

## **WELCOME 20<sup>th</sup> January 2019 – 2 Epiphany '19 C**

Ecclesiastes 3:1-14 & Luke 4:14-21

Good morning! Welcome to worship today!

It is great to have you here. Please stay with us for morning tea after worship so we can get a chance to know one another better...

Have you heard these before?

“Brevity is the soul of wit” – Shakespeare (Hamlet)

“Be Bold. Be Brief. Be Gone.” (common professional speaker’s circuit advice)

“Stand up. Speak out. Sit down.” – Martin Luther (instruction to preachers)

I think those guys would have loved Jesus’ sermon in the synagogue in Nazareth. One of the shortest recorded sermons in the Bible (only 8 words long in most translations) it captures Jesus’ mission on earth and reveals God heart & desire for all creation.

1<sup>st</sup> the text: (what he was about to preach on)

*“The Spirit of the LORD is upon me, for he (God) has anointed me to bring Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the oppressed will be set free, & that the time of the LORD’s favour has come...”*

Then the sermon...

*“Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing!”*

Jesus says he’s here & he has gathered us here to show the world that God’s reign of love & peace & joy & justice is at hand & at work in the world as he comes to us & as he moves through us into the lives of the people all around us...

We’ll explore & experience that together today...8 words? I don’t think so...but we’ll see

Let’s pray...

### **PRAYER OF THE DAY**

Heavenly Father...we in no way deserve to be where we are...in your presence embraced by your love...but here we are because you have chosen to be grace & love for us & to be here with us.

Right now...lift our hearts from the cares & concerns that cloud every day...let this moment be your gift to us where with your Spirit you renew our strength & restore us into the image and likeness of your Son Jesus Christ.

Take control of all we are and all we do so that in your good time we see your plan & purpose reach its completion & your Kingdom grow. In Jesus’ Name...Amen..

## 2 EPIPHANY '19 C – A TIME OF NO REGRETS: RE-STORE

- FAITH CHAT: 1. Have you ever lost something and then had it returned or found?  
2. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he has anointed me to \_\_\_\_\_"

I've been thinking about short sermons...not doing, just thinking. Here's one: "Yet 40 days & Nineveh will be destroyed." That's Jonah...once he got over the fact that God's call was unavoidable...he goes length & breadth of Nineveh with that 1 sentence...And the whole city from the palace to the barnyard went into full repentance – sackcloth...ashes...fasting – even the animals. King & cows alike

Here's another one: "Naked I was born & naked I shall die. The Lord gave & the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord." That's Job the day he learns his 7 sons, 3 daughters, 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 teams of oxen, 500 female donkeys & all but 4 of his many servants have been killed or captured by bands of raiders. It's an expression of faith as much as a sermon...but it's enough to catch the attention of his wife...who seems more upset that Job won't curse God & die than she is by the loss of her 10 children & their family livelihood.

None of the prophets could get what they had to say in that quickly...although John the Baptizer comes close: "Repent of your sins & turn to God, for the Kingdom of Heaven is near." But John also fired off longer sermons...*"baptize you with water; vs greater One coming who will baptize with the Holy Spirit & with fire...& will separate the chaff & wheat gathering the wheat into his barn but burning the chaff with never-ending fire."* He also wasn't afraid to tell folks exactly what it meant to live in this Kingdom...*2 shirts give one to the poor...share your food w/ those who have none...treat one another justly...no arm-twisting or advantage taking...that sort of thing.*

But this one...*"Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing!"* Is different from any of the others...again the context matters...*"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he (God) has anointed me to bring Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the oppressed will be set free, & that the time of the Lord's favour has come..."*

Those words are ≈ 6-700 years old...Is 61:1-2... b/t 722-587 BC Can you imagine waiting 700 years for a promise to be kept? The last 400 of those years in absolute silence from God. What about your waitings? Waiting for suffering sadness sorrow to be lifted. Waiting for guilt shame despair to be gone. Waiting for freedom from whatever has you tied up in knots...the emptiness of addictions the anxiety of compulsions the fruitlessness of chronic or terminal illness the pain of shattered families the way debt stalks & haunts...being oppressed by fear or bitterness or regrets...the "I did this so I could never do that's"...the hurts you feel for those you care about & can't help.

But in that synagogue...in that moment, Jesus says the waiting is over. Jesus says the promise is fulfilled. No matter how many times <sup>b/4</sup> they had prayed & hoped & longed for the Messiah to come; the waiting's over. Jesus sits in front of them & says the 'me' is 'me.' I'm sure they got it...I'm sure they understood that...But then a funny thing happens...doesn't happen...Nobody jumps up & shouts "Praise God! Hallelujah!" Nobody starts weeping tears of joy. Nobody grabs their best mate & starts hugging & dancing around the room. The best news of their lives in over 400 years & the best they've got is, *Everyone spoke well of him & was amazed by the gracious words that came from his lips. "How can this be?" they asked. "Isn't this Joseph's son?"* What? WHY?

I'm convinced part of the problem was Jesus quit reading in the middle of Is 61:2. He stopped at a comma...he left off the last bit...*He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the oppressed will be set free, & that the time of the Lord's favour has come, and with it, the day of God's vengeance against their enemies.* The last bit is what they were really waiting on. They were hanging out for the day when God would restore their Kingdom/dynasty/power & put his divine boot up the backsides of everyone who had pinned them down as conquered people for so long. They were longing for God to once again come down from heaven in cloud & fire & plant his big ol' God self right in the heart of the Jerusalem temple & rule from their own backyard...with ONE OF THEIR OWN on the throne... ONE OF THEIR OWN leading the armies... ONE OF THEIR OWN drenched with the blood of their oppressors...And Jesus wasn't that at all & seemed to have no inclination toward that at all & he stopped his sermon prep before he even got to the best part!

*Isn't this Joseph's son?* & all that meant...questionable parentage, common upbringing, nothing 'divine' about his appearance, no formal training or courtly graces/manners no army/no thunder/no lightning/no cloud/no fire/no boot & decidedly no kicking...so after a bit of too-ing & fro-ing they decide he's barking mad & try to throw him off a cliff...he slips through the mob & makes his way to Capernaum where he casts out demons & heals & preaches & calls the 12...Lives out that first sermon. *"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he (God) has anointed me to bring Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the oppressed will be set free, & that the time of the Lord's favour has come...Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing!"*

What is striking, if you listen closely, is that this good news is only good news if you are willing to admit to bad news...that life is hard...that there are empty spaces in your heart that you have filled but are still empty...that there's stuff that ties you up & won't turn loose...that you don't have all the answers that you aren't so perfect & all together after all. Look at the words that are in bold...Do you see what I mean? God offers words of comfort, but such words only mean something to those living with discomfort...a feast is only a feast to the hungry...

The 21<sup>st</sup> century is one great con...We spend so much time acting as if we have it all together. We spend so much money trying to look better, get fitter, appear younger...There is so much pressure to have it all & maintain it all & control it all... Except...the junk we put on social media or tell ourselves & our friends about being just fine...the commercials we watch telling us that we really can have it all, the ads that promise us that if we just purchase this we'll never feel insecure again – these are all false. And deep down we know it...and we oughta just admit it...

When we acknowledge our fakery...& our need...cool stuff happens. 1<sup>st</sup> there is huge freedom in telling the truth. Bad news – when it's true – is still better than a pretty lie. Because 2<sup>nd</sup> Jesus gives the help & comfort that God promises – release, sight, healing, freedom, & so much more...*'For in him every one of God's promises is a Yes.'* – 2 Cor 1:20 Then 3<sup>rd</sup>...maybe the coolest thing of all...We don't simply receive help & comfort, but we are also invited to offer it to others. We are invited, that is, not just to receive good news, but to be it.

Our task as those who've experienced that good news that jubilee of God that favour of the Father that freedom in Christ that forgiveness & restored sight firsthand is to announce redemption to a world that denies its fallenness...to announce healing to a world that revels in its brokenness...to proclaim love & trust to a world that knows only exploitation, fear & suspicion...to proclaim community to a world that thrives on its tribalism/individuality/anonymity.

Made for relationship with God, we hide in false philosophies & empty faiths. Made for joy, we settle for quickie indulgent pleasures. Made for justice, we clamor for revenge. Made for community, we insist on our own isolated way. Made for beauty, we accept cheap entertainment. But the new creation has begun. *Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing!* Today...Today...12x Luke uses that word (more often than the other 3 gospels combined) to drive home what Jesus preached...you do not have to sit in prison any longer.

The whole point of what - Jesus proclaimed & did was not saving souls for a disembodied eternity but rescuing us from the corruption & decay of this present world so we could enjoy "today" that restoration of all things which is God's ultimate purpose — and so we *in this moment* could become co-workers & partners in his redeeming restoring work. *And as the Spirit of the Lord works within us, we become more and more like him. 2 Cor 3:18*

You see that short sermon was really the warm up act for an even shorter one...the final one... *"It is finished."*

The new day dawned when the sinless one gave up his life for us. The new day dawned when there was nothing left to count against us because even death had been put to death. The new day dawned when evil did its worst, expended all it had & was stripped of its power. The new day dawned when stone rolled away and every promise was kept.

Today...Those claimed by Christ are called to leave behind, in the tomb of Jesus Christ, all that belongs to the fractured self-exalting but ultimately dying present world. That, quite simply, is what it means to be Christian: to follow Jesus Christ into the new world, God's new world, which he has thrown open before us...and to declare to all that it is for them too...Today.

Jesus says today (in him) God takes hold of you...makes you his own...makes you first a recipient & then an agent of that good news...The power of the good news is in the powerful announcement that God is God, that Jesus is Lord, that the powers of evil have been defeated, that God's new world has begun. Through his life/death/resurrection God in Jesus defeats all the forces that would bind you trap you ensnare you & kill you...restores you to your place as his child & restores in you the image and likeness of His Son. Jesus says he's here & he has gathered us here to show the world that God's reign of love & peace & joy & justice is at hand & at work in the world as he comes to us today & as he moves through us into the lives of the people all around us...

Let's pray with that in mind: **Father put to death in me everything but your presence. Bring to life in me only the image of your Son and the power of your Spirit. Let your freedom guide me deeper in trusting you in all things. Claim me again today as your child and set me to work boldly proclaiming your Kingdom of grace wherever I am. In Jesus' Name...Amen.**