

Fulfilling Our Mission
Luke 4:14-21
First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
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Do you have a personal mission statement?

Do you have a guiding principle by which you try to live?

Do you have a scripture or quote that accompanies you through life, something that helps to shape the choices you make?

What are your values? How do you decide what actions to take? What priorities to set?

Jesus was in the early days of his ministry. At baptism he had been claimed by God and named as beloved. Through the temptations in the wilderness he had remained true to his core commitments, to the values of God. As he went about Galilee he began his public ministry, teaching in synagogues across the area.

And then he came home.

Inevitably his parents excitedly welcomed him home, feeding him a home cooked meal and catching him up on the local news from around Nazareth. And then, when the sabbath came, they did what was their practice. They went to synagogue. They joined with their faith community to worship and to learn.

It was the custom in synagogues for various people to read the scripture and to teach. And that day, with Jesus home, with news about his teachings having begun to spread, it was his turn.

So, Jesus stood up to read. The scroll for the day was retrieved and soon Jesus had the scroll of Isaiah in his hands. He unrolled and you can almost feel the moment of pause as he finds the place from which he will read.

He read what we know as Isaiah 61:1-2:

*“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 set free those who are oppressed,
to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”*

In this reading, Jesus not only reflected upon an old familiar passage, but he claimed the direction of his ministry.

After all, if we pay attention to what Jesus does, it is exactly this.

He brings good news with special attention to those who are financially poor and those who are poor in spirit.

He releases people from the bondage of their bodies, from the bondage of slavery, from the bondage of the powers that be.

He returns physical sight to blind people and he opens the minds of those who are figuratively blind, those who have had a limited view of the world.

He speaks and works against all forms of oppression, and claims again and again the importance of economic and social justice, even when those claims challenge the empire. That reference in Isaiah to the year of the Lord's favor was a reference to the jubilee year. These years in Jewish history were "intended to be marked as a time to re-establish a proper relationship with God, with one another, and with all of creation, and involved the forgiveness of debts, the return of misappropriated land, and a fallow period for the fields." ([10 things to know about Jubilee 2025, the Holy Year that begins Dec. 24 :: Home | New Outlook](#)). These are values Jesus worked for.

And, let's not forget...this message didn't begin with him. Not only does his personal mission statement come from the mouth of a prophet, but remember just a few chapters back in this same gospel we read today, Luke tells us that Jesus' own mother sang a song where ordinary people prevailed and empires and emperors came tumbling down.

But, sometimes we forget to notice what's at the core of Jesus' ministry, of his life. Sometimes we choose not to notice the ways that Jesus called out the powerful. Sometimes we choose not to see how Jesus befriends the poor and the sick, the outcast and the oppressed. Sometimes we choose not to pay attention to who he really was.

Because if we do, it just might implicate us.

When we are honest, we know that sometimes we are the rich and powerful that Jesus speaks a harsh and challenging word to.

When we are honest, we know that if we are truly going to follow Jesus, then his mission and ministry has to be ours as well.

And sometimes we aren't sure we're up for that.

But, what if we choose it? Perhaps it is these words from Isaiah that become our guiding statement. Perhaps it is Mary's song. Perhaps it is those familiar words from

Micah, “do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with God” (Micah 6:8). Perhaps it is Jesus’ words that we hear in the Gospel of Matthew, “Just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me” (Matthew 25:40).

Friends, for too long we have sat comfortably with Jesus. We have experienced him as an easy house guest who blankets us in gratitude and praise.

But if we are honest, Jesus is that friend who drags us to rallies to speak out on behalf of those who are mistreated.

Jesus is that friend who invites one too many people to dinner and then invites even more just because he met some people who didn’t have enough to eat.

Jesus is that friend who challenges us to stick by the side of people even when our own freedom, our own livelihood, or sometimes our very lives are threatened.

Jesus is that friend who makes us uncomfortable because instead of sitting quietly and accepting whatever the powers-that-be say, he pushes, he challenges, he calls them to account for the ways their actions hurt people and our world.

Sometimes Jesus and his priorities make us uncomfortable. And, if we are honest, Jesus is just the friend we need.

Because we live in a world where not only are our systems built on white supremacist values but where it has become more acceptable to be openly racist and to shape our communities and our schools, our political boundaries and our voting practices in ways that leave people out because of the color of their skin.

We live in a world where people who had been given a chance to be honest about who they are are now being asked to go back into hiding, to pretend to be who they are not because the security of the powerful cannot handle people’s truths. We live in a world where the rights and protections of those who identify as anything other than straight and cisgender are being taken away.

We live in a world where weather patterns are changing, where parts of it are literally on fire because of the habits of humanity and yet against all evidence voices of power are claiming that climate change isn’t happening.

We live in a world where immigrants and refugees are scared to go to work or to the grocery store, where our schools are counseling parents to update contact information because they are fearing the day a child will go home to an empty house.

We live in a world where people are being forgotten because profits have been deemed more important, where the wealth of a few is allowed to destroy the lives of many.

But we are followers of Jesus. So our mission is the same as his.

So, how are we bringing good news to the poor and release to the captives?

How are we bringing recovery of sight to the blind and setting free those who are oppressed?

How will we proclaim the year of the Lord's favor?

How will we live as those who truly follow Jesus?