

Kate Heinzl, pastor UMC

VT 769 "Now I know" - Now I know, by God's own grace, all of you (us) are the children of God.

Luke 4:14-30

Then Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding country. He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone.

When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.'

And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them, 'Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.' All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth. They said, 'Is not this Joseph's son?' He said to them, 'Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, "Doctor, cure yourself!" And you will say, "Do here also in your home town the things that we have heard you did at Capernaum." ' And he said, 'Truly I tell you, no prophet is accepted in the prophet's home town. But the truth is, there were many widows in Israel in the time of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up for three years and six months, and there was a severe famine over all the land; yet Elijah was sent to none of them except to a widow at Zarephath in Sidon. There were also many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian.' When they heard this, all in the synagogue were filled with rage. They got up, drove him out of the town, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they might hurl him off the cliff. But he passed through the midst of them and went on his way.

Psalms 146 Common English Bible CEB

Praise the LORD!

Let my whole being praise the LORD!

I will praise the LORD with all my life;

I will sing praises to my God as long as I live.

Don't trust leaders;
don't trust any human beings—
there's no saving help with them!
Their breath leaves them,
then they go back to the ground.
On that very same day, their plans die too.
The person whose help is the God of Jacob—
the person whose hope rests on the LORD their God—
is truly happy!
God: the maker of heaven and earth,

the sea, and all that is in them,
God: who is faithful forever,
who gives justice to people who are oppressed,
who gives bread to people who are starving!
The LORD: who frees prisoners.
The LORD: who makes the blind see.
The LORD: who straightens up those who are bent low.
The LORD: who loves the righteous.
The LORD: who protects immigrants,
who helps orphans and widows,
but who makes the way of the wicked twist and turn!
The LORD will rule forever!
Zion, your God will rule from one generation to the next!
Praise the LORD!

CHILDREN'S TIME

Who likes to sing? Why do you sing? When do you sing? How does it make you feel?
Last weekend: song leaders workshop - learned new songs. Sang as a big group. Felt GOOD

Learned new songs and **ways to LEARN** new songs. One way is that we hear a line and sing it back. No need to read the words, just need to listen.

Let's practice:

VT 769 :“Now I know” - **Now I know, by God's own grace, all of you (us) are the children of God. LOOK AT ONE ANOTHER as we sing...**

END WITH PRAYER

SERMON

Begin with open arms - receiving the same spirit that filled Jesus.
Open our hearts, open our arms, receiving...

Do call back of the song just sung:
Now I know...
by God's own grace...
all of you (us)...
are the children of God.

Luke brings us into Jesus ministry back in his hometown.

Handed the scroll of Isaiah - reads a passage likely known and loved by his congregation.

It's a message of a hope, a promise of better times.

Imagine J reading it with authority. Silence as they listen.

And he stops. Stops mid phrase.
Ends with "God has sent me to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor".

Likely those in the synagogue that day would have known the next line.
The passage Jesus reads from, In Isaiah 61, reads:
"God has sent me to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God."

Jesus says that he has been sent to release, to restore, to proclaim the year of God's favor.
No vengeance. Instead, grace. Building up, not tearing down.

Jesus has come not as a king. Not to build a kingdom. But to establish a kin-dom. (K-I-N, kin-dom)
Kingdoms have walls and armies to protect it. Kingdoms require taxes and tariffs to keep them
running. Kingdoms don't center the poor and lowly, but the rich and powerful. Kin-doms are based on
caring for one another as siblings, cousins, grandparents, 3rd cousins once removed, kin.

Jesus makes it clear from this first public message that he's about kin-dom building.

*In Luke's gospel, what does Jesus have to say about his mission?*¹ For this gospel writer, it's about
proclaiming the dawn of the Great Jubilee, a new era of liberation, restoration, and return. In this
"inaugural address" of his ministry, Jesus is crystal clear that the Gospel is above all about God "lifting
up the lowly".

1

<https://www.saltproject.org/progressive-christian-blog/2019/1/23/jubilee-salts-lectionary-commentary-for-epiphany-week-three>

It's no accident that Luke introduces Jesus' ministry in this way.

Theologian Leticia Guardiola Saenz² suggests:

Luke's emphasis on this issue makes us think that his community was a mixed group struggling to integrate. Not only were they combating ethnic discrimination as a congregation made up of Jewish, Samaritan, and other Gentile believers, but they were grappling with healing the gap of great economic disparity between members who lived in affluence and those who lived in extreme poverty.

Luke's diverse community needed to hear this message of KIN-dom building.

It is echoed in some of Luke's popular parables, such as "the generous neighbor" (10: 25–37), and "the Rich Man and the homeless Lazarus" (16: 19–31).

Only in Luke do we hear Mary denouncing the powerful and rich while celebrating God's providence for the lowly and poor (1:46–55)

Only in Luke do we hear John the Baptist instructing people on how to live, sharing what they have with those who have nothing.

Only in Luke do we hear Jesus preaching a radical agenda from the prophet Isaiah that day: to bring good news to the poor, release to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, and freedom to the oppressed (4:18).

Jesus' listeners in the synagogue that day were likely expecting something else. They knew Isaiah's hope-filled vision - for the passage speaks of their city, Jerusalem, being vindicated. Isaiah's passage, written to a people just returning from exile, to a land decimated and overrun - it's a passage of comfort, where they'll be given the oil of gladness instead of mourning... and it's a passage that uses military imagery for the redemption of a people who have felt forgotten.

Those sitting in the synagogue in Nazareth were waiting for God to make it right - make it right for them, the Judeans, the Chosen People, using might if necessary.

But this message, Jesus' message, is for all who are poor. All in need of release and recovery - Jews and Gentiles alike. Is this the message of the Messiah?

His listeners go from being amazed to rage. Is this not Joseph's son?

Jesus came proclaiming the year of God's favor, an illusion to the year of Jubilee.

Jubilee³ - this aspirational way of being in the world was codified in the book of Leviticus - it's an entire economic reset where all debt is forgiven, where all land is returned to the ancient tribal boundary lines. It's a reset, in ancient context, that would keep any one group from having too much

² Latinx Perspectives on the New Testament, edited by Osvaldo D. Vena, and Leticia A. Guardiola-Sáenz, Lexington Books/Fortress Academic, 2022. PP 61-79

³ [Jubilee: The radical year of release](#)

land. It would keep anyone from having too much money or owning too many slaves...Once in a lifetime, every fifty years, this 'year of the LORD's favor' was to take place. Aspirational, unclear that it ever actually was enacted.

Jubilee is a restoration of 'enoughness' for all - that's the sabbath promise. God provides enough.

The Jubilee ideal isn't only for the benefit of the lowly — **it's also for the health of creation as a whole. Everyone benefits when liberty and wellbeing extend across the entire neighborhood; that's the heart of "Jubilee."** Jesus came proclaiming the year of the Lord's favour.

It's as if Jesus invites us to sing, with him: (IMAGE)

Now I know...
by God's own grace...
all of you (us)...
are the children of God.

Song originally written in Khmer language by a person from Cambodia. (IMAGE: Map)
I want to tell you a bit about him.

Barnabas Mam⁴ (IMAGE) joined the Communist party in his homeland of Cambodia as a teenager. It was while working as a spy, infiltrating a Christian evangelistic meeting in the early 1970's, that his life was transformed and he became a follower of Christ.

Eventually he was arrested and spent 4 years in captivity in the Killing Fields of the Khmer Rouge. After his release he fled Cambodia, living in a refugee camp in Thailand for 8 years where he began his ministry of sharing the good news of the gospel. Barnabas eventually returned to his home land, helping to rebuild the church and his country.

Today, less than 3% of the population in Cambodia is Christian - I think there's currently 1 Mennonite church in the country. And we sing this song, recognizing we are all kin - all part of God's kin-dom.

ENDING... (BLANK IMAGE)

For Luke, following Jesus isn't primarily about chasing down our own personal salvation, but rather about serving others, especially those who need it most.

This is how Jesus begins his public teaching: with a call to serve, and he ends his public teaching by reminding his listeners: "The greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like one who serves"... Jesus goes on: "For I am among you as one who serves" (Luke 22:26-27).

The Jubilee kin-dom Jesus proclaims is for all of us - it's for the health of the whole of creation. How might we join Jesus in this work?

Now I know...by God's own grace...all of us...are the children of God.

⁴ [Barnabas Mam | Christian Books](#)

Sunday school talk-back questions:

Kingdom versus Kin-dom. Where do you find examples in Jesus' teaching?

Jesus read from Isaiah yet didn't come as the Judeans expected.

What happens to you when you expect a leader to behave in a different way than they do?

The Jubilee ideal isn't only for the benefit of the lowly — it's also for the health of creation as a whole. Everyone benefits when liberty and wellbeing extend across the entire neighborhood; that's the heart of "Jubilee."

What might the health of creation as a whole look like today?

What else about the passage do you want to think about together?