

# Sunday, January 24, 2010

## Third Sunday after Epiphany / Lectionary 3

### **GOSPEL: Luke 4:14–21**

*Near the beginning of Jesus' public ministry, he visits his hometown of Nazareth. In the words of Isaiah, he states and claims his identity, purpose, and mission.*

<sup>14</sup>Then Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding country. <sup>15</sup>He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone.

<sup>16</sup>When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, <sup>17</sup>and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

<sup>18</sup>"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
because he has anointed me  
to bring good news to the poor.  
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives  
and recovery of sight to the blind,  
to let the oppressed go free,

<sup>19</sup>to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

<sup>20</sup>And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. <sup>21</sup>Then he began to say to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

## How's Your Vitamin D Intake?

**Our university students are back in session across the street (West Chester University) and so I thought I'd start by sharing , in honor of student body returning this past week...**

Top ten ways the Bible would be different if college students wrote it.

10. Last Supper would have become the Last Breakfast, as it would have been eaten the next morning - cold.
9. The Ten Commandments would actually be the five commandments, double-spaced, and written in an extremely large font.
8. A new edition would be released every two years in order to limit reselling.
7. Forbidden fruit would have been eaten not because the serpent tempted Adam and Eve, but because Adam and Eve knew that it wasn't cafeteria food.
6. Paul's letter to the Romans would have been Paul's [text message] e-mail to followers@romans.gov.
5. Reason Cain killed Abel: it's clear: They were roommates.
4. The place where the end of the world occurs: not Armageddon, but rather, Finals week,
3. Out go the mules; in come the mountain bikes.
2. Reason why Moses and followers walked in desert for 40 years: They didn't want to look like freshmen and ask for directions.
1. Instead of God creating the world in six days and resting on the seventh, God would have put it off until the night before it was due and then pulled an all-nighter.

No matter how the scriptures come to us

They define who we are and our purpose.

Jesus uses scripture for his identity purpose and mission

Reading today tells of a visit to his home town

To the place where he grew up

Place where he was known as Mary and Joe's eldest boy...

As was his regular custom, went to the synagogue to worship

It is there – give this home town boy

The scriptures to read

Takes Scroll finds section of Isaiah to read

<sup>18</sup>"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,

because he has anointed me

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19to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

After sitting down says

This reading has been fulfilled in your hearing today.  
Defining his identity and aligning his mission and purpose  
With a reading from scripture...  
We too as we baptize at 9:15 today  
As we welcome new disciples at 10:45  
Acknowledge a community that uses scripture for shaping our common life  
This is why staff meetings, council meetings, orientation yesterday  
Start by reading scripture, devotions, reflecting  
On a holy text...

This is why we encourage you to sign up to receive a daily e-mail with a devotion to start your day aware of your purpose and mission...

I know of a church that does this before every activity  
Even before volleyball games or knitting group or choir practice  
Or even any committee mtg they read scripture together  
Some one protested:  
Doesn't that leave less time for the committee to do its work  
Or for the council to make important decisions????

The response:

You would be surprised how efficient and well we work together  
After spending time in scripture and praying for one another

Scripture is our norm for life

It is our record of the past

It is our compass pointing us to the future

1<sup>st</sup> thing note from this reading

Is that Jesus used scripture to define his identity

Mission and purpose

So shall we...

Not only note that Jesus uses scripture for his identity and mission,

He also endeavored into that mission

filled with the power of the Spirit

Filled!

This week at Bible study we pondered - how does God's strength become our strength?

One image we discussed was a Gas station

Or remember what they used to be called?

Filling station

When your gas tank is empty - you know where to go

But what about when we want to be full of the spirit!

In part, this is why the church exists

Jesus has entrusted to us the means of grace

The waters of baptism and the bread and wine of communion

This filling station is permanently owned & operated by God

We're just part-time store managers doling out what is

freely given by the author of Life,

Might say, well and good for Jesus to be full of the Spirit, after all he was Son of God...

But what about us?

Believers have claimed this power as our own from the very beginning...

Even the first believers thought that this power transferred...

Romans 15:13 May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope **by** the **power** of the Holy Spirit.

A Transfer of power

That is what we are aiming for

God's strength, becoming your strength...

I am mindful of the transfer of power at the airport in Port Au Prince this week

A military taking over for the flow of aid

Or the desire of so many with monetary support, and supplies, and medical expertise, wanting to share their strength with those who desperately need it

A transfer of power...

This week in our home, we nearly witnessed the WRONG KIND of transfer of power as - Sparks were flying in our as I hurriedly re-attached an outlet plate incorrectly.

All I can say - is thank God for circuit breakers!

The house went dark, but I am still here!

[albeit with curlier hair than last week!!!]

That transfer of power, when safely handled

Is what enables us to turn on lights, keep house warm

Cook our food

And use a computer to send digital photos to grandparents

And other loved ones

It's what enables the CD player to fill our house with music we dance to, or the contemplative

Sound of a oboe and the haunting melody of

2<sup>nd</sup> movement of Dvorak's New World symphony

It can be incredible to witness

Or I think of an image I saw in Reader's Digest not long ago...

Power of light transferring vitamin D to toddlers above arctic circle;

It's a picture of children in Lovozero, Russia

Small herding town north of the Arctic Circle where they get only 1-3 hours sunlight, in the mid-winter

So, for decades children have received UV-light treatment  
Toddlers aren't getting enough sun's rays  
Need the bone-strengthening vitamin D  
To improve calcium absorption, to develop properly  
That's what this place is  
A Place to gain exposure to the light of life, to Jesus the light of the world  
To the one who said he came to proclaim good news  
And release to the captives...  
And we do so not so our bones can grow  
But so our faith can grow and sustain us...

Finally, I share the witness of Ben Larson – 25 yrs old Wartburg seminary student, who lost his life in Haiti earthquake.

His memorial service was this past week at Luther College, Decorah, IA  
The preacher at the service, Malpica Padilla, executive director, Global Mission of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) said when confronted with situations "that push the human experience to its limits" people turn to God for answers. "Where is God?" he asked.

"The gospel message is that we find God in those places where we think it is impossible for God to be," he said. "God is present in the periphery of human existence marked by poverty, exclusion, hunger... God is present under the rubble of collapsed buildings in Port Au Prince. Our God is the one who enfolds our broken reality and the pain of the world, making it God's own."

Ben's wife Renee and cousin Jonathan also with him – survived

His wife Renee recalled the moment the quake hit...

We were together on the same floor when the building began to shake  
Saw Ben near a pillar in the middle of the floor  
At that point two floors of the 5 story building collapsed  
Renee was trapped for a short time, but able to crawl out of the rubble  
She called for Ben and could hear his voice  
He was singing, which was not unusual for Ben,  
As he loved music.

Renee told him that she was okay, and to keep on singing  
But the singing stopped after he sang the words, God's peace to us we pray...  
If he was alive, he would have been calling for help...  
She said,  
Ben spent his last breath, singing...

Talk about a transfer of power!

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me...  
because he has anointed me  
to bring good news to the poor.

to proclaim release to the captives

<sup>19</sup>to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

& I would add:

To sing Lord's praise in a final breath..

Barbara Lundblad once said the most important word in this text is: today.

Jesus says, today, this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing

Jesus is the one who has the power to fulfill it

He is the one God filled with power on your behalf

He is the one who emptied himself, so that his power

Could be transferred to those who believe.

He is the one God raised from the tomb so the

Transfer of power would be complete.

And his word for you at this time is:

Today.

And now to Him who is able to accomplish abundantly beyond all we can ask or imagine, to Him be glory, now and forever. Amen.