

Sermon Starter/ Meditation 2

Jesus's inaugural address: Luke 4:14-20



“The Spirit of the Lord is on me,
because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
[The Lord] has sent me to proclaim freedom
for the prisoners
and recovery of sight for the blind,
to set the oppressed free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.”¹



This passage might be referred to as Jesus's inaugural address – i.e. his first public statement, where one sets the stage for their vision and intentions; for their path forward. It is the first time, chronologically, that any of the Gospel writers recorded Jesus speaking to a crowd. Jesus delivers this address in the Synagogue in Nazareth making a bold and powerful claim that he is the fulfillment of Isaiah's hopeful proclamation. The crowd in Nazareth does not respond well, violently rejecting Jesus, and his message.

So often we focus on that response of the crowd, but for now let us consider what Jesus is really saying in this first public address. Throughout his earthly Ministry, in parables and stories, Jesus talks about the Kingdom of Heaven, the Kingdom of God, or the Reign of God, depending on your version or interpretation. In this passage, we see Jesus setting a clear vision with intentions for the coming of God's Reign, and what it will entail, through him as the fulfillment: **good news for the poor, freedom for the prisoners and the**

oppressed, recovery of sight for the blind. How can we summarize this in one word? Peace!

We often think of peace as the absence of conflict or tension; when situations are quiet, when things remain the same. But as the late Martin Luther King Jr once said, **“True peace is not merely the absence of tension but the presence of justice.”** In the context of conflict and hunger, we also know that true peace isn't simply an end to conflict, but also when communities are empowered to set their own tables full of nutritious food.

In Jesus's day, and in our calling today, as disciples, true peace is bold and celebrates justice and well being for all. True peace is when all have access to enough nutritious food- when families and communities are empowered to set their own tables, full of nutritious food. True peace is when all have shelter and a safe place to call home. True peace is when those at the margins are welcomed into communities. **True peace embodies the Reign of God.**

¹From the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)