

Transcript of January 26-25 Gospel and Sermon

[MUSIC]

I'm judging whether you are sitting close enough to each other to hear each other sing.

[BLANK\_AUDIO]

I'll leave you to decide that.

Thank you for your indulgence in my late arrival.

There were some important insensitive matters that needed to be dealt with at a council meeting just before this one.

But to make it up to you, I will preach an extra 30 minutes longer.

Because I know you would feel left out.

What?

You would rather I didn't?

>> [LAUGH]

>> Well, we may have to make other adjustments then.

How about if we start by talking about the significance of this day and then I will pray the prayer of the day.

As Jesus continues to reveal himself, his first public act in Luke's Gospel was to preach a good news sermon.

And chances are some of you have heard something about other sermons preached

this week.

And I think I would invite you to remember that good news is not always good

news for everybody.

It could and should be, but it's not.

And we will talk a little bit more about that at length next week,  
particularly as we continue this story of Luke in which Jesus reads  
the good news in the synagogue.

Welcome to Sheila Brown,

who we're going to actually abridge your work and make things up as we go a little  
bit this morning.

But thank you for being our guest musician this morning.

[MUSIC]

[MUSIC]

**The Holy Gospel according to Saint Luke, the fourth chapter.**

Then Jesus in the power of the spirit returned to Galilee and  
a report about him spread throughout the region.

He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone.

When he came to Nazareth where he'd been brought up,  
he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day as was his custom.

He stood up to read and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him.

He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written.

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.

And Jesus rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and  
sat down.

And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him.

Then he began to say to them, today the scripture has been fulfilled  
in your hearing.

The gospel of our Lord.

Won't you be seated?

### **The Sermon**

Grace and peace to you.

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable  
to you, O Lord, our strength and our Redeemer.

Evidently, the good Bishop Mary Ann Edgar Buddy made quite an impression  
with her sermon on the day of inauguration of the US President this week.

So much so that people have been texting me, the copy of the sermon,  
the video of the sermon.

It's really worth listening to the whole sermon.

And I hope you get a chance to do that.

That's your homework.

Even with that sermon in mind, it seems providential that today we would hear  
about Jesus's first sermon, his first public act as recorded in Luke's gospel.

There are references to things he did, but a fully recorded first act is this good news sermon.

And for now, let's just say that not everybody regarded it as good news.

For our purposes, though, let's spend some time with those words from the prophet

Isaiah, let them resonate within us.

And maybe even ponder whether we dare believe that those promises are indeed fulfilled in our hearing.

Is good news to the poor only in the sweet buy and buy as we chow down on pie in the sky?

Or is it really today?

I was astonished to learn that from Election Day in the US early November to now, the richest three people in the world have amassed or accrued 223 billion with a B dollars.

People in Isaiah's day would have looked to scants at such excessive wealth and would have concluded that when someone generates that much wealth, especially that quickly, that means that somebody else is suffering because of it.

So the question becomes, where is good news for the poor, particularly when, depending on whose count you believe, scripture speaks some 2000 times about care for the poor.

Seems like that's maybe where Jesus heart lies and the prophets heart lies.

And as we speak about the release of the captive, we might be picturing in our

mind the hardened criminal offender.

But in reality, in Isaiah's day, many of the people who were imprisoned were there because they couldn't afford to pay their debts.

The poor.

Some were prisoners of conscience.

Some were prisoners of war.

And yes, probably some were offenders against society.

Brian Stevenson writes in his book, Just Mercy, that in the US criminal system, the prison system, more aptly, that the majority of inmates that he worked with as a defense attorney either had addiction, mental illness or significant intellectual disability.

After the first service, someone came to me and said, you know, I have friends in law enforcement and in the prison systems in Canada.

And their rough estimate in the detention centers where they work 70% of people there are there who really would benefit from mental health therapy or dealing with their addictions or with some sort of intellectual disability.

Is there good news for such a captive today?

And restoration of sight for those who don't see.

Could you imagine navigating a world that is designed for only sighted people?

And imagine the social isolation that comes when you have a limitation.

But imagine like in Jesus day, when his own followers were convinced that the reason people couldn't see was because either they or their parents had sinned.

You might remember Jesus response in John chapter nine.

He says.

In sort of brushing aside the question.

There's work to be done and people to be healed.

And on that day, someone born blind received their sight.

Freedom from oppression.

I think there were some oppressed this week who heard a word of good news when

they heard the Bishop at the Cathedral speak when I'm editorializing heavily

in a very gentle and compassionate and humane and courageous way.

Ask for mercy for people who are living in fear.

LGBTQ people, for example, were people who, even as we speak, are being deported.

People, by the way, many of whom were the ones who grew our food, harvested our food,

cared for our elderly and our children, served us in restaurants.

And I think the list goes on, including one who regained documentation and became a judge.

Release for the oppressed.

Jesus would say that those promises are being fulfilled in our hearing.

And a proclamation of the Lord's favor.

That's actually a bit of a technical term, and it's an ideal that never really quite gained traction.

Some of you maybe are familiar with the term Jubilee, even outside the context of

certain desserts.

Yeah.

The year of Jubilee happened every seven.

And for people who were in debt and crippled by that, their debts were forgiven.

And the vision of Jubilee, the year of God's favor, seven of those seven years, the fiftieth year, if a family had lost everything, including property because of debt, it would be returned back to them.

Well, by Jesus' time, that ideal had long since faded, and yet he re-invokes it when he reads from the prophet Isaiah and says, "Today, these words are fulfilled even as

they reverberate in your ears and echo in your memory."

And that today, Jesus announces, God is present with people desperate to hear good news.

There are more todays in Luke's Gospel, plenty of them.

But many of those todays show us Jesus healing people, forgiving people, including

welcoming, forgiving people.

And proclaiming by word and by action, the year of the Lord's favor.

I think Luke has an agenda when he tells us what he tells us about Jesus' sermon and

quoting from the prophet Isaiah.

It's an invitation.

It's an invitation to a very, very different way of being and way of life than maybe we are used to.

It's an invitation to follow that one who indeed did preach and enact good news for us all.

Amen.

[MUSIC]