**To proclaim Freedom for the Prisoners**

Luke4:14-30

Luke 4:18-19 **The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.**

Last week we learned that Jesus defeated Satan’s temptation by the Word of God. Thank God for Jesus, who opened the way for us to defeat the devil’s temptation! Today’s passage, standing at the beginning of Jesus’ messianic ministry, conveys the profile of the Gospel. Luke gives us the story of the beginning of our Lord’s ministry. We can learn who Jesus is and what he did and does today among us. May God work among us so that we may believe and experience the salvation in Jesus by faith!

After defeating Satan’s temptation, Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit (14). Jesus preached the good news of the kingdom of God in their synagogues, and everyone praised him. Then Jesus went to Nazareth, his hometown, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. The most important part of a synagogue worship service was a Scripture-reading. Someone was selected each Sabbath to be the preacher. Often a visiting rabbi would be chosen. On this Sabbath, Jesus was the choice. They had heard about this young man who was teaching in the synagogues and was praised by all. Now he was back home, and the ruling elders invited him to speak. The custom was to read the word of God standing up and to preach sitting down (not a bad idea from a preacher’ point of view). When Jesus stood up to read, the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him (17).

Unrolling the scroll of the prophet Isaiah, Jesus found the place in Isaiah about the Messiah. Look at verses 18-19. “**The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach the good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor**.”

This is a free quotation from Isaiah 61:1-2 and 58:6. This quotation is very significant for knowing who Jesus is and what he does. Who is Jesus?

“**The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me**…” In the Old Testament, God’s ministers like priests, kings, and prophets were anointed by oil. Jesus was anointed by the Holy Spirit, which means Jesus is the Messiah, who brings about salvation for us. Jesus not only proclaims the salvation, but also Jesus himself brought about the salvation. Jesus has come to fulfill the salvation by the Holy Spirit, not just to give a message.

Luke emphasizes that Jesus was anointed by the Spirit of the Lord. Jesus did not appear in public before he was baptized by the Holy Spirit. When Jesus was baptized in the Jordan, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove (Lk3:21-22). Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, defeated Satan’s temptation and began his messianic ministry in Galilee. In Gen1, the great creation took place when the Spirit of God began to work. When Jesus was anointed by the Spirit, a new creation took place wherever he went. Likewise, the work of God is the work of the Holy Spirit. Often we try to change external things when we do not succeed in ministry. However, God’s work doesn’t depend on tangible things such as external skills and methods. God’s ministry cannot be carried out by your knowledge, effort, or experience, no matter how great they are. The creation of life is possible only by the Holy Spirit, not by might nor by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord (Zech 4:6)!

Then, what is the ministry of Jesus anointed by the Spirit? We learn here some central points of the Messiah Jesus’ ministry based on verses 18 and19.

**First, Jesus preaches good news to the poor.**

People want to become rich and make as much money as they can. Everybody dreams of hitting the jackpot when they buy lotto tickets. Jesus is the one who brings good news to the poor. Who are the poor? They are needy people. However, you cannot understand the meaning of being poor in terms of your bank account balance. The term means “having nothing,” or being lowly and crouching. In other words, being poor has something to do with suffering and being humble. Generally speaking, you will puff your chest out when you have enough money in your bank account. But if you are bankrupt, you will become humble. According to the OT and Luke, the poor are the afflicted who became humble (Lk1:53; 6:20). So the poor here are suffering people in this world and have no one but God to depend on. They are open to God and his way, since they are frequently the first to recognize how much they need God (6:20-23).

Independent and successful people often have a false sense of security about life, as if it is really within their control. People think that they can grab life by the reins and steer their own way. They think that only the weak believe in God. They don’t know about their spiritual bankruptcy. A missionary to Africa said that many Christians in the developed countries are spiritually malnourished because they eat only a few breadcrumbs of the gospel. The poor, however, don’t live under such delusions and are usually better prepared to turn toward God. Abraham Lincoln was born in poverty and lost his mother at the age of 10. He said, “All that I am I owe to my angel mother.” He said that he inherited two things from his mother: poverty and the Bible, which later made him into a great man of God. There is no reason for despair and hopelessness when you are in difficult situations. Jesus has always sided with the suffering and the poor. Those who notice their needy conditions are standing to be blessed. When you are sick, you will earnestly seek God. When you have problems with jobs, money, school study, or family, you will turn to Jesus. The really poor people depend on nothing but God. To such spiritually open people, Jesus proclaims the good news of the kingdom of God. God will exalt those who are lowly and humble (Lk1:51-53).

**Second, Jesus proclaims freedom for the prisoners.**

This promise from Isa61:1-2 first alludes to the liberation of Israel from the Babylonian captivity. It ultimately means that the Messiah sets free all people from the bondage of sin and death. Freedom is something we treasure in America. Many men and women have given their lives for freedom since the birth of this nation. Many teenagers are waiting to turn 18 so that they can be legally free from their parents. These days the concept of freedom is greatly misunderstood. People think they are free if they can enjoy physical pleasure. However, that’s not true. They are deceived and have a wrong concept of freedom. The Bible clearly declares: “everyone who sins is a slave to sin.” If you get into the house of sin, you can never get out of its house on your own. Many people today are in bondage. Whether it is alcohol, drugs, games, pornography, gambling, fear of failure, or bitterness and anger, they are so bound by their sins that there is no freedom in their lives. These people, often even churchgoers, live lives of desperation.

But this is exactly why Jesus came. Jesus came to bring you out of that captivity. Deliverance begins with a decision to let Jesus lead you out of the prison you are in. St. Augustine was once an intellectual hedonist who lived following his sinful desires. In his famous confessions, chapter 8, where he brings his conversion to a vivid expression, he found himself in the bondage of sin and he cried out in tears to God “How long? Oh, Lord how long?” When he cried out to God, he experienced forgiveness and true freedom from the bondage of his sin. I’m Augustine, too. When I was wandering under my sins, I could not believe in God’s love. But listening to a message, I looked up at Jesus on the cross who prayed, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” Then, Jesus gave me forgiveness and real freedom. Jesus breaks the bondage of sin and gives freedom to the prisoners. “So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed” (John 8:36). Many of us have been set free by the love of Jesus Christ. But there are more that are still held in bondage. No matter what prison Satan has tried to lock you in, remember, Jesus has the power to set you free. What sin is holding you hostage? Cry out to Jesus to set you free this morning. When Jesus sets you free, you will go out and leap like calves released from the stall.

**Third, Jesus recovers sight for the blind.**

The Old Testament promised that the Messiah would open the eyes of the blind. One of the marks of the Messiah would be giving the blind their sight. Again and again, we see Jesus heal the blind (Luke 18:35; John 9:1). The word “blind” means “darkened by smoke”. Again, there is a deeper spiritual meaning here. Jesus came to restore our spiritual sight. Since spectacles have been invented, most people can enjoy 20/20 vision. With 20/20 vision they enjoy many things. However, the invisible world is incomparably bigger than our visible world. People can only see one tenth of an iceberg. Such an iceberg caused the Titanic to sink. There are people who don’t see what they should see. The Bible says that they are spiritually blind.
The apostle Paul was a zealous persecutor of the church, until he met Jesus face to face on the road to Damascus. After this encounter, Paul was blind for three days. God directed a godly follower to lay hands on him. When he did, something like scales fell from Paul’s eyes, and he could see again (Acts9:18).

John Newton fits this category, too. He was a godless man who was a part of the slave trade in the early 1800s. He was given to fits of anger and drunkenness. But then, Jesus opened his eyes. He became an abolitionist fighting against the slave trade, and wrote many of the hymns we sing today. In his most famous hymn he describes the recovery of his sight: “Amazing grace/how sweet the sound/that saved a wretch like me/I once was lost/but now I’m found/was blind but now I see.”
Jesus came to open our spiritual eyes. He opens our eyes to see the kingdom of God. He opens our eyes to see where we came from and where we are going.

**Fourth, Jesus proclaims the year of the Lord’s favor.**

The year of the Lord’s favor is the Year of Jubilee. According to the Hebrew calendar, the Year of Jubilee should be celebrated every fifty years (Lev25:8-55). The Year of Jubilee was the great equalizer. Every fifty years, all slaves were to be set free; all leases were to expire; all debts were to be forgiven without any conditions, and property was to be returned to its original owners. It was a way for God to remind the people that the land was not really theirs but that God had entrusted it to them. No one could grow too rich, and no one would be perpetually poor. No matter how bleak a person’s life was, the Year of Jubilee provided hope. Everything would be made right at the Year of Jubilee.

What if we were to try this today? The average American household’s debt amounts to around $118,000. The ram’s horn of the Jubilee would be blown and all the debt would be completely erased. Every person that had declared bankruptcy would be given back all their assets. Does it sound like a pipe dream? Sounds too difficult?

The Year of Jubilee is a powerful symbol, a sign of things to come. It was God’s reminder for his people that the Messiah would bring freedom and restoration. Jesus proclaimed, “**Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.**”(21) “Today” is the time Jesus has come to us. “Today” is the hour we are listening to the message of liberation in Jesus. Jesus paid off all our debts of sins on the cross. Whoever believes in Jesus Christ will receive the Year of the Jubilee. Many people are paralyzed by their past; paralyzed by their past sin and past failure. Are you paralyzed by your past? Jesus is working among us by the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus can give us a new start today. Whoever believes in Jesus will be set free. Nobody can make an excuse before the grace of salvation. Now is the time of God’s favor, now is the day of salvation (2Cor6:2).

We are here at this Sunday worship service not because we have more than enough time, but because we confess that our life is in the grace of the mighty God who gives us a new start. Now our life is a festival of liberation in Jesus. Whoever believes in the good news of Jesus Christ will live life from victory to victory. Are you living a life of liberation and celebration in Jesus Christ? May you claim this amazing grace in Jesus and be renewed for the next chapter of your life!