

“Jesus Reigns”

The best interviewers know the right questions to ask. They know how to be welcoming and how to make people feel comfortable. Of course, they also know how to be good listeners, because the point of asking questions is to actually hear what people have to say. The best interviewers know the value of keeping detailed records. They know how to keep their notes organized, so they can easily review them. But none of these techniques really work without one simple quality on the interviewer's part. And that quality is curiosity. As Dale Carnegie explained in his popular book, *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, “*You can make more friends in two months by becoming interested in other people than you can in two years by trying to get other people interested in you.*”

Luke sure seemed to have that most important quality of curiosity, didn't he? Of course, he seemed to have all the others as well. He knew the right questions to ask. He knew how to make people feel comfortable. He obviously knew the value of detailed and organized records. But it was his curiosity, I think, that allowed him to focus on what other people had to say—their stories, their experiences, their first hand accounts of who Jesus really was, and what he came to do.

So, as I studied our gospel reading from Luke, chapter 4 today, the one thing that kept popping into my mind was how interested he must have been in what these eyewitnesses had to say. Because what he records clearly points to the fact that in Jesus, God has broken into the world in a new way, just as he had promised he would do through the prophets, and is reigning as King. But what did these interviews look like from Luke's perspective?

I imagine him sitting down with a man who claimed to be an eyewitness. They engage in some small talk, maybe commenting on the weather, or family members, or places they had visited. And about the time Luke senses that they are comfortable with each other, he casually asks a question like, “tell me about that day in Capernaum.” “Capernaum,” the man asks? “Oh yes, I remember. Jesus was there teaching in the synagogue. But he encountered a little problem...well, actually it was a big problem. Because a man was there who was possessed by a demon. And this demon was

aggressive. And he talked. The demon actually asked Jesus if he was there to destroy him, because he knew who Jesus was—he actually called him the Holy One of God.” I imagine Luke taking it all in and maybe even making a comment like “wow, how broken must the world be when pious Jews gather together for worship in the synagogue and right there among them is an angry demon? Maybe they share a little laugh. But then the man gets really serious. “You know Jesus didn’t waiver. He rebuked the demon telling him to be silent and come out. And that’s exactly what happened... I mean he just said the word and it happened. All of us were all standing there in utter amazement. All I can say is this was something only God could do.”

I imagine Luke got similar responses from the others he interviewed about that day. From the healing of Simon Peter’s mother-in-law, to the many more sick people who were brought to Jesus, to the many more demons who came out crying and calling him by name, the take away was that Jesus rebuked with his word. I can just picture Luke going over all the details as he sat down to write, maybe thinking to himself, “who breaks the power of the demons with his word? Jesus. Who heals sickness with his word? Jesus. God’s creation is broken, but what I’m hearing is that he’s taking it back in Jesus.”

Now, obviously I have no idea how Luke’s interviews really went. I have no idea what questions he asked, or what people he talked to. But I do know that everything he received about Jesus’ ministry in Capernaum pointed to the fact that Jesus reigns. Of course, the person or persons Luke interviewed certainly couldn’t have known the whole truth about Jesus at this point. I mean, we have to remember that this was his first day in public ministry. But they knew that he spoke with the authority of God. They knew he was in complete control of situations that seemed uncontrollable. They knew he was like no other. And this is just what Luke’s words reflect in chapter 4.

But what about modern day readers like you and me? We can see how these verses show us that God is reigning in the ministry of Jesus. Even more, we know that this theme continues throughout his gospel. Jesus speaks and things happen. Storms are calmed. Diseases are healed. The blind see, and the lame walk.

But we also know that a day finally came when Jesus’ earthly ministry would come to an end, don’t we? Luke’s record certainly shows that Jesus reigns, but on that day it sure seemed like he had given up. Because on that day, the perfectly innocent Jesus allowed all the brokenness of the world to come against him. But he didn’t fight it. He took it all until he died. But God raised him from the dead! And this means death doesn’t have the

last word. Satan doesn't have the last word. Your sin doesn't have the last word. Jesus is alive and he reigns! He has all rule; all power; all dominion over all things for the sake of his Church. "I am with you always," he says, which means he is interceding for us each and every day, helping us, protecting us, and delivering us from evil in ways we don't even know. But it's not all hidden. He continues to speak his all powerful word to us and things happen. "I baptize you," he says. This is my body, this is my blood for you, for the forgiveness of your sins, he says. And there's even more, because one day he promises that he will return to raise the dead, repair the world, and take all the faithful to live with him in his new creation forever. This is all part of God's comprehensive story of redemption in Christ, and we would be lost without it!

So why does it feel like so many of us are still searching for clues about Jesus? Why does it feel like so many of us are looking for more about him than what has been revealed to us in the holy scriptures? Is it simply curiosity? Or do we feel like we don't have enough information to confidently proclaim that Jesus really reigns? I mean if I'm honest, sometimes it feels like some of us have become the next generation of interviewers—and this is not a complement! People hear about a new book, or article, or movie claiming miraculous healings, trips to heaven, or blessings beyond belief— all in the name of Jesus— and they think they need to know more, just in case the Bible missed something. How did it happen? Where did it happen? What were the people doing at the time? Were there any special prayers, or passages they were reading at the time? We hear about people running after God, giving their lives to Jesus, and bearing fruit because they did, and it makes us question if we're doing it right. So we continue the interview process. I know I'm being kind of harsh here, but no matter what we think we might find out about Jesus, it will not be something new.

I know this can be a real struggle, especially when we are looking for answers. I get that. We pray for healing, or assurance, or some sort of affirmation, but nothing comes. Many of us carry the burden of shame and guilt, but seem to only be met with silence. If this is what Jesus reigning in our lives looks like, we think, maybe we should keep searching.

But remember what Luke has revealed? Jesus fixes the broken world, which is your world and mine. No matter how much we search, no matter how many people we interview, or how many books we read, we will find nothing that can make the world better for ourselves than what Jesus has done; what he continues to do; and what he finally will do for all with faith in him. His reign is not absent from our lives in any way. I know it might feel that way at times, but hear the truth. He who reigns over you lived a

perfect life for you. He who reigns over you offered that perfect life for you. He who reigns over you conquered the grave for you, and has ascended as Lord over you. He has made you his own, declared you forgiven, and now, through faith, you live under him in his kingdom, which is the best place any of us could be.

And if you're wondering what to do now, I've got one word for you. Relax. Be interested in other people. Listen to their stories. Read your Bible. Love your neighbor. Live as those who have heard and received that powerful word of Jesus which does what it promises it will do. And when the opportunity presents itself—share this good news with someone else. Jesus reigns. **Amen.**