

CALLING

Jesus and his disciples traveled to his hometown of Nazareth. When Jesus entered the synagogue, the Jewish place of worship, he was asked to read a portion of scripture from the prophet Isaiah. So Jesus stood and read this from the scroll:

God's Spirit is upon me, giving me power to help all those in need. I bring hope to the poor and the prisoners; the blind will now see; the abused, hurting, and forgotten will be set free. This is the year! This is the time of God's blessing!

After reading this, Jesus sat down (as was the custom before commenting about the scripture). The people looked at Jesus, anticipating his response. After a moment, Jesus said, *"This scripture is being fulfilled right in front of you! This is why I have come."*

The people were surprised by what he said. *"How can this be?"* they asked. *"Isn't that Joseph's son?"* They wondered why Jesus wasn't performing miracles in Nazareth like he had elsewhere.

So Jesus told them, *"Prophets are rejected by their own people. If you'll not listen to the truth, I will be just like the prophets before me. I'll go to those who will believe."* Jesus' response made the people in the synagogue furious. They forced Jesus out the door and tried to push him off a cliff. But Jesus slipped through the crowd and went on his way.

A CAPTIVE SET FREE

From there, Jesus and his disciples traveled to a nearby town, where he taught in the synagogue. His teaching amazed people because it was genuine and had real power—**different** than most teachers in that day.

While in the synagogue, a man thought to be controlled by an evil spirit began shouting at Jesus: *"Go away! Why are you bothering us? I know who you are—God's holy one!"*

Jesus interrupted him and commanded, *"Be quiet and come out of him!"* The man's body convulsed as he fell to the ground. In an instant, the evil left man and he got up, unharmed. Everyone in the synagogue was amazed and said, *"Who is this? The evil spirits even obey him!"*

THE BLIND WILL SEE

As Jesus and his disciples were traveling, they saw a poor, blind man sitting on the side of the road. In Judea, poverty was common. Many struggled daily to find food, and disease and sickness were widespread. As Jesus approached, the blind man shouted, *"Jesus, Son of David, show me mercy!"* The man called him *"Son of David"* to show that he believed Jesus could be the Messiah that the Jews were hoping for.

Jesus' disciples and people around the man yelled at him to be quiet, but he shouted even louder, *"Jesus, please show me mercy!"*

Jesus heard the man yelling and stopped to ask him, *"What would you like me to do for you?"* The man said, *"Teacher, please . . . I want to see again!"* So Jesus said, *"All right . . . now, you can see again! Your faith has healed you."* Instantly, the man could see! He shouted praises to God and followed Jesus down the road. Everyone who was watching joined in celebrating and thanking God!

THE DEAF WILL HEAR

Another time, a man who was deaf and could not speak was brought to Jesus. His friends begged Jesus to heal him. So Jesus took him aside, and put his fingers in the deaf man's ears. Then Jesus removed his fingers, spit on them, and touched the man's tongue. Jesus looked up to sky, breathed deeply, and said, *"Be opened!"* Instantly the man could hear and speak clearly!

Jesus told the crowd not to tell anyone. But the more Jesus told people not to tell anyone, the more they shared about him! Everyone who saw this was amazed. People said, *"Everything he does is remarkable. Jesus gives hearing to the deaf and voice to those who cannot speak!"*

HOPE TO THE HURTING

Later, while Jesus and his disciples pressed through a large crowd, a woman touched the fringe of his robe. For twelve years she had been suffering with constant bleeding and could find no cure. The moment she touched Jesus' robe, the bleeding stopped.

"Who touched me?" Jesus asked.

Peter, one of Jesus' disciples, said to him, *"What do you mean? This entire crowd is pressed up against us."*

Jesus stopped and said to the crowd, *"I felt healing power go out from me to someone here."*

The crowd stood silent. After a moment, the woman fell on her knees in front of Jesus, trembling with fear. She said, *"You . . . you healed me . . ."* and then she told Jesus and the crowd about her illness that was now gone after years of suffering.

Jesus listened to her carefully and then said, *"Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace."* Large crowds followed Jesus everywhere he went. People with every kind of illness came to him, and Jesus healed them. The crippled walked, those who were captive were set free, the sick were made well, and blind could now see