

August 17, 2003
AM Service
Patchogue Church of the Nazarene

“The Year of God’s Favor”

Luke 4:14-21

14 Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside. 15 He taught in their synagogues, and everyone praised him.

16 He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. And he stood up to read. 17 The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:

18 "The Spirit of the Lord is on me,
because he has anointed me
to preach good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners
and recovery of sight for the blind,
to release the oppressed,
19 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

20 Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him, 21 and he began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

On the Sabbath, as was His custom, Jesus went into the House of Worship [I pray that, like Jesus, you will make it your custom to be in Church on the Christian Sabbath as you are today]. And as was the custom of those days, in order to show respect and honor for the Scriptures, Jesus stood up to read. The scroll was handed to Him containing the messages of Isaiah the prophet (Isa 61:1-2). There can be no doubt that this passage in Isaiah principally refers to the Messiah. Jesus unrolled the scroll to the place where it says: "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me" Jesus says the Spirit of the Lord God, or the Spirit of Yahweh is upon me. Jesus had come from the Jordan having been baptized by John (the Baptist) full of the Holy Spirit and the power of the Spirit. Not that He needed to be baptized but it was then that (Luke 3:22) as He was praying, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended on Him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased." So Jesus says this about Himself, "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because He has anointed me." The word *anointed* is a form of the word *Messiah*. Messiah literally means the *anointed one*. All these things were signs and admission by Jesus that He is God’s Son, the Messiah. Jesus says that these words written by Isaiah about the Messiah 100’s of years before were directly written about Him for (in v21) Jesus says, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

In the OT instructions were given for the making of certain anointing oils. They were for a holy purpose and could be used for that purpose only. And so it was forbidden to imitate these oils for use in any other manner. Jesus alone is the anointed one of God. And He would only do what He was anointed or set apart to do. Jesus goes on to say what He was anointed to do:

Preach good news: The English word Gospel means “good news.” It means good communication or a joyful message (Remember when Luke recorded [2: 8-11] how angels appeared to the shepherds on the night Jesus was born and said, “Don’t be afraid, we bring you good tidings/news or great joy.” And what was this good news? The Messiah [Greek equivalent: Christ] The Lord was born that night in Bethlehem).

Now, notice that this joyful message is preached to the "poor."

Jesus was anointed to **preach good news ... to the poor.**

The "poor" are all those who are deprived of the comforts of this life, and who therefore may be more ready and willing to seek treasures in heaven. But poor can also be poor in spirit (Matt 5:3). Poor in spirit are all those who are willing to see and admit their sins. And the poor can also be all the sad and afflicted.

Our Savior, Jesus, gave as one proof that He was the Messiah, or was from God, that He preached Good News to "the poor." The religious leaders of His day despised the poor; ancient philosophers neglected them; but the gospel of Jesus seeks to bless them-to give comfort where it is felt to be needed, and where it will be received with gratitude.

"Riches fill the mind with pride, with self-complacency, and with a feeling that the gospel is not needed. The poor "feel" their need of some sources of comfort that the world cannot give ..." It is also one proof that the gospel is true. If it had been of "men," it would have sought the rich and mighty; but it pours contempt on all human greatness, and seeks, like God, to do good to those whom the world overlooks or despises." (from Barnes' Notes, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1997 by Biblosoft)

The next thing that Jesus says is that He was sent by God and anointed to:

Proclaim Freedom: This means to be released from bondage, imprisonment etc. So the word can also be liberation or freedom. The word also can mean forgiveness or remission. Originally it applied to those held captive in Egypt and later in Babylon. They were miserable until they were delivered from their captivity.

Jesus was sent to **proclaim freedom... for the prisoners:** Not the literal opening of prison doors, but He sets our minds and lives free from the prison caused by sin and from the slavery of sin. We have heard testimonies of those who are in jail, who found Jesus will in prison and although still in jail and although they may never get out of jail they feel a new freedom. We have heard testimonies of those who are addicted to alcohol, drugs, pornography, food, cigarettes, anger, selfishness who have been freed from their prisons and slavery. And all Christians can testify to be set free from the power of sin in their lives that once controlled them because of their faith in Jesus. We can be delivered from bondage.

Next Jesus says He was sent and anointed to proclaim:

Recovery of sight...for the blind: Not only is Jesus a light for those in darkness, He gives sight to those who are blind. He literally healed those who physically could not see. He also makes those who are blind to God and spiritual things see. He restores our relationship with God lost in the fall.

Next it says that He will:

Release... the oppressed: Those broken by calamity or tragedy, those shattered and bruised will find release, liberty. The brokenhearted will be healed. And those weighted down by sin and guilt will be released from that pressure through repentance/contrite heart and faith.

Jesus has come:

"To proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

Now is the day of salvation. Now is the time that God is willing to accept all people, to forgive all sins, and show His favor to all who will believe.

Perhaps, here, there is an allusion to the year of jubilee-the fiftieth year, when the trumpet was blown, and through the whole land proclamation was made of the liberty of Hebrew slaves, of the remission of debts, and of the restoration of possessions to their original families, Lev 25:8-13. The phrase "the acceptable year" means the time when it would be acceptable to God to proclaim such a message, or agreeable to him-to wit, under the gospel.

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Jesus is the Great Prophet anointed to proclaim good news of great joy.
Jesus is the Great Physician anointed with power to heal broken bodies and the brokenhearted.
Jesus is the only Redeemer proclaiming freedom from sin.

But listen one more time. He says He will:

Preach good news (but only) **to the poor**. Do you need good news today? Jesus has good news for you, but first you must admit that you are in need.

Jesus was sent to:

Proclaim freedom (but only) **for the prisoners**. Do you need to be set free today? Jesus can set you free, but first you must admit you are a slave to something.

Jesus was sent to bring:

Recovery of sight (but only) **for the blind**. You are spiritually blind, but Jesus can bring sight... only if you will realize your blindness.

Jesus was sent to:

Release the oppressed...but you must take a closer look at your life and admit your need.

Jesus has proclaimed that now is the time "of the Lord's favor." For when He rolled up the scroll and the eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him, He said that what Isaiah gave as prophecy had become history. "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."