "Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, 'Doctor, cure yourself!' And you will say, 'Do here also in your hometown the things that we have heard you did at Capernaum.'" <sup>24</sup> And he said, "Truly I tell you, no prophet is accepted in the prophet's hometown. <sup>25</sup> But the truth is, there were many widows in Israel in the time of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three*

years and six months, and there was a severe famine over all the land; <sup>26</sup> yet Elijah was sent to none of them except to a widow at Zarephath in Sidon. <sup>27</sup> There were also many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian.” <sup>28</sup> When they heard this, all in the synagogue were filled with rage. <sup>29</sup> They got up, drove him out of the town, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they might hurl him off the cliff. <sup>30</sup> But he passed through the midst of them and went on his way.

### **This Week: Luke 4:14-30**

The scene is more significant than its brevity might suggest. Its position at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry, its emphasis on the Spirit and Scripture, and its depiction of themes that will dominate the rest of the Gospel all point to its paradigmatic character. Readers of the Gospel now understand that all Jesus does in the coming chapters occurs by the power of the Spirit and in fulfillment of God’s dream for humanity. Jesus teaches, preaches, heals, and casts out demons. He moves among the poor, the outcast, the sick, and the blind. His actions fulfill the Scriptures, especially the Prophets, but even those who awaited the fulfillment of the Scriptures took offense at Jesus and eventually put him to death. This scene suggests that the basis for their hostility toward Jesus was a difference in the way they read the Scriptures and misunderstood God’s dream.

The people of Jesus’ hometown read the Scriptures as promises of God’s exclusive covenant with them, a covenant that involved promises of deliverance from their oppressors, a year of God’s favor (Jubilee – Leviticus 25), a clean slate and reset moment for their own personal, private benefit. Jesus came announcing deliverance, but it was not simply a Nazareth or even national deliverance but God’s promise of liberation for all the poor and oppressed regardless of nationality, gender, or race. When the radical inclusiveness of Jesus’ announcement became clear to those gathered in the synagogue in Nazareth, their commitment to their own community boundaries took precedence over their joy that God had sent a prophet among them. In the end, because they were not open to the prospect of others’ sharing in the bounty of God’s deliverance, they themselves were unable to receive it.

-Adapted from New Interpreters Commentary, Vol IX, p. 108

### **Questions to Ponder for Accountability in the Group:**

1. Why do you think Jesus chose the Isaiah 61 passage (quoted in verses 18-19) for his reading?
2. Many scholars believe that this Isaiah passage harkens back to Leviticus 25 (a year of Jubilee or ‘*year of the Lord’s favor*’, wiping away debts and giving

everyone a 'clean slate'). What does this say about a potential 'reset moment' that Jesus was unveiling? Do you resonate with the need for a 'year of the Lord's favor' reset in 2022?

3. The dream year (year of the Lord's favor) would not automatically happen in Moses day, in Isaiah's day, or in 1<sup>st</sup> Century Nazareth. Similarly, we can approach the year ahead passively, hoping for a break to come our way, or actively, cooperating with Jesus in living out the dream. What are some ways that you can cooperate with Jesus in this potential dream year?
4. Jesus chose his boyhood home synagogue in Nazareth for his 'dream' unveiling. What might have been going through the minds of the people as Jesus read? Do you think they expected favored treatment for Nazareth from their 'favorite son?' When Jesus emphasizes that God's favor extends to whoever is receptive (even Gentiles!), why do you think they responded so negatively?
5. Jesus dreams went beyond the parochial, pint-sized dreams of Nazareth to create a movement with a heart for the world. What about your dreams? What are some ways that you can make a difference beyond 'you and yours'? What are some ways that FUMC can dream a bigger dream in 2022?

### **Activity for the Life of a Disciple:**

1. Remember to find encouragement for the day by reading the daily devotional from FUMCC.
2. Ponder and pray on this scripture this week: Luke 4: 18-19  
*<sup>18</sup> "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
because he has anointed me  
to bring good news to the poor.  
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives  
and recovery of sight to the blind,  
to let the oppressed go free,  
<sup>19</sup> to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."*