

I know a young woman who is active in her Methodist church. When she is scheduled to be a lector, she spends the week beforehand researching the Scriptures she is going to bring to God's people.

She has no seminary training.

- She reads commentaries,
- uses Bible handbooks,
- reads various translations,
- talks to her pastor
- and is not satisfied until her questions of the text are answered.

Then she practices reading the text so that its message as God's Word is as clear to the hearers as she can make it.

She is often praised by others.

I wonder how Jesus prepared for reading God's Word in the synagogue?

Today's Gospel reading in Luke 4 follows on the heels of his 40 days of fasting and struggling against the trials with the devil in the wilderness.

He has begun the preaching circuit and the healing that goes with it.

He was filled with the Spirit when he faced the devil

and he is filled with the Spirit as he brings the Scriptures to God's people.

By the time he reaches his hometown of Nazareth, he has gained a reputation as a powerful preacher worthy of acclaim.

But this morning will end with an angry congregation and people wanting to kill him.

...

In one respect, it is this sermon that begins fueling the charge of blasphemy that will eventually result in his death by crucifixion.

But the real reason his sermon turns dangerous is because of how it steps on peoples' toes.

It is easy to hear the prophetic words with sentimental comfort:

"The Spirit of the Lord is on me.

He has anointed me

to announce the good news to poor people.

He has sent me to announce freedom for prisoners.

He has sent me so that the blind will see again.

He wants me to set free those who are treated badly.

¹⁹ And he has sent me to announce the year when he will set his people free." ([Isaiah 61:1,2](#))

Some might hear this and think:

You go, Jesus –take care of those unfortunate people – as long as I don't have to deal with them.

Others might hear it and think:

Finally! My prayers are answered!

But as Jesus says "*Today, this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing*" and begins to tell them what this means for them, the people want nothing to do with it.

- It means they have to forgive debts and pay their workers fairly.
- They have to let go of grudges and stop belly-aching.
- It means that land and property they had taken from people who owed them money must be returned.
- It means that those who can't pay for medical care will be treated the same as those who do pay.
- It means that money and power cannot buy prosperity and freedom.

Jesus has just told them that starting today, God is acting to save those who don't deserve it.

And they don't like it one bit!

Imagine the furor if Jesus preached this sermon in Congress or the White House today

– or if he preached it at all the southern border crossings

How would it be heard differently if he preached it in the detention centers where migrants are being held

- or in the orchards of Adams county during the summer and fall?

This is a dangerous sermon.

Truly – every time we hear God's Word it is dangerous.

God might be speaking to us

– and we might have to do something we don't like

– or accept a change in circumstance that we don't want.

- God has sent Jesus to give good news to poor people.
 - **And Jesus has called us and filled us with his Spirit to carry out that mission.**
- God has sent Jesus to set prisoners free.
 - And Jesus has called us and filled us with his Spirit to carry out that mission.
 - Really? Doesn't Jesus care about the laws of the land?
 - Yes – but some prisoners are held unjustly.
 - They are detained because of a corrupt system and not given access to fair process.
 - Some people are cut off from resources just because they are different;
 - Some people are imprisoned by prostitution or gang life or addiction.
 - **And God has set Jesus and the Church in motion to set such prisoners free.**

- **God has sent Jesus to give sight to the blind and Jesus has filled his Church with the Spirit to heal and speak the truth.**

We are called to confront the blindness

of ignorance, prejudice, racism, and all the other “isms”

with the truth of Jesus and the power of God's love for all people.

**We can no longer refer to anyone or any group as “those people”.
There is no such thing in God's world.**

Angry yet?

- God sent Jesus to lift the burdens of those who are enslaved by others – who are treated as “less than” – who are shown no respect as fellow human beings.
 - Jesus calls us and baptized us with his Holy Spirit to carry on the mission of lifting burdens from the oppressed.
- **And God sent Jesus to announce to the people that today, with him, God’s new world order takes effect.**

God has a mission and God’s mission has a church.

People of God – in Holy Baptism, we have been called by God to be united in carrying out the mission of Jesus Christ.

In fact, this is our life.

It is joyous, rewarding, and dangerous.

We will be persecuted, ridiculed, maybe even killed.

But that doesn’t stop us, because:

When we are filled with the Holy Spirit – death is no threat – for Jesus has overcome it.

...

He brings the Word of God to us today: *“This is my body, given for you. This is my blood, poured out for you.”*

- You poor, inherit the riches of my life.
- You prisoners of sin are set free and forgiven – my life for yours.
- You who are treated badly in this life have a future with me, I promise.
- You who are blind to the evils of this world look at me on the cross– here’s where that all leads

- – but now look at me again – I live victorious.
- **Today, you receive me, who died for you and lives in you by my Spirit.**

My life is your life and my power is your power.

My purpose is your purpose.

Go and show the world who I am.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vFCYHs3d6Qc>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ekV7dbI1VvU>