



“God Made Known in the Word”

Third Sunday after Epiphany
Saturday & Sunday, January 26–27, 2019
All Services
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Camp Hill, Pennsylvania

Luke 4:14-21

Our story for today is a sermon. So, what you're about to hear is a sermon about a sermon. Jesus has returned home; he is at his home synagogue, surrounded by people who have known him since he was a child. They probably remember Jesus in diapers, Jesus on his mother's hip, Jesus as the mouthy pre-teen, Jesus as the brooding teenager. And here he is as an adult and he has something important to say. He has something important to share. He is about to share the good news of God with his home congregation.

As someone who has gone home to preach at her home congregation, I can tell you it is an interesting experience. Throughout seminary, I went home to share the Word of God with those who remember me as a baby, who remember me as a questioning and sassy pre-teen, who remember me falling asleep during sermons. I remember thinking, “Will these people take me seriously? Will they see me as the accomplished adult that I am? Or will they just shake their heads and think it's cute that a daughter of the congregation is coming back to show off her new tricks? Will they just see the little girl they used to know?”

I can't help but wonder if Jesus felt the same way as he stepped up to read the scroll of Isaiah. Did Jesus wonder how this group would receive him and the words he was about to share? Spoiler alert: what Jesus says is not well-received. What Jesus says is controversial. What Jesus says may strike some of you as 'political.' What Jesus says is radical.

Jesus says, “God has picked me. God has chosen me, Jesus - the kid you used to know – as the anointed one. God picked me to share the good news with the poor, to give pardon to prisoners, to give sight to the blind, to set the oppressed free, and to proclaim the year of the Lord! And, in the words of the Message, Jesus says, “today, you've heard the Scripture make history. It has come true just now in this place.”

What we just heard in our story for today was a mic drop. Jesus just dropped the mic. “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” Mic drop. Since the 1980s, rappers and comedians have been dropping their mics at the end of performances or sketches to signal triumph. To give you an example: While still in the candidacy process in our synod, I announced on Facebook that I had been endorsed, the second step in the process to ordination with the words: “Endorsed. Mic drop.” I was proud of myself. I felt accomplished. I was slowly fulfilling my goal to become a pastor.

But Jesus' mic drop doesn't signal his triumph. It signals God's triumph. What we have just heard about is the embodied fulfillment of God's promise. Jesus is the embodied fulfillment of God's word. Jesus himself is the word of good news. God has triumphed with the coming of Jesus into this world. He is God's triumph for all those who society has cast out, ostracized and

oppressed. God's promises are being made real. Jesus is God's mic drop. "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

I want to draw your attention to one little word in that phrase I just repeated from Luke. Today. Just now. Here and now. In this moment. In your presence. Today. God is doing something. "God is at work and you're witnessing it," Jesus says. What the prophets long ago said is coming true. Jesus preaches on Isaiah to proclaim that what scripture says about God is true, what scripture says God will do is true because Jesus – God Incarnate – has arrived. There is urgency with this word *today*. God's work is immediate.

But there is something we miss as English speakers, as people who read the Bible in just one language. Bear with me here for a moment as I dive into the Greek and get a little nerdy. What we miss in the English translation is the tense in which this phrase from Jesus was spoken. "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." In the Greek, it is written in the perfect tense. It's as if Jesus is saying, "Today is just the beginning..." In the words of David Lose, it's as if Jesus is saying, "Today this scripture is fulfilled and continues to be fulfilled and therefore will keep needing to be fulfilled in your presence." Looking at it this way, we see how these words of Jesus still matter today. And here's why.

Maybe you heard my Christmas Day sermon or maybe you read it after the fact. Or maybe this is the first time, you're hearing this and that's okay. But I want to revisit something I said that morning. I spoke of God's promise and God's invitation. Christmas is a celebration of God's promise, the coming of Jesus Christ, but Christmas also holds an invitation for us, an invitation to share the good news of Jesus with every person we encounter. The same could be said with these words from Jesus: "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

These words are God's promise to those that heard it thousands of years ago. These words are God's promise to us today – here and now. God promises to care for those in need and God promises to continue to accompany the vulnerable. And, these words also hold an invitation for us with this promise. God invites us to be a part of the promise. God calls us to participate in the work of justice for every beloved child of God. Jesus is the embodiment of God's promise, but so are we. Through our actions and our words, God calls us "to bring the good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free..."

If I was a rapper or a comedian, I'd end this sermon with a mic drop, but I am neither of those things. And what I've just said isn't about me or my triumph and success. It's about God and what God is doing in our world. Let's remember who triumphs when we share the word of God. Let's go share God's word and promise, Jesus Christ.

Amen.

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