

I.N.I.

## HOW JESUS DID MINISTRY

Homily for the Third Sunday after the Epiphany--Cycle C, A.D. 2.3.2019

St. Paul's Lutheran Church, 57th & Broadway, Sacramento, CA ☩

**St. Lk. 4:17-30** 17and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

18The 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, 19to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

20And 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. 21Then he began to say to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

22 And all spoke well of him and marveled at the gracious words that were coming from his mouth. And they said, "Is not this Joseph's son?" 23 And he said to them, "Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, 'Physician, heal yourself.' What we have heard you did at Capernaum, do here in your hometown as well." 24 And he said, "Truly, I say to you, no prophet is acceptable in his hometown. 25 But in truth, I tell you, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heavens were shut up three years and six months, and a great famine came over all the land, 26 and Elijah was sent to none of them but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. 27 And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian." 28 When they heard these things, all in the synagogue were filled with wrath. 29 And they rose up and drove him out of the town and brought him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they could throw him down the cliff. 30 But passing through their midst, he went away. (ESV)

May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.  
Amen. [2 Pet. 1:2]

As a beginning to a new year, January was quite a month for the news of the world--especially here in the USA.

Frankly, I often switch to sports instead of the news channel (*if Ruth will let me*)—but of course there's excitement there, too—how about those Kings? + the Super Bowl today.

Beginnings!—Two Sundays ago we saw the beginning of our Lord's ministry in the first **sign** he did at Cana in Galilee, creating fifty cases of fine wine for a wedding party, thus manifesting his glory--an EPIPHANY of **pastoral care** in a time of need.

Now in today's Gospel, Luke tells the beginning of our Lord's **preaching** ministry!

In his sermon in his home town, Jesus outlines his agenda for his work on earth by using a text from the prophet Isaiah. (61:1f)

His ministry is simply this: proclamation! - - - proclamation of the Good News of God's gracious rule.

Could "HOW JESUS DID MINISTRY" set an example today, first for pastors but also for lay people?

### Part I. Jesus' Proclamation of Good News

#### **Point 1, I can see the headline in the paper: "Hometown Boy Makes Good"**

Let's recall where Jesus had just been--at the Jordan River where he was baptized.

So "...filled with the power of the Spirit, he returned to Galilee..." where he had grown up, walked up to Cana for that wedding, and began to get a reputation as a teacher, a rabbi—why, - - - the people praised him!

Then he came to his home town of Nazareth and naturally went to the synagogue/church on the sabbath.

#### **Point 2. Jesus Gave A Startling Revelation of Good News**

As a visiting rabbi/teacher, Jesus received the customary courtesy of being invited to read the Scripture and present a message.

He "...found the place where it was written: 18The 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, 19to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

As Jesus was reading, his hearers would have heard echos of the "Suffering Servant" passages of the Old Testament.

They would have known that Isaiah was echoing a theme from the OT book of Leviticus about the Year of Jubilee: "...you shall hallow the fiftieth year and you shall proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants." (Lev. 25:10)

Slaves were set free—land returned to original owners! "It shall be a jubilee for you...." And what was the task of the Suffering Servant of Yahweh? To proclaim! To preach! To announce good news to the poor and liberty to the captives, the blind and the oppressed.

### **Point 3. We Are Included in the Good News**

Why should this proclamation interest us? Because we are the poor, the captive, the blind, and the oppressed! We are:

- poor in our own resources for doing what is right;
- captive to passions we can't contain;
- blind to our sinful reasons for doing what we do; and
- oppressed in our false notions of "the good life" learned from advertisers.

And it is exactly from these conditions that Christ came to set us free.

He not only preached good news, he practiced it! He acted to free us.

Yes, his actions ultimately led to crucifixion, but that was the price he was willing to pay for our release.

And so we are indeed free today—now—here—because Jesus Christ died on a cross.

Our year of jubilee has arrived by God's grace, and we **trust** in this very good news.

**To sum up—1. "Hometown Boy Makes Good;" 2. His Sermon Is a Startling Revelation of Good News; And 3. We Are Included in the Good News.**

## **II. Our Lord Set The Example for Pastors and Parishioners Today**

### **First, It Is Parishioners Who Call Pastors—They Want Knowledgeable Pastors.**

To proclaim the good news, pastors must first know the gospel.

This may seem to be so obvious as to need no mention, but I will never forget what my seminary prof. for "Preaching" said: "A peculiar mischief seems to set in when we get right at the point of saying the pure gospel."

Our Lord spent three years training the twelve apostles for their ministry and to this day seminaries have three year curricula for pastors plus an internship year.

As Lutherans, we believe seminary training for our pastors is not optional.

### **Secondly, a pastor must not be a novice in the faith, that is, a newly converted Christian.**

Again, take the example of Jesus in training his disciples, patiently (and some times not so patiently) explaining and re-explaining his parables and his teachings.

Further, St. Paul instructs Timothy not to ordain "**a recent convert**" (1 Tim.3:6), and Paul writes Titus that a pastor "**must have a firm grasp of the word.**" (Titus 1:9)

### **Third, a pastor must have a good reputation, like Jesus.**

We reject the opinion, which seems to be gaining these days, that pastors are like anybody else and are entitled to the same gross sins as anyone else.

Scripture has a higher standard for spiritual leaders--they are to be examples to the flock.

### **Finally, like our Lord, Pastors Are to Focus on the Central Task of the Ministry.**

Jesus took his cue for ministry from Isaiah's picture of the Suffering Servant who proclaimed the good news of the Kingdom--that is the central task of ministry!

Pr. Michael McDaniel writes in Lutheran Forum:

We must help each other keep sharply in focus the purpose of our ministry, clearly set forth in Article V of the Augsburg Confession: "... the provision of the sacraments and preaching that people might be brought to, and nurtured in, faith." (Winter '97,p.17)

Why do we need to be reminded of these four examples from our Lord's life?

Because in recent years the push for social action has affected many parts of the Church.

Christians are urged constantly to become agents for social change, but the power suggested for change is not the power of the gospel.

It is rather the power of self-realization, dominance, and control, i.e., worldly power.

Does this sound like salvation by good works? Article VI of the Augsburg Confession clearly states that "we must do all such good works as God has commanded, but we should do them for God's sake and not put our trust in them as if thereby to merit favor before God."

Yet clergy in high positions in the Church are leading the charge for secular causes.

Of course, some of these causes are proper concerns for the people of God, but it is

implied that pastors should get involved in all of them. So some pastors spend days away from their parish neglecting their proper tasks of prayer, Bible study, mastering sound theology, teaching confirmation classes, writing sermons, visiting the ill and caring for their spiritual needs, giving careful preparation to worship services— instead, they attend this and that workshop on social ills. And church members seem OK with this—here’s an example that may help:



Little Hillary thinks like many church members—our pastor is the “pro” who should handle **outreach** to the community.

Pr. McDaniel writes: The Church has but one divinely given mission.... It is no part of a pastor's task, as pastor, to work for the improvement of social conditions. If pastors are driven to try to change the world, then they must do that in their personal time [or] they will never ... get their real work done." (LF, Winter, 1997, p.18, emphasis in original)

But you may ask, Why did our Lord come from Heaven if not to manage the world's desperate needs? - - Listen to what happened at the coffee hour after Synagogue Svc.: First Jesus said: “No doubt you want to say ...**What we have heard you did at Capernaum, do here in your hometown as well.**”

I can just see the heads nodding—“yeah, put on a show—heal somebody or something!”  
**24 [Jesus] said, .... 25 But in truth, I tell you, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heavens were shut up three years and six months, and a great famine came over all the land, 26 and Elijah was sent to none of them but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. 27 And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian.”**

In other words, God has never been just a Super Social Worker even though there are many widows and cancer patients still in our world.

Well, - - - “**28 When they heard these things, all in the synagogue were filled with wrath. 29 And they rose up and drove him out of the town and brought him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they could throw him down the cliff. 30 But passing through their midst, he went away.**”

Can you believe it? Right after worship the crowd turned into a murderous mob.

Pr. McD.: It was precisely the [same] temptation to squander his energies on meeting the world's needs that Satan put before Jesus in the wilderness; and Jesus spurned him.... Jesus knows what our real need is: [our sins forgiven, a blessed life now, and salvation hereafter]! (Op. cit. p.18)

**Final Point:** Our Lord Jesus returned to his home town and preached the guest sermon. First headline: “Home Town Boy Makes Good”--then, “MOB SCENE AT SYNAGOGUE!” His message told how he would do his ministry: proclaim the good news of the year of jubilee--but the **greedy** were outraged that he gave out **no goodies, no miracles**. He was the **good news!** He said: “**Today** this scripture is **fulfilled** in your hearing!”

His “**today**” is still our today—we will do what we can to rescue the widow & homeless, but motivated by believing the good news of forgiveness, life and salvation.

St. Paul wrote to the Corinthians:

**Therefore, my beloved, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord, because you know that, in the Lord, your labor is not in vain.** (1 Cor.15:58)

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

S.D.g.

The Rev. Dr. Don Schedler, Ph.D., Snowline Hospice Chaplain, ret.  
 [1870 spoken words, Iowan Old Style 10, Georgia 9, Arial 10.]