

Our epistle lesson today insists on something we at Church of the Resurrection know to be true: We are all one body, with Christ at the head, operating under a mandate for unity. To our great credit, our political opinions do not unite us:

- Some of you are fearful of the changes our new presidency will bring.
- Some of you think that, despite the “hype,” all will be well.
- Some of you worry about the fate of immigrants, especially non-European immigrants, and potential mass deportations.
- Some of you would welcome a national ban on abortions.
- Some of you know federal workers who have already had their jobs terminated.
- Some of you wish for fewer federal assistance programs.



I could go on, but I won't. Our various political beliefs are NOT the Good News that we are here to share today. The Good News is that our unity in Christ Jesus, and that unity allows us to be part of the Movement that Jesus declared in our gospel lesson today when he named his mission and gave his followers their **marching orders**.

In our gospel lesson, Jesus read from the Isaiah scroll, rolled up the scroll, then sat down. This is how Jewish preachers in Jesus' time prepared to preach a sermon, which was an interpretation of the scripture passage they had just read. The people in the synagogue with Jesus on that day knew this and waited to hear his sermon. They had already heard from others how this “local boy” had made such a good name for himself as an interpreter of scripture, as a preacher. Luke adds that the people wanted to hear for themselves what Jesus would preach.

This was very early in Jesus' public ministry, soon after his baptism and his testing in the wilderness. So far, Jesus had only (to our knowledge) “preached in ‘their’ synagogues and was praised by everyone.” Luke adds one more detail to the incident; Luke says that Jesus was “filled with the power of the Spirit.”

I want to pause here and ask if you've ever met anyone, heard anyone, seen anyone who is filled with the Holy Spirit? Of course, we are ALL filled with the Holy Spirit, all the time. However, in some people at some times, when people are in full synch with the Spirit within, acting so in tune with their divine purpose, they radiate with spiritual power. I'm thinking of Dr. King during his “I have a dream”

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and “I’ve been to the mountain top” speeches. I’m also thinking of Archbishop Tutu, when speaking about God’s love for absolutely everyone, and our last Presiding Bishop, Michael Curry, every single time he preached.

But we are not here today to reflect on our lists of people acting in full accord with the Holy Spirit; we’re here to talk about Jesus.

Early in Jesus’ ministry, filled with the Holy Spirit, he was invited to preach on a passage from Isaiah. What he read was only a part of Isaiah, one-and-a-half verses from what we know as chapter 61, verses 1-2a, to be exact. The part that Jesus read was most of the mission of the Messiah; what he left out was “proclaiming the day of vengeance of our God,” and “to comfort all who mourn.” In other words, Jesus declared his mission but disavowed taking on the Romans. Instead, in our gospel lesson today and in the verses that immediately follow, he declared his mission to be solidarity with all people.

When Jesus sat down to preach, the entire text of his sermon was, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”

Normally, we would hear next Sunday what the people’s response was to this sermon. However, this is one of those rare years when Jesus’s presentation in the Jerusalem Temple (40 days after his birth) falls on a Sunday. So, let me just say that everything seemed to go well—all who heard him were “amazed”—until Jesus told his fellow Nazarenes that the time of God’s favor would be for all people, not just those who thought themselves the only ones that God favored.

This event was a momentous moment, the first words we heard Jesus say after he began his public ministry. And what those words said was that Jesus had accepted his mission and was now living his mission; his time was “now at hand.” The Jesus revolution had begun, here in Jesus’ hometown, where Jesus declared his mission. “The Lord has anointed me,” read Jesus, and this was true. The Lord anointed Jesus at his baptism, and now Jesus was doing what an anointed person in the Jesus movement does:

- Fulfills the longings and hopes of the poor,
- Delivers the oppressed and the imprisoned, and
- Ushers in a time of radical forgiveness, radical amnesty, radical liberation, and radical restoration... all the things the Year of the Lord’s Favor does.

These were Jesus’ “**marching orders.**” We learn in the four gospels how Jesus accomplished what he declared he would do in his sermon. In the Book of Acts we learn how Jesus’ followers established the church to teach about Christ Jesus and help people carry on the mission he declared in the synagogue

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in his hometown. All of that was later history, though; what we have today is the beginning of a mandate for change that our last Presiding Bishop called, “the Jesus Movement,” a movement we Jesus-followers continue today.

The Apostle Paul, also, laid out a mandate for change: In Christ, he said, we are all one: one Body with Christ at the head, one body that needs Jews and Greeks, slaves and free. This was a radical mandate, given that Jews would have nothing to do with Gentiles at the time and given that free people didn’t mix with their slaves then, either. The basic idea was that all are equal in Christ, and thus in Christ’s church, and in the Jesus Movement that is Christ’s church.

So, too, today. We understand the basic mandates of Jesus and Jesus’ apostle Paul as applicable to all people. In Christ, ALL PEOPLE are equal: equally beloved of God, equally favored, equally blessed, whether a part of the church or just part of Christ’s world, whether male or female (and everyone in between), whether gay or straight (and everyone in between), whether citizen or immigrant (and everyone in between), whether white or black (and everyone in between).

So, I ask you:

- Is not the Spirit of the Lord upon each of US?
- Has not God anointed each of us at OUR baptisms to:
  - Bring Good News to the poor,
  - Proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind,
  - Free the oppressed, and
  - Proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor?

This is not just Jesus’ mission; it is ours. This was not just Jesus’ marching orders; they are ours, a call to respond today.

To end, I want to cycle back to the list of political beliefs (among others) held by people in our congregation. You might get the impression from hearing them that we are all very far apart here at Church of the Resurrection. Nothing could be further from the truth because everyone here puts love of God and love of neighbor first in their lives, and I daresay every single one of us values being a part of this Body of Christ, this Community and wants to do what God is calling us to do to help those in need around us.