

Fulfilled

About 600 years before Jesus, the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem, killed most of its inhabitants, and took some of the survivors back to Babylon as slaves. Eventually the Persians defeated the Babylonians, and Nehemiah, a Jewish man, was the Cup Bearer to the King of the Persians. Nehemiah convinced the king to let the Israelites go, AND to provide enough money to help rebuild Jerusalem, its walls, and its Temple. Today's lesson (Nehemiah 8:1-3, 5-6, 8-10) picks up the story after the rebuilding was largely finished and the people gathered to hear the Word of God, and to recommit themselves to the Covenant.

When Paul wrote to the church in Corinth, he was writing to a church that was in conflict. Here (1 Corinthians 12:12-31a), Paul is reminding the Corinthian Christians that everyone deserves respect, and everyone is needed, because we are all the body of Christ. We need each other, he says, no matter who we are, what gifts we have or don't have, or how good we are.

Today's Gospel lesson (Luke 4:14-21) is where Jesus claims his mission statement. He enters his hometown synagogue and picks up the scroll of the Prophet Isaiah, and he begins reading. The passage from Isaiah speaks of one who is to bring Good News to the poor, release those who are captive, make the blind see, set those who are oppressed free, and proclaim the year of Jubilee. Then, he blows everyone in the synagogue away by telling them that he's the one that Isaiah was writing about. This mission, is his mission.

Call and Response

The heavens declare the glory of God,
and the firmament shows God's handiwork.

Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of our hearts,
be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our rock and our redeemer.

(Adapted from Psalm 19)

Discussion and Question

Jesus' mission, as expressed in Luke 4, is to 1) bring good news to the poor, 2) release the captives and the oppressed, 3) bring sight to the blind, 4) and set people free (which is what the "year of the Lord's favor" is all about). What do you think about this mission statement? Is this really what Jesus was all about? Anything left out? Could this become YOUR mission statement? Could this become OUR church's mission statement?

Prayer

Lord Jesus, give us the power of your Holy Spirit, that we might be set free, that we might be brought good news, and that you might open our eyes when we have forgotten to see. Amen.

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