



September 11, 2011
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Got News? Luke 4:14-21

Welcome to "Back Home Sunday." This is the kick off to our year. The choir's back, Sunday School's back, the Puyallup is back...we are ready to launch! And what's our theme? ***The Year of Good News.*** How many know what the word "gospel" means? Good news! We are going to spend this year talking about the gospel... the good news of Jesus: what is it, what it isn't, what we do with it, how we do it. By the end of this year, if you are faithful, you will be equipped with "the reason, the will, the courage, the ability and the inspiration to share your living faith in Jesus Christ." Are you up for that?

Of course, we've already started! Wasn't John Lennox inspiring this summer? Want them to come back? And over the last two weeks, Pastor Jim gave us some incredible tools for sharing the good news. (By the way, Jim has only one sermon left before retiring. Say "Waaa.... don't leave us, Pastor Jim!") And Ellis and Rachel White, our missionaries from Oxford... have they brought some fire to this place or what? So we've already had a pretty good start. But this morning is the OFFICIAL grand opening to the *Year of Good News.*

But it's an odd day for such a thing, isn't it? Of all of the Bad News days in our history, September 11 ranks near the top, doesn't it? Will you ever forget where you were on 9/11? Where were you? I was sitting in my chair studying when I got a call from Berta Brynestad. "Mark, have you heard the news?" What news? "A plane has flown into the north tower of the World Trade Center."

Of course, that was just the beginning. At 9:03, the South tower... then the Pentagon... and a field in Pennsylvania. Our country was under attack from radical terrorists. We hunkered down. We had no idea what was coming next. And if you had told me that ten years later, we would not have experienced another successful terrorist attack, I would not have believed it. Would you? Men and women from our own congregation have joined thousands of others on the front lines of the battle against terror and kept that battle away from our shores. And as I told one of our Air Force pilots yesterday, "I am so grateful for what you are doing." Aren't you?

But what if it had been different? What if 9/11 was just the **first** wave of attack? What if we were invaded by the radicals? Can you imagine our capitol building as the largest mosque in the world? The Washington Monument as the tallest

minaret? What if millions of us had our homes stolen and were transported to the deserts of Iraq to live in exile. Under a government that despised our way of life. Under Sharia law with no rights, no freedom, held in contempt... longing for the liberty we had lost? Crying out to God for deliverance; for mercy; for judgment! Can you imagine such a thing?

That is exactly the backdrop of Isaiah 61. That's the text you heard read earlier in the service. The people of Israel have persisted in rebellion against God and, finally, he is fed up! God sends the Babylonians to render his judgment in 586 BC. The Jews are vanquished and taken into captivity. When you heard the words, "They will rebuild the ancient ruins and restore the places long devastated," Isaiah was writing about Jerusalem. Their New York. It had been sacked. Solomon's temple... their "tower,"—the center of their life—had been destroyed. They were forced to march 600 miles to a new land, a place they did not know, a language they did not speak, gods they did not serve.

And do you remember how long they lived in this state of captivity? 70 years! The Jews were heartbroken... hopeless. One generation was born and died in Babylon. Forgotten. Another generation, born and died... still, nothing. Perhaps God had finally washed his hands of them... finally given up on them. Ahhh... but then along comes a prophet of Yahweh. And these were the words he spoke to his brokenhearted people.

The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the LORD'S favor...

"People of Israel; captives. Listen to me," said the prophet. "I have been anointed. Not with holy oil. But with the Holy Spirit. God has poured out his Spirit upon me." Why? What had God called him to do? "Preach." Preach what? "Preach good news!"

Way back in the Old Testament—hundreds of years before Jesus came on the scene—God was already in the Good News business. But what is the good news that God has for us? Well, here's the gospel according to Isaiah. Listen, and see if this doesn't sound like good news to us, too. And to our unsaved friends, right here 2500 years later.

"The Lord has anointed me to preach good news..." (Good news for whom?) "I have good news for the poor... you who are impoverished by our culture. You who don't know where your next meal will come from... who have lost your home... who have no job... who are facing bankruptcy. I have good news for YOU." Never in my life have more people faced financial ruin and uncertainty than right now. Hundreds in this room are frightened about their financial future. And God says, "Relax, I have good news for you!"

But it's even more than that. The word for poor can also mean "afflicted!" Good news to the afflicted. "Do you feel like the world is beating you down? You can't catch a break? Problems are hitting you like a tsunami? I've got good news for you, too!" Relief from affliction...prosperity instead of poverty... does that sound like good news today? "The Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor..."

"He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted." Two weeks ago a child of this community...Emily Duppenthaler...was in a horrible car accident. The seatbelt did its job so violently that it ruptured her intestines and split her aorta. She was airlifted to Harborview and, literally, Emily had her broken heart bound back up. Was that miracle good news? But there are all kinds of broken hearts. I met with them this week. Every week. Hearts broken over a marriage that is slipping away. Hearts broken over a child that is slipping away. Over a reputation that is slipping away. If you've ever had your heart broken, you know how painful it is. The prophet says, "God will wrap the bands of his Holy Spirit around your heart, hold it together and ease the pain until it is healed." Heart-healing. Does that sound like good news!

He has sent me "to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners." Several weeks ago, I drove down to Oregon to visit a man in prison. He described the fear and humiliation he experienced there, his regret, his desire to be free. If you've ever visited someone in prison, you know how they long for freedom. Do you know what the favorite hymn is at the Purdy Prison? "I'll Fly Away!" Freedom!

But prisons don't need bars. I spoke with a man recently. He said, "I realized that I was drinking more wine every night just to relax. I was feeling trapped. So I am going on an alcohol fast for the next six months. I'm going to find my relaxation in my wife and my kids. And I want you to know." Maybe your prison bars are alcohol or food or prescription drugs. Or maybe a credit card with no limit ...and no income to back it up! Our Celebrate Recovery ministry is built around the idea that you can be set free from whatever prison is holding you. Freedom? Does that sound like good news?

And then this wonderful line. **He has anointed me to "proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."** What must it be like to experience God's favor...to be a favorite of the Lord? When our kids were growing up, I would say, "Rachel... you are my favorite daughter." She would always answer, "Daddy, I'm your only daughter!" "Yes, but you are my favorite." I did the same thing with Cooper. I thought about telling Cyndi that she was my favorite wife. But when you've married into a Mormon family, you have to be careful about such things!

What must it be like to be a favorite of God? Well, actually, the Year of the Lord's favor referred to something specific. We find it in Leviticus 25. It was called the Year of Jubilee. Every 50 years was the Year of Jubilee. Do you know what

happened that year? If you were a slave, you were set free. If you had debts, they were cancelled. If you had sold your ancestral land, it was returned to you. If you were a farmer, you let the ground lie fallow. The Year of Jubilee was like hitting a re-set button. It was a Ctl-Alt-Del and reboot of the entire culture. Slaves freed, debts remitted, land restored, fields rested. A fresh start! Jubilee!

Last Sunday we took Rachel back to Whitworth. We stayed just outside of Spokane in a hunting cabin of a friend, arriving late at night. But the minute we walked in, we knew something was very wrong. The whole place reeked! There was no power. Everything in the refrigerator had rotted. The bottom of the freezer was covered in a half inch of warm duck blood. I stumbled into the basement using my phone as a flashlight. I found the breaker box. But nothing was wrong. Turns out, a bird had committed hari kari on the transformer on a power pole out in the field somewhere and blown a fuse.

We called the power company and, waited, playing cribbage by flashlight. Finally, they arrived. And suddenly, after what seemed like a VERY long, very stinky cribbage game in a dungeon, the power came on. It was magic. Light in the darkness! No more tripping or fumbling. We pulled the rotten duck meat out of the fridge, wiped it down with Clorox and aired the place out. Jubilee! Reset. Fresh start! (Of course, when I took the rotten meat outside, I was attacked by a swarm of flying bugs...it was an infestation of biblical proportion! They were dive bombing me! So it wasn't all Jubilee!)

Now... if you were sitting in a detention camp, a slave of a foreign power, and a prophet declared, "Jubilee! The Lord's Year of Favor has come! You will get your freedom back. You will get your income back. You will get your homes back. You will get your life back. Reset!" Would that be good news? Any of you need Jubilee right now????

Now, I want you to jump to Luke chapter 4, verse 16. After perhaps a year of ministry in Galilee, Jesus decides it's time to return to his hometown of Nazareth. It was Sabbath and Jesus went to the synagogue... the same synagogue he had attended since he was a baby. His reputation as a rabbi has spread so they invite him to pick a text and preach on it. This is Jesus' very first sermon in Luke's gospel. And guess which text Jesus turns to? Listen to the story:

He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. And he stood up to read. The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written: "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him...

Can you feel the excitement? Jesus has just read Isaiah's wonderful words first spoken to God's people in captivity. And now, 500 years later... they are in captivity again. To Rome. Once again, God's people are poor and broken-hearted and hopeless. They long for God's favor. They long for Jubilee.

And now, Jesus the hometown boy is about to preach from this text. The scroll is been rolled up. He sits down—(that's how preachers did it back then)—and he's about to speak. They lean forward. They strain to hear his words. "What will he say??? What will little Jesus say?"

"...and he began by saying to them, 'Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.'"

"What? What are you saying, Jesus? You just read the greatest deliverance text in Isaiah. Good news for the poor, broken hearts bound up, sight to the blind, freedom for the captives... Jubilee. What do you mean that all of this is fulfilled in our hearing? Do you really mean to say that in your coming, in your presence... that in YOU we find God's favor? Really?"

Really. That's exactly what he meant to say. Jesus IS our Jubilee! Jesus IS the reset button in our life. In Jesus, all debts are paid. In Jesus, the future that we thought was gone is returned. In Jesus, the legacy we thought we had lost is restored. In Jesus, all captives find freedom. In Jesus, all things become clear again. In Jesus, the brokenhearted can breathe again without pain. In Jesus the poor and the afflicted have hope and a future. In Jesus we become the favorite of our heavenly father! In Jesus, we have Jubilee! Can I get a witness?

If you could say such a thing to a friend—a friend who was poor or afflicted or brokenhearted or hostage—if you could say, "How would you like Jubilee? How would you like to press the reset button in your life?" Would that be good news?

That is what we have to offer in Jesus Christ. When we think of doing evangelism, we are so quick to jump to ideas of sin and hell and the need for forgiveness, that we forget how Jesus proclaimed good news. He started with mercy and grace. He started with healing and deliverance. He started with Jubilee. He did it in his first sermon in Luke. He did it in his first sermon in Matthew. Remember how the Sermon on the Mount begins? Beatitudes! Blessed are you when you mourn and grieve and hurt and hunger.

Does anyone here need a reset? Does anyone you know need a reset? Jesus' good news starts with Jubilee. Our good news should start with Jubilee! A giant reset button. A new beginning. A fresh start. It is all found in Christ. It is only found in Christ. And not every 50 years, but right now... this moment... every day. Jesus is our Jubilee! It will never be the same again. Isn't THAT good news worth sharing?

SERMON DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- **READ** the passage out loud.
- **REFLECT & APPLY INDIVIDUALLY:** Each person take 5-7 minutes to circle words or phrases that jumped out at them; jot down your reflections; check the notes in your Study Bible for insight or help. Grapple with what the Spirit is saying to you, your group, the church—write down some applications.
- **REFLECT & APPLY TOGETHER:** Share your thoughts. Don't teach! Listen and reflect on God's word together; grapple with what God is calling us to do and be through this passage.
- **PRAY TOGETHER:** Tell the Lord one thing you are thankful for, and lay one concern before the Lord.
- **DIG DEEPER**
 1. Read both Isaiah 61: 1-4 and Luke 14: 14-21. (They are a little different; how?) Why do you think Jesus chooses this as His text for His inaugural sermon in Luke? What does He mean by verse 21?
 2. What is the Year of Jubilee? What did it mean? (Hint- Lev 25) Why is Jubilee a great description of Jesus?
 3. How is this "good news" different from other ways that you have heard the "good news" shared? Who, specifically, do you know that needs some part of this good news? What one thing could you do to share that with them?

