

## A Challenge of Jesus' Manifesto in Luke 4:16-21 to the Nigerian Christian

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### Abstract

This work studied Jesus' manifesto in Luke 4: 16-21 in the context of Nigerian Christianity. The diachronic exegesis was adopted in this analysis and it was found out that Luke 4:16-21 unfolds Jesus' mission statement. This mission statement included preaching the Gospel to the poor, healing and comforting the bruised and heart broken, liberating those who are bound and healing those with physical ailments especially, the blind. Like the Jewish-Roman world of Jesus, some of these maladies, the work found out, exist in Nigeria. The findings of the work showed that social problems like poverty, oppression, human rights abuses, violence, child abuse, women's oppression, prisoners' rights abuses, diseases and sickness are rampant in Nigeria. In this regards, the work challenged the Nigerian Christian to emulate Jesus in his manifesto and take pro-active steps in fighting against these social challenges seen in Nigeria today.

**Key Words:** Manifesto, Maladies, Poverty, Healing, Liberation, Salvation, Social Problem, Nigerian Christian

### Introduction

The Gospel of Luke is well known to have preserved a lot of important material about Jesus Christ which are not found among other Gospels. In other words, some material about the teaching of Jesus is peculiar to the Gospel of Luke. Among these material found in the Gospel of Luke, the pericope of Lk4: 16-21 stands out. This pericope (Lk. 4:16-21) is better referred to in this work as the "manifesto of Jesus." This is

because, from the framework of the Gospel of Luke, a thorough understanding of the manifesto of Jesus in Lk4:16-21 is very important in understanding the earthly mission of Jesus Christ. This, therefore, means that Lk4:16-21 clearly spells out Jesus' understanding of his earthly mission; it is a summary of Jesus' mission programme.

Onwu (2002:276), commenting on the pericope of Lk 4:16-21, wrote that "... it is like a budget speech which provides an agenda for Jesus and his people." Like Onwu, Myers (2013) equally pointed out that the pericope of Lk4:16-21 is the summary of Jesus' earthly mission statement. This is because, to Myers, Jesus clearly spelt out in this pericope, his earthly mission and the foreshadowing for how his ministry will be received. However, the research's concern here does not lie on how Jesus' contemporaries received his ministry. Rather, the research's concern lies in the fact that in the Gospel of Luke, Jesus is depicted as having fulfilled this manifesto which he presented in Lk 4: 16-21. The contents of this manifesto, of course, show Jesus' interest in the welfare of the poor, the captives, the bruised or crushed, the heart broken, the blind etc. In a wider perspective, all those who, in Jesus' days suffered and groaned under different maladies materially or spiritually, were an integral part of this manifesto. Some of these mentioned above, are people who were being defeated by crises in their lives. Added to this, the Roman imperialistic rule of Jesus' days compounded their woes. As this work shall later discuss, the imperialistic Roman rule of Jesus' time was bedeviled with a lot of maladies which some Jews found incongruous in their socio-political life. This manifesto therefore presents Jesus as a herald of hope and salvation to those who suffered these maladies (Brown, 2013).

Like the time of Jesus, the context in which this work studies the pericope of Lk4:16-21, is bedeviled with a lot of maladies. To be precise, Nigeria is a country where social problems threaten the well-being of its citizens. Some of these social problems include poverty, social injustice in forms of abuse of human rights, women's oppression, child abuse and unemployment (World Bank Economic Report, 2013; World Bank/IMF Report, 2014; National Bureau of Statistics, 2013). Crimes and violence, prisoners' rights abuses, child labour, corruption, diseases and sicknesses etc also constitute social challenges in Nigeria today (Onaiyekan, 2010; Onike, 2014). These show that there is much for people in Nigeria to be heart broken about.

In this regards, the objective of this work is to critically study Jesus' manifesto in Lk4:16-21 and show how it challenges the Nigerian Christian to translate this manifesto into practical actions which will effect appreciable change in the Nigerian society. The chief methodological tool this work uses in its study of the pericope of Lk 4: 16-21 is the diachronic method of exegesis. This method of exegesis, which is otherwise called the critical-historical method, is interested in issues like textual criticism, pre-history of texts, oral traditions, source criticism, background of texts etc (Goerman, 2006). The adoption of this methodological tool in this work is to make for a comprehensive study of Lk 4:16-19. The work will equally give some recommendations based on the exegesis and practical observations about contemporary Christian practice in Nigeria.

### **Behind the Text of Luke4:16-21: A Brief Overview of Political, Economic and Social Setting of Israel during the Time of Jesus**

Politically, the glorious years of self rule ended for the people of Israel (Northern Kingdom) in the year 722 B.C while that of Judah ended in 597/586 BC (Okwueze1998). This marked the beginning of a new romance of the Jews with imperial rule. Foreign powers like Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greeks and Seleucids all ruled the Jews at different times of history. During the time of Jesus, the whole of Judea was colonized by the greatest of all empires that ever existed – Rome. Of course, Roman imperialistic rule started centuries ago before the birth of Jesus. According to Houston (1988) Roman Empire was officially turned into an imperialistic dictator in 31 BC. During the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, Roman imperial rule was already extended to the whole of Italy, Gaul, Spain, North Africa and the whole of the lands bordering the eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea (Rowdon1988).

Palestine, in which Judea was situated, lies at the extreme of the eastern Roman Empire (Enslin1961). This area of land stretched from Egypt to Greece. In this area too, Roman imperial rule was felt. Of course, it was Pompey's subjugation of this area in 64B.C that brought the kingdoms of Judea, Galilee and Samaria under the Roman province of Syria. In Judea, Herod, the son of Antipater, otherwise called Herod the great, had been ruling for some years prior to end of the last century B.C. He reigned over Judea for at least 33 years. These years were marked by political intrigues. Judeans thought Herod a ferocious and cruel ruler. It was under his rulership that Jesus was born

(Matt.2:27). During this time, Rome was ruled by Augustus Caesar. Herod himself died in 4BC (Rowdon1988; Enslin 1961).

As with most colonial governments, the issue of taxation, for example, was an integral part of Roman imperial rule. The reign of Herod the Great, in particular, was characterized by high taxation levied on the Jews. That Herod's administration was marred by high level taxation, is well attested in history (Josephus1980; Willems2013; Jerimias1969; Carter2006). The great Jewish historian Josephus pointed out that the Jews groaned heavily under the heavy taxation of the Herodian administration. Josephus further pointed that at the demise of Herod, when Archelaus took over, there was a clamour among the Jews that Archelaus ease them of the annual payment (tax) (Anth xviii. 8.4).

Under the procuratorship of Coponius and Quirinus in AD 6, new taxes in forms of poll tax on each individual including women and slaves, an income tax – a percentage of the herds of those who kept cattle and taxes on land to be paid out of the produce of harvest, were all introduced (Grant1973; Carter 2006). With these forms of taxes, it is not therefore a surprise that most Jews were heavily affected as pointed out by Carter (2006). In fact, the effects of these taxes are squarely pointed out by Carter (2006:10) when he wrote “This led to a great divide between the economic elites and the ninety – seven percent of those in the whole of the Roman Empire who live in some degree of poverty.” To Horsley in Willems (2013) these taxes brought great economic pressure on peasant producers especially, village families in Judea who were forced into debt and were faced with the prospect of losing their family inheritance of land. These taxes, therefore, led to great impoverishment of a great many Jews especially poor ones. Truly had Josephus pointed out that a part of the demand of the Jews on Archelaus' ascension as King, was that there should be a release of those Jews put in prisons because of the debts they owed the Roman government (Ant xvii.8.4). In the above regards, there is a clear indication that a lot of Jews were held captives (prisoners) by the Roman government. This, definitely, may have been connected to their inability to pay their debts especially Roman taxes (Jerimias 1969).

Like taxation, slavery was also found in Roman imperialistic rulership of Jesus' time. Though Jerimias (1961) argued that during Roman rulership in the time of Jesus, it was impossible for a full

blooded Jew to be taken a slave, it was evident that slavery existed in Judea during this time. Jerimias himself is not quick to dismiss this fact. In fact, he pointed out that there existed a small number of Jewish slaves in Judea during the time of Jesus. But, to Jerimias, these slaves were far more out numbered by Jewish daily labourers and Gentile slaves. As it concerned these Jewish daily labourers, Jerimias (1969) and Grant (1973) pointed out that, they (daily labourers) made up a huge percentage of Jewish populace during the time of Jesus. If this is true, it is therefore evident that a large number of Jews were poor during this time. And, in Judea of those days, these daily labourers were mostly hired out by the nobility especially in Jerusalem. These labourers were hewers of woods, tillers of the vine yards, olive growers, and carriers of water (Grant1973). Unfortunately for these labourers, their daily wages “average one dynarium” (Jerimias1969:111).

These pointed out, were aspects of life in an environment which Jesus was not only born, but lived and carried out his earthly ministry. It was an environment, as Jerimias (1969) and Crossan (2008) pointed out, where impoverishment of many Jews was a reality and morality amounted to nothing. There was tyranny, injustice, over bearing and domineering leadership which characterized Roman imperialistic rule. In fact, this was an environment in which many Jews had much to be heartbroken about. This may have influenced Jesus’ choice of the text of Isaiah 61 as his manifesto which he read in Lk.4: 16-21. This possibility cannot be ruled out. Truly has Willems (2013) pointed out that from Lucan perspective, Jesus sets out to challenge the socio-political norm that was the result of Roman rule. From this perspective still, Grant (1973:116) pointed that it was because of Jesus’ concern about the socio-political ills of his day that “The carpenter of Nazareth has been hailed as the world’s first socialist and his name and figure, the inspiration of a vast far reaching movement of social idealism...”

#### **Textual Problem in Luke4: 17 & 18**

The text selected for exegesis has textual problems in its original Greek text. In other words, in the pericope of Lk16-21, verses 17 & 18 have variant readings. The concern of the research work here is to determine the best possible variant reading to be adopted in this exegesis. This having been said, Vs 17 reads “*Kai epedothē autō biblion tou prophetou Isaïou kai anaptuxas.*” The verb “*anaptuxas*” has a variant reading which reads “*anoixas*”. While *anaptuxas* as used

in the first reading means opening/unrolling/unfurling, *anoixas* used in the variant means “opening”. Both words: *anaptuxas* and *anoixas*, are in the aorist forms of the verbs *anaptuxsō* and *anoigō*, respectively.

The first reading that has *anaptuxas* is supported by:

- (i) Codex *sinaiticus* which is highly regarded as reliable in textual criticism. It is an uncial document dated about 4th century AD and contains the Gospels, Acts, General Epistles, Pauline Epistles and Revelation.
- (ii) ΔΘΨ: These are St. Gaul, Tbilisi and Athos. These are uncials dated about 9<sup>th</sup> century AD.
- (iii) D<sup>c</sup>: This is a 5<sup>th</sup> century uncial document which contains both the Gospels and Acts. Based on date and character of witness, this is not to be relied on so much.
- (iv) 0233, (Munster/West) and F<sup>1</sup>, F<sup>13</sup>, and Minuscules like 28, 157, 180 etc.

The variant reading which has *anoixas* is supported by:

- (i) A (Codex *Alexandrius*, 5<sup>th</sup> century AD)
- (ii) B: Codex *Vaticanus* (4<sup>th</sup> century AD)
- (iii) L: Paris Document (8<sup>th</sup> century AD)
- (iv) W (Washington, 5<sup>th</sup> century AD)
- (v) 33, 597 etc. These are minuscules which are dated at 9<sup>th</sup> century AD. It is worthy to note here that apart from the reliability of the character of B (Codex *Vaticanus*). Other supporters of this variant reading are not to be relied heavily on.

With regards to the second textual problem found in Vs18, the original reading omits the following statements, after *Me: Iasasthai tous suntetrimmenous Tēn kardian*. This variant reading is supported by:

- (i) A (Codex *Alexandrinus*, 5<sup>th</sup> century AD)
- (ii) Δ St. Gaul Manuscript (9<sup>th</sup> century)
- (iii) Θ: Tbilisi (9<sup>th</sup> century).
- (iv) Other uncials like 0102,0233, F<sup>1</sup>, and Minuscules like 28, 157,180 etc

Reading 1, the one adopted in the Greek text is supported by Codex *Sinaiticus* (4<sup>th</sup> century), Codex *Vaticanus*, *Bazae Cantabrigiensis* etc. Also, this is supported by F<sup>13</sup> and other minuscules like 33, 579, 700, 892 etc.

### **Adopting Reading for Textual Exegesis**

In the case of Vs 17; the aorist verb form: *anaptuxas* will be adopted because of:

- (i) The character of its manuscript support.
- (ii) The context in which the word (*anaptuxas*) occurs allows for its adoption here. We are to know that the text from which Jesus read was in scroll form.

*Anaptuxas*, which means unrolling/unfurling, denotes the act of unrolling a scroll. Certainly, reading a scroll in Jesus' days would begin with unfurling of a scroll. Jesus definitely followed this procedure when he read in the synagogue. In the case of vs 18, the work shall adopt the variant which adds "*Me iasasthai tous suntetrimmenous tēn kardian.*" The reliability of its character support may not be strong but in textual criticism, character support is not always the sole criterion for adopting a particular reading. This work stresses the fact that Jesus read some lines from a particular text (Isaiah 61). The culture of Jewish rabbis makes for a strong reverence for sacred texts. Rabbis never subtracted words from sacred texts, when copying or reading. Jesus as a Jewish rabbi probably could not have missed such important lines from the text he read (Isaiah 61:1-2). In other words, Jesus certainly read this variant which some Greek texts omit.

### **Textual Exegesis and Critical Commentary on Luke 4:16-21**

Vs 16: Luke records here that Jesus came to Nazareth where he had been brought up. He was an integral part of Nazareth (Luke 2:39). If not for anything, this was where Jesus received his training, growing in wisdom and stature (Luke 2:40). It was therefore natural for him to kick start his ministry and also train his disciples there (Meyers, 2013). Nazareth was not in any way a small place as Barclay (1975) would point out. Barclay gave an estimate of the population of Nazareth as being 2000 inhabitants during the time of Jesus. As Jesus' custom was, he taught in synagogues especially on Sabbaths. Jesus probably had this custom going for him because as Luke 4:14 pictures, he had already achieved fame through his teaching and work.

The synagogue itself had been an integral part of Jewish worship even before the time of Jesus. Synagogue represented as *sunagōge* in Greek literally translates as assembly or congregation. Though it is quite obscure at what time in history of Judaism that the synagogue started, one factual thing about synagogues during the time of Jesus is that they were a huge part of Jewish worship. Okwueze

(1998) suggests that synagogues probably developed during the exilic period when there was an absence of temples. The synagogues were used mainly for expounding the Scriptures and later, for service of praise and prayer (Ellison1988; Edershim1988; Myers2013). Ten people were the least required numbers needed for a synagogue to be founded. In the time of Jesus, it is suggested that “about 400 synagogues existed in Jerusalem” (Myers 2013). It was in one of the synagogues in Nazareth that Jesus taught on this Sabbath day.

Vs 17: When Jesus went to teach in the synagogue, he was handed a scroll containing the prophecy of Isaiah. And unfurling this scroll, Jesus found the text he wanted to read – Isaiah 61. Here, questions have been asked by exegetes concerning if Jesus chose this text himself or, if the text was an appointed text to be read in the synagogue on this particular Sabbath. Answering this question demands giving a brief explanation of how fixation of synagogue lectionary worked during the time of Jesus.

In the synagogue practice of Jesus’ days, it was certain that prayers and passages for each day and, weeks of the year may not have been codified. In other words, the lectionary used in synagogues did not contain codified passages for prayers to be read on Sabbaths (Meyers2013; Porter1988). Though the prayer or teaching for a particular day depends on the tradition used, the Torah is taught through either once a year or once every three years. Meyers (2013) suggests that if Jesus used a cycle, it was probably the triennial cycle which contained passages from the prophets; these passages are not found in the one year cycle. This, therefore, implies that the passage Jesus read (Isaiah 61) is not found in the one year cycle. Depending on the Torah reading for a day, passages from historical books and the prophets would also be taught. These were called the *Haftarah* in Hebrew (Meyers2013). In Jesus’ days, the *Haftarah* passages may not have been codified. In other words, this suggests that any man asked to teach the concluding Sabbath lessons was allowed to choose from any passage he wanted (Meyers2013; Wightmann, 1962; Bock1994; Porter1988; Brown2013). Jesus certainly was the man asked to teach the concluding lesson on this Sabbath day. Apart from Muehlenberg (2013), who suggested that the text of Isaiah 61 may have been a codified text for the Sabbath day Jesus taught, most scholars who have commented on this passages favour the possibility that Jesus chose the text of Isaiah 61 by himself. The lexical structure of the Greek verb



used here in the above regards, equally supports this idea. *Heuren*, which is in the aorist passive (3<sup>rd</sup> person singular) is translated “He found”. The verb *heuren* as used here therefore suggests that it was Jesus who chose the text of Isaiah 61: 1-2 by himself when the *chazzan* (attendant) handed him the scroll containing the prophecy of Isaiah.

V18: This is the manifesto of Jesus or his mission statement. Jesus reads from the text of Isaiah 61: 1-2 through which he explained to the Nazarenes what he came to do (Onwu2002). His statement here, writes Myers (2013:2) “aptly summarizes his earthly ministry.” The text of Isaiah 61, from which Jesus reads his manifesto, is originally, believed to be the words of Isaiah the eight century prophet from Jerusalem. The text depicts Isaiah as a prophet filled with God’s spirit. However, here in Luke 4: 18, Jesus applies this text to himself and to all those who follow him (Myers2013). Jesus’ reference to God’s spirit here is an allusion to the Holy Spirit which he received during his baptism. According to Edersheim (1988:454) “The ancient synagogue belief regarded Isaiah 61:1-2 as one of the three passages in which mention of the Holy Spirit was connected with the promise of redemption.” It equally seemed here that Lucan Jesus had the belief that he was empowered by the Holy Spirit to fulfill his earthly ministry.

In this manifesto, Jesus reads, first, that he was anointed to preach the Gospel to the poor. The verb used here is *euaggelizathai*. This is in the present middle form of the Greek verb *euaggelizō* which means “preach” or “proclaim the good news.” This, as Myers (2013) wrote, involves both words and actions. This is because both sermon and service are used to reveal the gospel to the poor. The chief recipients of this Gospel, here, are the poor. The Greek word used here for poor is *ptōchois* which denotes the have-nots or those in abject poverty especially those without jobs or means of livelihood (Alland et al1993). This also includes the beggars and the down trodden which formed the destitute of the society.

Rightly has Green (1997) argued that the word poor could be understood from the Mediterranean concept of honour. What this means on one hand, is that poverty and honour in Mediterranean context maybe related while on the other hand, poverty and honour may still not be related. However, the research work is inclined to believe here that the poor of Jesus’ days were certainly without honour. This attracted Jesus’ concern about them – they were the impoverished

and the rejected of the society. They were people who are in most need of God's salvation (Green 1997). People in this category equally include the spiritually poor. As noted by Bailey (2008), the Hebrew context of Isaiah 61 include the *anawim*, the Hebrew word for those who do not have food to eat and also, the humble who seek God. Certainly, Lucan Jesus had both the materially poor and the spiritually poor in mind here when he made reference to the *ptōchoi*. After all, during Jesus' earthly life, he was a friend of both the spiritually and materially poor.

The next item on the manifesto, reveals Jesus' mission to heal the heart broken. The heart broken is represented here in Greek as *suntetrimmenous*. This is the plural form of *suntetrimmenos* which means "bruised or broken" (Alland et al, 1993). Of course, this cannot be understood from a spiritual standpoint. It was already shown in this work that a lot of maladies existed in the Roman world of Jesus' days. In this sense, some Jews were already "heart broken" before the coming of Jesus. Jesus himself felt the pains of these people. In this regards, he came to heal their broken heartedness; to bring joy to them once more.

Next after this, it was Jesus' mission to proclaim liberty to the captives. The Greek word used here for captives is *aichmalōtois* which is the plural dative form of *aichmalōtos*. This may mean prisoners (Alland et al 1993). Equally, the Greek word *aphesis* used here in the accusative singular, means release, especially, that of prisoners. *Aphesis* may also mean forgiveness of sin. However, Jesus certainly had the prisoners in mind when he read about *aphesis* here. This is because the Roman world of Jesus' time had already taken a lot of Jews prisoners. A lot of Jews equally had lost their inheritance, lands and property to the Roman imperialistic rule. And worst still, the whole of Jewish nation was a Roman captive. Jesus' audience probably understood his talk about *aphesis* in direction of releasing Jewish prisoners. Another dimension of *aphesis* here borders on those who are held captive by the devil and sin. Therefore, the spiritual dimension of *aphesis* here cannot be overlooked. Jesus, in the above regards, came to release the Jews from the clutches of sin.

In the next mission statement, Jesus reads about "recovering sight to the blind." The original of this phrase in Hebrew, notes Bailey (2008), is very ambiguous because of its meanings. To Bailey, the best Hebrew translation of this phrase is "opening of the gate to those who

are bound.” The other translation, notes Baily (2008) is “opening of the eyes of the blind.” In this exegesis the research, shall take the translation which reads “opening of the eyes of the blind.” This is justified by the Greek expression used here: *tuphlois anablephin*. Of course, *tuphlois* in Greek means blind people while *anablephin* means restoration of sight (Alland, 1993). Jesus’ statement here probably smacks of the desire to give sight to the blind. Well attested in the Gospels, is the fact that Jesus gave sight to a lot of blind people during his earthly ministry. However, there is no denial here that Jesus may have had the spiritually blind in mind when he made this statement. Both giving sight to the blind and directing the spiritually blind, were all integral part of Jesus’ mission statement here. In the case of the spiritually blind, Jewish religious leaders were top of Jesus’ agenda here (Meyers 2013).

The fifth item on the manifesto shows Jesus coming to set at liberty those who are oppressed. This statement is very much related to Jesus’ task of liberating the captives. This is because, as this work has already noted, the whole of Jewish nation was dominated by the Romans. And, oppression was a fact in Roman rulership of Jesus’ time. The people were groaning under the imperialistic Roman government. There was injustice of many kinds. Many Jews were, therefore, oppressed by the Roman government. Jesus’ audience certainly understood the task of his liberation from the perspective of throwing off the imperialistic Roman rule. This, to them, was to ensure the end of oppression and Roman domination once and for all. But is this the only explanation to be given Jesus’ statement here? Certainly not. Aside Roman oppressive rulership, other forms of oppression existed during Jesus’ time. Top among these, was oppression by the devil in forms of sicknesses, diseases, demonic attacks, and lunacy. Also some Jews were being defeated by things around them during this time. These are all the handiwork of the devil. In this regards, both categories of people discussed above, are the subjects of Jesus’ liberating work.

The last task of Jesus in his manifesto here is a kind of summary statement. Here, Jesus comes to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. As Brown (2013:2) noted, this was an “allusion to the Jubilee year when slaves were set free; a year of universal release for persons and property.” Myers (2013) citing Malina, adds that this was also a year when lands were reverted to their original owners and were not

ploughed, planted or harvested and all debts were cancelled. In Jewish law (cf Lv 25:10) this was to happen every 50 years. But it is really doubtful if the Jubilee year was ever observed in Israelite history. In Myers (2013:6) words, “This was supposed to happen every 50 years but there is some question as to whether it ever happened in Israelite history.” This notwithstanding, Jesus declared his coming to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. This has led Evans (2003) to point out that the year 26/27AD was a Jubilee year. Based on this, Evans (2003:291) further pointed out that “it is possible that Luke understood this as the year that Jesus began his messianic ministry.” If this was the case, what Jesus wanted to point out is the fact that while the Jubilee year has never been observed in Israelite history, his ministry will practically demonstrate what the Jubilee year was meant to entail. His ministry was to provide both material and spiritual needs of man. This was to be accompanied by forgiveness of sin and eternal life. As Myers (2013:8) squarely pointed out, Jesus’ statement here would “bring relief from suffering, sickness, slavery, injustice, crushing debt, generational poverty, and governmental oppression.” This shows the in breaking of God’s power over the maladies that plague the whole of humanity.

Vs 20-21: It was natural that all eyes of those in the synagogue should be fastened on Jesus when he gave back the scroll to the *chazzan* (attendant). The Jews of his time may never have heard anyone put up such claims since the voice of Isaiah went silent. In vs 21, Jesus made a solemn declaration that he is the fulfillment of the text he just read. Here, Jesus meant that his earthly ministry is to fulfill the provisions of the text of Isaiah 61:1-2. Jesus was not bragging about this. Despite his rejection here in his home town, throughout his earthly ministry, the Gospel of Luke pictured him as having fulfilled the contents of his manifesto in Luke 4:16-19.

### **Conclusion of the Exegesis and Theological Thrust of Luke 4:16-21**

The exegesis done reveals important aspects and an understanding of Jesus’ earthly mission. Firstly, the pericope, is Christological as it teaches about the person of Jesus in relation to his earthly mission. Here, the text reveals Jesus as a healer, liberator and saviour. Jesus is the healer who came to heal the ills and maladies under which humanity groan. These maladies include physical diseases and ailments, poverty, political and spiritual captivity, oppression of all

kinds, injustice and sin. Secondly, and in alignment with the above point, the pericope of Lk 4:16-21 teaches that all believers are part of Jesus' manifesto. His mission of liberating, healing and saving is extended to all who are believers in him. This is, therefore, in line with the universalistic appeal of Lucan Gospel.

### **The Hermeneutics of Luke 4:16-21 in the Nigerian Context**

No doubt, Nigeria is a country plagued with a lot of social problems. These social problems affect the lives of over 170 million citizens that make up the Nigerian populace. This includes people of the Christian faith. Of course, one needs not doubt that Christianity is a strong religious movement in Nigeria. According to the Central Intelligence Agency World Factbook (2011), the percentage of Christians in Nigeria is 40. This figure cuts across cultures and ethnic groups. These Christians equally face the challenges the Nigeria world has to offer.

Top among these challenges is poverty. According to the report of National Bureau of Statistics (2013) "about 67.1% of Nigerians are poor." In other words, more than half of the Nigerian populace is poor. The World Bank corroborates this in its April 10, 2014 report when it ranked Nigeria t third on world poverty index with Nigeria accounting for 33% of the world's poor (Omoh, 2014). Related to poverty is unemployment. Between poverty and unemployment, unemployment induces poverty. The World Bank in its Economic Report in May 2013 pointed out that both poverty and unemployment are huge issues in Nigeria. In alignment with this, the World Bank indicted the current democratic dispensation of Goodluck Jonathan for failing to tackle the problems of poverty and unemployment (Bangudu, 2013).

Aside the problems of poverty and unemployment, other social problems like corruption, human rights abuses, women's oppression, crimes and violence, child labour, poor prisoners' welfare, hunger, the problem of the physically challenged, sickness and diseases which include HIV/AIDS and malaria etc have all become huge problems in Nigeria (Ogungbola, 2013; Ako-Nai, 2013; Onike, 2014; The Punch Newspaper January 28, 2014). Other forms of oppression in Nigeria manifest in what Onwu (2002:277) described as "People who go from crises to crises, people under demonic oppression and attack." These all show how social problems are indeed affecting the well-being of some Nigerians. Sadly, in the midst of all these, the about 40% people who make up the Christian faith in Nigeria have not really done much

to alleviate these problems. Rightly has Atowoju (2013) pointed out that Christians in Nigeria mostly play a passive role in issues of social problems in Nigeria. This he says arises from the erroneous belief that they are not of this world.

It is therefore in situations like these that Jesus' manifesto in Lk 4:16-21 challenges the Nigerian Christian who watches helplessly in the midst of all these. It is a challenge to the Nigerian Christian as a bearer of Jesus' manifesto here in Lk 4:16-21 to take pro-active steps and fight against these social problems. Such a Christian should adopt Jesus' manifesto and become a crusader against social injustice, poverty, oppression of all kinds, corruption and unemployment which are rampant in Nigeria today. Jesus' manifesto in Lk 4:16-21 therefore reminds the Nigerian Christian about the need to initiate practical actions aimed at alleviating these social problems in Nigeria. This manifesto equally tells the Nigerian Christian about the need for active participation in socio-political issues that affect the Nigerian society rather than shying away from them. The Nigerian Christian should therefore be an initiator and an executor of practical actions that will fight against social ills in Nigeria.

If, for example, such a Christian is a part of the political class, there is a challenge on him to use his position of authority to initiate policies that will alleviate poverty, unemployment governmental oppression, human rights abuses, corruption, hunger etc in Nigeria. The Christian in Nigeria is also challenged by Jesus' manifesto to play active role in the welfare of the physically challenged, orphans, widows, prisoners, the sick and afflicted. This class of people is emotionally, physically and financially in need. They are indeed heart broken. The Nigerian Christian is therefore challenged to heal their broken heartedness through extending charity deeds and re-integration into normal societal life. Concerning people who are still under the shackles of idolatry, shrines, occultism or evil habits, Jesus' manifesto in Lk 4:16-21 equally challenges the Nigerian Christian, as one who has been delivered, to deliver these people through preaching the gospel to them and godly counseling.

In all, Jesus' manifesto in Lk 4:16-21 charges the Nigerian Christian to emulate Jesus and challenge the status quo of certain social problems in Nigeria in order to effect appreciable changes in the society. It is when this is done, that the Nigerian Christian can indeed be called a true bearer of Jesus' manifesto as presented in Lk 4:16-21.

### **Recommendations**

- (i) Every Christian in Nigeria should be a crusader against social ills in the society.
- (ii) In alignment with the above, every Christian in Nigeria should understand the charge Jesus' manifesto in Lk.4:16-21 places on him/her to challenge the status quo of some social ills in Nigeria
- (iii) As explained in the exegesis done on Luke 4:16-22, the poor are an integral part of Jesus' earthly mission. The church and individual Christians in Nigeria are hereby challenged to fight for the cause of the poor in their midst. In this regards, the church should initiate poverty alleviating programmes in favour of the poor Christians in the church in Nigeria.
- (iv) Injustice, in which ever form, should be abhorred in the church in Nigeria.
- (v) Christian political leaders should use their position of authority to fight against social problems in Nigeria.

### **Conclusion**

Luke 4:16-21 unfolds Jesus' mission statement. It is therefore Jesus' manifesto. This research work studied this manifesto in the context of Nigerian Christianity. The findings of the work showed that the poor, those under bondage, the physically incapacitated and those who are heart broken were the subjects of Jesus' mission work. In alignment with this, the problems of poverty, unemployment, oppression of all kinds, diseases and sickness, poor welfare of the physically challenge and the prisoners, human rights abuses etc. are all part of everyday life in Nigeria. This is why the research work challenged the Nigerian Christian to take more pro-active steps to alleviate these social problem pointed out above.

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