

WELCOME 19th January 2025 – 2 Epiphany '25 C

Luke 4:14-21 & John 20:19-23

Welcome! It's great to be together again today! Along with your worship order you have in your hands & Bible Study **Qs** that are able to lead you deeper into God's word/work in your life, & help you share that w/ someone else. We also use them for our **Zoom Bible Study Catch-ups on Friday @ 1p.m.** Link is on website...

As we move into this week You've heard the old expression, "You only live once"? Well...Snoopy begs to differ...I love that...We only *DIE* once. We *LIVE* every day. The question then for each of us... **What** do you do with those days? Since we get to live every day *UNTIL* we die...What do you do w/ those days? Jesus tells us:

Peace be with you. *As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you...Receive the Holy Spirit.* Our being restored to the Father by Christ's death & resurrection draws us into the abundant life only Christ can give & propels us into the world as bearers of that life in invitation to everyone we meet. Jesus declared his mission like this:

*"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
for he 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,
and that the time of the Lord's favour has come."*

As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you. Since we get to live every day *UNTIL* we die **What do you do w/ those days?** Jesus tells us...we move with the Spirit...wherever & to whomever it leads w/ the assurance God is still w/ us. Christ is still at work w/in us. The Spirit still speaks to us & is powerful through us.

We move in peace, in the power & the true wisdom of the Spirit...w/ good news, declaring freedom, release, restoration, forgiveness, & the overthrow of the world's futile fatal striving & the advancing victory of the reign of love, mercy, grace & abundant life in Christ.

Let's pray...and then explore & experience that together...

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Holy Spirit, you are welcome here. Move freely among us this morning and renew your breath of life in us again. Change our hearts and our minds to be more like Jesus so that in all we do and say, we bring glory to God and others to see Jesus living in us. Amen.

Let's hear God's word...

FAITH CHAT:

1. What does it mean to be "filled with the Spirit?"
2. What does it mean **FOR YOU** to be "filled with the Spirit?"

2 EPIPHANY '25 C – WINDS OF CHANGE: MOVE WITH THE SPIRIT

I learned a new word the other day...of course I'll share it w/ you. **Hyperpleasure** – gotta love new words. I heard it 1st in the context of drug use/addiction. Yrs ago a friend who struggled w/ addiction told me “John, you never want to use heroin... **It** feels better than anything else in the world.” He wasn't just warning **ME**, as part of his recovery he reminded himself that *feeling better than anything else*, was not a good thing, 'cos once you go there... You're stuck. This past week, I was reading another recovery story that compared using methamphetamines w/ how Drs measure pain...0-10...0 = no pain 10 = hurt ≈ dying. He said: “regular people have a pleasure scale going from 0-10. Meth makes that scale go all the way to 1000. So think of the things you enjoy most... maybe 8-9-10/**10**. Enjoying a 9/10 is amazing, a 9/1000 barely registers.”
Meth=1000

The author then noted that *EVERY HUMAN PLEASURE* involves some cost...For me to enjoy my Texas family involves the cost of travel, time...good meal...play sports... Every pleasure involves some cost. Nothing in this life is completely free or “pain free.” I grew up around this **beer** ad. Schlitz was big in US baseball. And our hearts tell us to go for the 1000/max/gusto the easiest way possible. To max pleasure min pain – max reward min input. I've heard parents tell their teenage children to seek employment that asks little but pays a lot. I know folks who arrange their lives like that...meet the minimum expectation to get all the benefit. 21st cent technology offers us unlimited kinds & degrees of pleasures & opportunities to grab all the gusto/pleasure we can all from the comfort of our homes...min cost max pleasure.

It's no surprise really that Jesus has a different vision for our lives. Think about it... My heart/self-interested/self-invested part of me...telling me to grab all the gusto, to go for max/1000 pleasure **will** always be in pursuit but never in possession:|| Eventually I run out of ways to dial up the pleasure...Age, infirmity, reality, or death assures me of that. But Jesus **says**, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you... Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone's sins, they are forgiven. If you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.” & this **“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he 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.”** Jesus has a different vision for our lives...

Those...are the bookends of Jesus' life/ministry. The post-resurrection appearance to the disciples where Jesus' first word *Peace be w/ you* is the declaration that **IN HIM** restoration to the Father, healing of sin's fracturing of the universe, rescue from loss & death is assured in him. He repeats that word, *Peace* 3X...restoration rescue healing max joy life & pleasure are ours **IN HIM** as he stands triumphant over the grave/evil one:||

In Jesus all creation, broken torn twisted deformed by sin/evil is restored...**AND...** **MOST IMPORTANTLY...** Our being restored to the Father by Christ's death & resurrection draws us into the abundant life only Christ can give & propels us into the world as bearers of that life in invitation to everyone we meet. *As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you...Receive the Holy Spirit...* The Spirit that catapulted Jesus into his ministry...anointed him w/ Good News for the poor...liberty for captives...sight for the blind...freedom for the oppressed...& the arrival of the time of the Lord's favour...is now poured into each of us who are drawn into his peace/wholeness/fullness by our baptism into his death & resurrection & propelled into his mission.

As Jesus quotes Is 61 in the synagogue, he opens the door to his ministry. As he breathes on his followers after he is raised from death, he opens the door to ours. In the synagogue Jesus gives voice to God's agenda...he lays out the work of God's Kingdom as **HE AND THEN HIS FOLLOWERS** will accomplish it. After he is raised he plants his Spirit **IN US** to continue in his presence, power, & provision his purpose **THROUGH US**. How did we say this earlier? **We** only **DIE** once. **We LIVE** every day. The question then for each of us... What do you do w/ those days? Since we get to live every day **UNTIL** we **die**...What do you do with those days? *Because you see...*

If Jesus is right about his mission becoming ours...that's daunting...scary even. Why? It's one thing to hear “*God so loved the world...*” it's something else to hear “*love your enemies & pray for those who persecute you.*” Make God's love for the world real & specific in the way you love someone you really don't want to. It's one thing to hear “*blessed are the peacemakers...*” yet something far more demanding to be told “*No, don't forgive 7 times, but 70 TIMES 7 times.*” Make the peace you have in Jesus specific in the relationship where you've been hurt badly. It is one thing to have acted wisely, worked hard, saved & put away a safe nest egg “*Take a lesson from the ants, you lazybones...they labour hard all summer, gathering food for winter*” & have to remember, “*Don't store up for yourselves treasures on earth...*” It is one thing to be an introvert... have a comfort safe zone & then hear the call, *Don't forget to show hospitality to strangers, for some who have done this have entertained angels without realizing it!*

We can do this all day long...“*I tell you the truth, it is very hard for a rich person to enter the Kingdom of Heaven.*” **OR...** “*I tell you the truth,*” Jesus said, “*this poor widow has given more than all the rest of them. For they have given a tiny part of their surplus, but she, poor as she is, has given everything she has.*” Even here... *He rolled up the scroll, handed it back to the attendant, & sat down. All eyes in the synagogue looked at him intently. Then he began to speak to them. “The Scripture you've just heard has been fulfilled this very day!”* I'm fairly sure Jesus is talking about today. This day is the day of fulfilment. He means more than just go do these few things...he means today is the day to love,

today is the day to tell the truth, today is the day to forgive, today is the day to live w/ integrity, today is the day to open your life to someone in need, today is the day to offer hope to someone who may have none, today is the day to reconcile & be at peace... Today, not yesterday & not tomorrow, this day, is the day of fulfilment. There is no other day. I won't get yesterday back & I don't know if I'll have tomorrow. Today is the day. If not today, when? Hear this **again**...

Good News for the poor...liberty for captives...sight for the blind ...freedom for the oppressed...& the arrival of the time of the Lord's favour... This isn't a checklist. It's a call on our very lives...our getting up going to the shops or work or Dr or the neighbour or to our family living...it's a call we each carry. Since we get to live every day UNTIL we die...What do you do with those days? We know there is a claim & a call on our lives & there are days we'd rather there wasn't. It is easy & tempting it is to let the gospel go in one ear & out the other. We know if Jesus' words are fulfilled in our hearing today then we have to be changed...transformed...move w/ the Spirit. It is the church that is intended to be Jesus' living engagement w/ the world not a handy escape from the world. In a world that's always in pursuit but never in possession we have been given the greatest treasure – highest joy – abundance of life – fullness of pleasure all for the sharing.

If you feel overwhelmed by that...frightened by that...like you simply are not going to be that because you don't have what it takes, I have good news. You're in good company, & you're not alone... The Holy Spirit now lives w/in you, empowering you to do everything Jesus calls you to do. Listen again...

Peace *be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you...Receive the Holy Spirit.* Our being restored to the Father by Christ's death & resurrection draws us into the abundant life only Christ can give & propels us into the world as bearers of that life in invitation to everyone we meet. Whatever blows your way in the year ahead... God is still w/ us. Christ is still at work w/in us. The Spirit still speaks to us & is powerful through us.

Since we get to live every day UNTIL we **die** What do you do w/ those days? Jesus tells us... **We** move with the Spirit...wherever & to whomever it leads w/ the assurance God is still w/ us. Christ is still at work w/in us. The Spirit still speaks to us & is powerful through us. We move in peace, in the power & the true wisdom of the Spirit...w/ good news, declaring freedom, release, restoration, forgiveness, & the overthrow of the world's futile fatal striving & the advancing victory of the reign of love, mercy, grace & abundant life in Christ.

TAKE IT HOME – *As you leave today, be specific & share w/ your neighbour...*

Where in the week ahead do you want to fulfil your call & anointing by the Spirit?
(everywhere doesn't count...be specific...where/with whom do you want the Spirit's presence & Christ's power to be at work through you for someone else?)

Let's pray with that in mind... Lord Jesus, help us to see you at work all around us & to experience your Spirit working within us. Open us to those moments when we can share what we've experienced with others & invite them into your enormous love. Make us agents & instruments of your grace & the triumph of your kingdom... In your Name we pray...Amen...