

3rd Sunday Ord. Time (C)
St. Athanasius and St. Francis Parishes
January 23, 24, 2016

It is the last line of today's gospel text that should really claim our attention at least it does mine! *"Today this Scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing."*

But first let's look again at the words Jesus read to those in the Synagogue Assembly, because it is the words he said to them that are *"fulfilled in your hearing"*.

Jesus reads from something he looked for in the Scroll; he did not read from just what happened to be unrolled by the Scribe

He reads selected verses from a specific chapter of Isaiah: verses 1 & 2 from Chapter 61. In fact, these are so specifically chosen that Luke omits the last line of verse 2. He includes only what he thinks will detail the mission of Jesus. And, it is quite specific *"bring good news to the poor, release to captives, sight to the blind, and freedom to the oppressed."*

Notice how these all deal with the social issues of the day. Once again, as we heard late last fall, no challenges are issued about spending time in the Temple. And later on, Luke will even say, "before you come to the Temple with your gifts, take care of what stands between you and your sister/brother. God does wonderful things in Jesus, so that he can do even more wonderful things for others.

But a caution is in order, of course. Just before Jesus enters the Synagogue Assembly, he had spent 40 days in the desert praying and fasting, and being tempted by Satan. You and I must also spend some time praying, and fasting. This will ground us so that we too will be able to *"bring good news to the poor, release to captives, sight to the blind, and freedom to those who are oppressed."* Nothing truly worthy and effective for the long term in the area of bringing assistance to the poor, the blind, those held captive and any who are oppressed of really bringing about something of the Kingdom of God will happen unless our lives are rooted in a deep connection to Christ. You know well the very famous text of St. Paul to the Corinthians about love (which we will hear as the Second Scripture next weekend) *"If I speak with an angelic tongue, if I have the gift of prophecy, and understand many things about God, and even if I give away everything I own and hand my body over in service BUT DO NOT HAVE LOVE ... it is nothing."* And we know that another word for love IS God, and that another word for God IS love. God and Love are synonymous.

How good it is, then, that just prior to the Season of Lent, a time for alms-giving and works of charity toward the poor and the oppressed, we have these 3 days to deepen our connection to Jesus through the Parish Mission that we are beginning. It all fits so well together we come these next nights to pray we deepen our love of Jesus and one another, and then we will be able to go into Lent committed as was Jesus to *bringing good news to the poor, release to captives, sight to the blind and freedom to the oppressed.* (Introduce Jon Leonetti)