

Pastor Daniel Waldschmidt – Luke 4:14-21 – 3rd Sunday after Pentecost – Year C – St. John’s Lutheran Church – 1/27/2019

Have you ever waited for a long time for someone to come and then they finally arrived? Maybe when you were a little child you waited for grandma and grandpa to come to your house. Do you remember the excitement you felt when you finally saw them pull into the driveway? I know my kids are so excited when grandma and grandpa are here!

The Israelites had waited for a long time for the Savior, the Anointed One to come. Today in our Gospel, Jesus says, “The Lord’s Anointed is here!” In the synagogue at Nazareth Jesus read a prophecy about the anointed one and then said, **“Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing” (Luke 4:21).**

The Lord’s Anointed is here!

- I. **To proclaim good news to the poor**
- II. **To proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.**

I.

First, the Lord’s anointed is here to proclaim good news to the poor. Luke tells this story in a lot of detail. Luke could have simply said, “Jesus went to his hometown of Nazareth and on the Sabbath day in the synagogue he read from this passage from the prophet Isaiah.” But instead Luke tells the story with a lot of dramatic detail. He says Jesus entered the synagogue on the Sabbath day. And he stood up to read. And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it is written, “The Spirit of the Lord is on me because he has anointed to me to preach good news to the poor...” Jesus rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in synagogue were fastened on him. And he began by saying to them, **“Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing” (Luke 4:21).**

The fact that Luke tells this story in such detail shows that this story is very important to Luke. This story is important to Luke for a couple of reasons. First, Luke wanted to show that Jesus was the fulfillment of all the promises God had made in the Old Testament. Here we have Jesus reading a prophecy from the Old Testament and saying that it is about him. So it fit Luke purpose very well. Another reason Luke attaches such importance to this story is because these words from Isaiah give the theme of everything Jesus is going to do throughout the rest of his ministry. So let’s look more closely at these words that Jesus read.

“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me” (Isaiah 61:1; Luke 4:18). Jesus is often called the Christ. “Christ” means “the anointed one.” In the Old Testament they would anoint people, that means they would pour or smear oil on a person’s head, to show that God had set this person aside for a special task. They anointed prophets and priests and kings. So we say that Jesus was anointed to be our Prophet, our Priest, and our King.

This prophecy from Isaiah emphasizes that Jesus was anointed to be our prophet. A prophet is someone who speaks words for God. Notice how emphasis there is in this prophecy on Jesus speaking or proclaiming. **“He has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor ... to proclaim freedom for the prisoners ... to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor” (Isaiah 61:1-2; Luke 4:18-19).** Jesus was anointed to speak good news to the poor.

Who are “the poor” in this passage? The poor in this passage are those who recognize their need for God’s help. Sometimes those who are physically poor recognize their need for God’s help faster than those who are financially secure because it’s more obvious to them that they need to depend on God. The poor in this passage are also those who recognize their need for the forgiveness of sins. The poor in this passage are those who beg God for forgiveness because they don’t have any confidence in their own righteousness. When you look at it that way, we are all poor because we can’t depend on our own righteousness to get into heaven. It reminds me of a story about Martin Luther. When Martin Luther died they found a slip of paper in his pocket. And on that slip of paper Martin Luther had written down, “We are all beggars. This is true.” We’re all beggars. We need to recognize our need for God’s help and for God’s forgiveness. And when we recognize our need for God’s help and for God’s forgiveness, then Jesus proclaims the good news to us:

We see Jesus proclaim good news to the poor when he tells people that their sins are forgiven. For example one time a paralyzed man was lowered from the roof right in front of Jesus and Jesus said to him, **“Friend, your sins are forgiven” (Luke 5:20).** He proclaimed good news to the poor. Another time in Luke chapter 7 a woman who had lived a sinful life but was repentant came to Jesus while Jesus was at a Pharisee’s house and Jesus told her, **“Your sins are forgiven. Your faith has saved you. Go in peace” (Luke 7:48, 50).** Jesus proclaimed good news to the poor.

And when you come up to receive holy communion and you have a humble and repentant attitude about your sins, and Christ says to you through his called servant, “This is the body of Christ given for you. This is the blood of Christ shed for you for the forgiveness of sins,” then still today Christ preaches good news to the poor.

II.

The anointed one is here to proclaim good news to the poor and also to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor. The words Jesus read say, **“The Spirit of the Lord is on me because he has anointed me ... to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor” (Isaiah 61:1, 2; Luke 4:18, 19).** “The year of the Lord’s favor” refers to something in the Old Testament called “the year of Jubilee.” In the Old Testament the year of Jubilee was to be observed every 50th year. If an Israelite had become poor and had to sell his property that was given to him as his little part of the promised land, that land would be returned to him in the year of Jubilee. (Leviticus 25:10) If an Israelite became poor and had to sell himself into slavery, he would be set free in the year of Jubilee. (Leviticus 25:39-43, 47-55) All Israelites debts were cancelled in the year of Jubilee. (Deuteronomy 15:1-3)

The year of Jubilee pointed forward to the Savior. In the synagogue at Nazareth Jesus proclaimed the year of the Lord's favor. The year of the Lord's favor here is not a literal year (only 365 days) but it refers to the time of salvation. We have racked up an unpayable debt to God because of our sins. But Jesus paid that debt on the cross and now your debt is cancelled. It's the year of the Lord's favor. And you receive the benefit of that cancelled debt through faith in Jesus. Adam and Eve were forced to leave the garden of Eden. We lost Paradise because of our sin, but God is going to give Paradise back to those who believe in Jesus. It's the year of the Lord's favor. Jesus has made the payment for sins and God invites everyone to receive salvation through faith in him. It's the year of the Lord's favor.

In the book of 2 Corinthians, the apostle Paul picks up on the year of Jubilee theme. Paul says, **"I tell you, now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation" (2 Corinthians 6:2)**. Now is the time when the invitation goes out to all: "Believe in Jesus and be saved."

Both Paul and Luke are excited that now is time when the Savior has come. Luke records Jesus' statement: **"Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing" (Luke 4:21)**. "Today" is a key word in the book of Luke. Do you remember what the angels said to the shepherds when Jesus was born in Luke chapter 2? **"Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:11)**. The angel is saying, "You've been waiting for this Savior for thousands of years and today's the day! He is born *today*. Or do you remember what Jesus said when he looked up into the tree and saw Zacchaeus in Luke 19? Jesus said, **"Zacchaeus, come down. I must stay at your house today" (Luke 19:5)**. And at the end of the story Jesus said, **"Today, salvation has come to this house" (Luke 19:9)**. It was salvation day for Zacchaeus and Luke is saying, "Believe in Jesus today will be salvation day for you too. And then there's the thief on the cross in Luke 23. He looks at Jesus and says, **"Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom" (Luke 23:42)** And Jesus says to him, **"I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43)**. In the year of Jubilee people got their little piece of the Promised Land back. Because Jesus died on the cross, we get paradise back. Jesus came to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

The Savior has come. In the synagogue at Nazareth Jesus said, **"Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing" (Luke 4:21)**. The Lord's Anointed is here to proclaim good news to the poor and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. The Savior came and through faith in Jesus the forgiveness of sins and salvation are yours today and will be yours forever. Amen.