

Grace, mercy and peace be with you from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father.

¹⁴ Then Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and news of Him went out through all the surrounding region. ¹⁵ And He taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all. ¹⁶ So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read. ¹⁷ And He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written: ¹⁸ “The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; ¹⁹ to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD.” ²⁰ Then He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on Him. ²¹ And He began to say to them, “Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”

Text: Luke 4:14-21 A 1/20/19 Is. 61:1-6 1 Cor. 12:12-21, 26-27 Psalm 67 Resp. Ps.: 19
Hymns: 134, 657, 761, 777

JESUS SETS US FREE!

Dear fellow believers in Christ,

In our text Jesus speaks of “*the acceptable year of the Lord.*” The idea is that it was ‘the year of the Lord’s acceptance of His people’ – ‘the year of the Lord’s favor upon His people.’ August Pieper refers to it as “the Year of Grace of the Lord” (*Isaiah II*, p. 601). “*The acceptable year of the Lord*” is an expression God used in the Old Testament to refer to the “Jubilee” year. In the twenty-fifth chapter of Leviticus we learn that the Jubilee was to be observed by God’s people once every fifty years. During the fiftieth “Jubilee” year, people who owed money had their debts cancelled, anyone who had sold land had his land returned to him, and all Jews who had become slaves were set free. For that whole year none of the land was to be planted and harvested. The people were freed from having to work the land, and so given rest. God intended it to be a time of great joy for His people. “*The acceptable year of the Lord,*” or “*Jubilee*” was, in God’s own words, a celebration of “*liberty*” and “*rest*” for His people (Lev. 25:10). Jesus makes it clear in our text that the “Jubilee” was a type, or picture of the way He sets us free and gives us rest!

Our text begins, “*Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and news of Him went out through all the surrounding region. And He taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all.*” Jesus went to His home town of Nazareth. It was a Sabbath day, and Jesus went to the synagogue to preach to the people. “*The eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on Him.*” They had all heard what a wonderful teacher and preacher Jesus was. Now they themselves had the opportunity to hear, as they called Him, “*Joseph’s son*” (v. 22).

Jesus read from the book of Isaiah, “*The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.*” Then Jesus told them, “*Today this*

Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.” Jesus said that Isaiah’s prophecy was about Him. Jesus was telling the people: “I am your promised Messiah.” This is one of the clearest statements Jesus makes in the Gospels that He is our Savior. The Jews had been looking for the Messiah to release them from Roman rule and set them free to be a powerful earthly nation. But Jesus came to do something infinitely better for the Jews, and for us all. Jesus was sent from God as our Jubilee to preach the Gospel and set us free and give us rest from Satan, from sin, from death, and from hell!

Jesus says, “*The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me.*” As we heard last Sunday, during the time of the Old Testament, before Jewish prophets and priests began serving, and Jewish kings began their rule, they would be anointed by having olive oil poured on their head. The anointing meant that this man had been chosen and consecrated by God for his office, and had every right to that office. In the name, “Jesus Christ,” “Christ” means “anointed one.” Jesus was ‘anointed,’ so to speak, when He was baptized. The Holy Spirit descended on Him in the form of a dove to show His unity with Jesus as God. And God the Father said about Jesus, “*This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased*” (Mt. 3:17). Peter says in the book of Acts, “*God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him*” (Ac. 10:38). Jesus was telling the people of His home town the wonderful news that He had been sent by God the Father and empowered by God the Holy Spirit as their Jubilee – to release them and set them free and give them rest!

Jesus told the people what kind of release and rest He gives us: “*The Lord ... has anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor.*” “*Poor*” in the original means “*miserable,*” “*beggarly,*” “*destitute.*” Jesus has to open our blind eyes to see the truth about ourselves that we don’t want to see – that by nature we are completely sinful before God and deserve to be punished forever for our sins in hell. “O almighty God, merciful Father, I, a **poor**, miserable sinner confess unto Thee all my sins and iniquities with which I have ever offended Thee and justly deserved Thy temporal and eternal punishment” (TLH p. 16). There is nothing we “*beggarly,*” “*destitute*” sinners can do, no price we can pay to take our sins away. But Jesus “[*preaches*] *the Gospel to the poor*”! Jesus comforts us poor sinners with the Good News that He paid for all of our sins with His suffering and death on the cross! Jesus was “*anointed ... to preach the Gospel to the poor.*” Every human being is a “*poor*” sinner before God. Therefore Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has come to tell the whole world of our forgiveness and salvation, complete and free, in Him! “*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life*” (Jn. 3:16).

Jesus says, “[*The Lord*] *has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted.*” “*Brokenhearted*” in the original is literally, “*broken in pieces,*” “*shattered,*” “*crushed.*” That is how our sins can make us feel. How the sins of our past can come back to our mind and torment us! How our wretched sinfulness before our holy God can tempt us to despair. “*O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?*” (Ro. 7:24). Jesus, our Savior, has come “*to heal the brokenhearted.*” “*If we confess our sins, [God] is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*” (1 Jn. 1:9). Jesus assures us “*brokenhearted,*” “*shattered,*” “*crushed*” sinners, My son, My daughter, be happy, your sins are forgiven! (Mt. 9:2). We sinners bring our sorrow and guilt and shame and fear of punishment to Jesus, who sets us free and “[*heals*]” us and gives our souls sweet rest.

Jesus says, “[The Lord] has sent Me ... to proclaim liberty to the captives” (literally: “the prisoners of war”) “and ... to set at liberty those who are oppressed” (literally, “those who are broken in pieces, shattered.”) The original pictures a man sitting in prison, beaten and bleeding. Prisoners of war are often treated cruelly, and can give up hope of ever being free again. By nature we are prisoners of Satan, and sin, and death, and hell – cruel jailers. There’s no way we can free ourselves from them. They would “break us in pieces” and “shatter” us and rob us of all hope. But Jesus has come “to proclaim liberty to the captives and ... to set at liberty those who are oppressed.” The idea from the original is that Jesus “releases us from our imprisonment,” and “pardons” us. Don’t give up hope because of your sinfulness and your weaknesses! We are not prisoners to our sinfulness and our weaknesses. When we sin and ask Jesus, “Forgive me. Have mercy on me,” He takes all of our sins away. When we ask, “Help me, Jesus,” He gives us the strength to resist temptation, and to live our lives for Him. Satan is not our master. “[We] belong to Christ”! (Mk. 9:41). Death is not the end for us. In Christ, “Death is swallowed up in victory!” (1 Cor. 15:54). We are not doomed to spend eternity in hell. Jesus is taking us to live with Him forever in heaven! Jesus promises us, “I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall anyone pluck them out of My hand” (Jn. 10:28). Our Savior assures us, “If the Son sets you free, you shall be free indeed” (Jn. 8:36).

Jesus says, “[The Lord] has sent Me ... to proclaim recovery of sight to the blind.” What a blessing our sight is – all the beautiful, wonderful, amazing things we enjoy and all the things we can do because we can see! How much our life would be changed if we became blind. When Jesus healed the blind, how they and others who were there must have marveled over what Jesus had done and about who Jesus is and how He can make the blind see!

My oldest brother, Greg, has been blind since birth. Sometimes people tell Greg they feel sorry for him. Greg tells them, “Jesus is my Savior. He has given me spiritual insights that have far more than made up for the physical sight of which He has deprived me.” By nature we’re all spiritually blind, lost in the darkness of sin and unbelief. By nature, we can’t see the beautiful, wonderful, amazing truth that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and our Savior, and that all of the Bible is the Word of God Himself and the truth from God. Thank God that He sent Jesus “to proclaim recovery of sight to the blind.” Jesus has released us and set us free from our blindness! Jesus, “the Light of the world,” has shown through His Gospel and cured us of our spiritual blindness and opened our eyes to see Him and believe in Him and know Him as our God and our Savior from sin. “Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost, but now I’m found, was blind, but now I see!”

There’s no way we’re going to keep to ourselves what Jesus has done for us! “We cannot stop speaking of the things which we have seen and heard”! (Ac. 4:20). Jesus has set us free to proclaim His saving Gospel to all the world, that He may give to everyone the eyes of faith to see in Him their Savior from sin. “You are ... [God’s] own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light”! (1 Pet. 2:9).

Thank God that in Jesus He accepts us and His favor rests upon us. Thank God that in Jesus He has released us from Satan, and from sin, and from death, and from hell, and given our souls rest. Thank God that in Jesus He has set us free to live in Him and for Him and bear witness to Him and His Word, and, finally, to live with Him in heaven forever! Amen.