

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because God has anointed me, to preach good news to the poor, release to the captives, the recovery of sight to the blind, to bring liberty to those who are oppressed and to proclaim the year of God's favor, the year of Jubilee. In this way, the devastations of old shall be rebuilt. The faith renewed. Those who mourn the longest, the loudest, those victims of the devastation, the injustice will be given garlands instead of ashes.

In the season of Advent, this text lands rolls off God's holy mountain like a massive boulder hitting the highway as we drive by, crashing onto the niceness of our Christmas preparations. We gather here on this Sunday morning, having wandered the malls and the shopping centres looking for the perfect gifts, the perfect tree, the perfect ornament, the perfect turkey. Isaiah's prophecy crashes on to all of it. We don't want to consider the devastations of our cheap food policies; we don't like to see the ruins caused by our international trade practices; and every time we pass by those among us who mourn the loudest at the injustice of our economic reality, wrapped in a soaking wet sleeping bag with paper cup in hand, we know we've walked by a symbol of that which we don't really understand.

What does it mean to be oppressed? Am I the oppressor? Really? I'm just getting ready for Christmas.

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me to proclaim the year of God's favor, the year of God's Jubilee. In Leviticus, the law requires that after every 50 year cycle, there is universal flattening of the economy. Debt is forgiven. Lands are returned to their original owners. Slaves are set free. The farmland lies in fallow. All work stops. Taxes are not collected. Beginning with the Jewish Day of Atonement, with the sound of the trumpet, the year of Jubilee re-orders and re-casts. Think of it as the great re-set button on life. Start again. Delete what just happened.

We heard Stan remind us that, according to the gospel of Luke, when Jesus began his ministry, after being tempted in the desert, he returned to the synagogue – it may have even been the Day of Atonement. He was handed the scroll of Isaiah and he read this very passage. After reading he sat down, all eyes on him, and he said "today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." He told his friends and faith community that his life would be about a re-ordering of the social conditions of his time.

I remember at the turn of the millennium, there was a worldwide movement to declare the year 2000 as a year of Jubilee. It was a lovely and lofty idea. But could you imagine.

Debts are forgiven. Can you imagine the Bank of Montreal forgiving your \$400,000 mortgage? Can you imagine the International Monetary Fund forgiving the national debt of Greece? For example?

Lands are returned. The reason your mortgage is forgiven is because most of the land we live on is actually First Nation's Land.

Slaves are released. Who do we hold in bondage doing things we no longer want to do, are willing to do, hate to do? What would it mean to us that they would be freed from that bondage?

Taxes are not paid. Can you imagine the ramifications of not paying property or income tax for a year?

In a modern 50 year Sabbath, a 50 year Jubilee, we would certainly have a re-ordering of our economic systems, but would it bring us joy? Would we see peace with justice? Would we see a flattening of our world? Or would we be in chaos? Chaos might not be such a bad thing if those who mourn the loudest among us, those most affected by our systems, are handed garlands instead of ashes; the devastations, the ruins are re-built and there is peace with justice. Might be quite joyful, depending on which corner you stand to watch it all happen.

Do you see what I mean? In the middle of our Christmas preparations, this text lands really hard amongst us. Because the Spirit of the Lord is upon US because God has anointed US to preach this good news, to bring release, to heal the sick, to bind up the broken hearted, and to declare the year of God's favor; not just some of us. But all who would follow the Jewish carpenter from Nazareth who not only calls us to love God, but to love our neighbor as ourselves.

In an earlier prophesy, written before the Israelites were rounded up into captivity, a contributor to Isaiah had another vision of those who would lead with the Spirit of the Lord upon them. He wrote: "A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. <sup>2</sup>The spirit of the LORD shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might. In those days, the wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard

shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them.”

With trusting innocence, faithful vulnerability, and a generous hope for the future, like a child, the Spirit of the Lord is upon us, to undertake this role for which we feel neither particularly gifted nor prepared. So let us be led this morning. Let us see with new eyes, how the child-like among us lead us with trusting innocence, faithful vulnerability and a generous hope that we might catch a glimpse of God’s kin-dom coming. Let us see the Spirit of the Lord upon those among us who have been anointed to preach good news, that it might not only bring us joy, but that it might inspire our complacency. I want to show you a video this morning. This video shows us the call and prophesies of Isaiah, lived out in very practical terms, living and moving among us. Thanks be to God. Amen.

(play the mixed abilities choir video)