

Second Scripture Lesson: Luke 4: 14-22

The Beginning of the Galilean Ministry

¹⁴ Then Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding country. ¹⁵ He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone.

The Rejection of Jesus at Nazareth

¹⁶ 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, ¹⁷ and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

¹⁸ “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, ¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

²⁰ 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. ²¹ Then he began to say to them, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” ²² 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?”

Sermon: Drawn In: Living the Creative Life with God. Step 1: Hovering Over the Unexplained Potential by Pastor Jenn

If I were to ask you the question: What drives you? Meaning what keeps you going? What would you say? Some of us would confess it’s coffee or some other energy drink. Others may say chocolate. I once knew a church member who lived to be 107 and before she passed she claimed the secret to her long life, was treating herself at the end of the day with a piece of chocolate. Maybe what drives you isn’t such a treat, but rather the love you get from family and friends. Or maybe the joy you experience when a project is completed, or an assignment done. Or a competition is won. I would say there are lots of things that can drive us, but do you ever wonder if we are being driven too much and not taking the time to be drawn in? What I mean by that is how busy we are, feeling compelled to do so much as a way of work and helping others. But when do we allow ourselves to be drawn in? Drawn into the heart of God that will not only heal and bless us, but also energize and inspire us to draw others to God’s heart too.

When Jesus went into the temple that day to read the words of Isaiah, he had just experienced a time of testing and strength for his connection with God for 40 days and 40 nights in the desert wilderness. It was also at that time that the devil tempted him three times. However, each time Jesus was tempted, he drew on God, by way of the Spirit that was upon him. It was a time of soul searching and discernment for him, and in the end he knew what he was called to do, what the Spirit was leading him to do, to carry on God’s design for the world, for all to have a personal relationship with God.

So Jesus began to **invite others to do the** same, starting his ministry career by going to the Temple of his hometown and proclaiming to them words Jesus chooses from Isaiah 58 and 61: ¹⁸ **“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 favor.”**

Jesus claims those words will be fulfilled, words of promise given to the people of Israel. And he claims they will be fulfilled because he is anointed by the Spirit. In other words, the Spirit is upon him to do those things, to make things better. Further he will go on to say such blessings will be offered to all, even beyond Nazareth. Meaning: No more emptiness for the poor; no more oppression due to illness, ethnicity, gender, or even sins; and no more darkness, but light for guidance and salvation for all. The times were going to change according to Jesus, because as the Spirit hovered over him, anointed him, Jesus looked around his hometown and saw God's dream, the potential to set things right. Further he was not about to limit it to just them because God's grace is never limited to boundaries of towns, people, race, or gender, with the Spirit, Jesus was able to go proclaim God's favor for all.

Friends, as his Church, the body of Christ on earth, we are people called to continue that change as the Spirit has anointed us too. You see all that Jesus proclaimed and did, we carry on, by way of the Spirit. In John 14 Jesus says this to his disciples, **truly, I tell you, whoever believes in Me will also do the works that I am doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. 13And I will do whatever you ask in My name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14If you ask Me for anything in My name, I will do it.** This is where the tradition of ending a prayer in Jesus' name comes from. And then he goes on to say how he will do these things we ask of him: **15If you love Me, keep My commands, 16and I will ask the Father, and He will give to you another Comforter, that He may remain with you throughout the age: 17the Spirit of truth, whom the world is not able to receive, because it does not see nor know [this] One, and you know [this] One, because [this] One remains with you, and will be in you. The Holy Spirit is with us. It is the Spirit of truth, a Spirit of Comfort** that works in and through us to bring about God's will and kingdom to all, using each of us, and the creative ideas, notions, and ways that we each offer.

In 1997 two women, Janet Bristow and Victoria Galo attended the Women's Leadership Institute in Hartford, Connecticut. There they studied applied Feminist Spirituality that looked at Scripture that focused on acts of compassion through prayer and spiritual practice. One of those acts was the giving and receiving of prayer shawls, mentioned in both the Old and New Testaments. Originally, prayer shawls were commissioned by God and only worn by men after their Bar Mitzvah. In Numbers 15:38-40 God told the Israelites to make for themselves a garment with fringes on the borders called a tallit (ta-leet). It was a rectangular piece of cloth that looked like a blanket. The blue stripes and fringes and knots on the border of the tallit are significant as they represent the 613 commandments or laws the Israelites were to follow. The men wrapped their tallit around their head and shoulders as a personal secret place to pray. It is believed that Jesus wore a tallit. Mark 5:25-30 tells of the woman who was sick for 12 years and touched the edge of his garment or shawl tassel and was healed. This would be the same garment he would have used probably at the reading in Nazareth, those times he went off alone to pray, and tradition would have him buried with it, in his grave, and therefore found alone on the day of resurrection.

In 1998 upon completion of their program in Hartford, Bristow and Galo combined what they learned with their love of knitting and crocheting and developed a prayer shawl ministry for those in need of comfort, or those celebrating joy. As Bristow once explained, "Shawls ... made for centuries universal and embracing, symbolic of an inclusive, unconditionally loving, God. They wrap, enfold, comfort, cover, give solace, mother, hug, shelter and beautify. Those who have received these shawls have been uplifted and affirmed, as if given wings to fly above their troubles..." Earlier you saw how that is one way the Spirit is at work in some of our members, to continue the creative work of God's favor for all. How about with you? How is God using your creativity to draw yourself and others closer to God's heart?

Offering of the Creative Spirit & Lord's Prayer:

Today offer a brief exercise to get in touch with that hovering Spirit during this time of prayer. Take the post it note...and as we hold it we will consider some answer that you can write on the post it notes with a pen, a pencil, but I am going to suggest your finger. Because this is between you and God. Let's imagine we are hovering over this world. What do you see that reveals the beauty of God's creation? The joy and inspiration calling people to God? Let us offer those things to the Lord silently or outloud. And yet not all things are good, some are broken. What is broken in this world? Let us offer those things to the Lord silently or outloud. Now, **what do you think would make this community, this nation, this world, better?** Take a moment to consider that. Take a moment to draw close to the heart of God and discern what would make God's favor known. Imagine, Create, with the Hovering Spirit, what that answer would be....

Let us join together in praying for God's will....Our Father (sins).

Offering Prayer: This is our creative spirit in the world, this is our offering. May the things we do, no matter how small or mundane, contribute goodness to the world, creating more life, more joy, more love. Praise be to God, the Creator of all that is! Amen.