



LIVING THE GOSPEL

**3rd Sunday of Ordinary Time
January 26th 2025**

Theme: "Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee."

Gathering Prayer

All: Almighty ever-living God, direct our actions according to your good pleasure, that in the name of your beloved Son we may abound in good works. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Exploring the Word

Gospel Reading: Luke 1:1-4; 4:14-21

^{1:1} In as much as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things which have been accomplished among us, ² just as they were delivered to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word, ³ it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, ⁴ that you may know the truth concerning the things of which you have been informed. ...

^{4:14} And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee, and a report concerning him went out through all the surrounding country. ¹⁵ And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all.

¹⁶ And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up; and he went to the synagogue, as his custom was, on the sabbath day. And he stood up to read; ¹⁷ and there was given to him the book of the prophet Isaiah. He opened the book and found the place where it was written, ¹⁸ "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, ¹⁹ to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord."

²⁰ And he closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant, and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. ²¹ And he began to say to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

Gospel Focus

This gospel passage jumps from Luke's introductory words to his fourth chapter. After Jesus' infancy and baptism and temptation in the desert, his public ministry begins. This is different from the gospel we heard last week, in which John shows Jesus cajoled into beginning his public work with a miracle as a wedding. Here, Jesus begins with preaching—he is one of many teachers in the synagogues, operating with the existing framework of his time. Word spreads about him, though—there is something special

about him. When he returns to his hometown, he reveals himself as someone totally new: he is the One of whom Isaiah speaks, the One whom God has anointed.

Gospel Reflection

Many organizations have a mission statement that succinctly defines their purpose. Today's gospel recounts Jesus' declaration of his own "mission statement" in his hometown synagogue. Jesus begins by saying that the power of the Holy Spirit is upon him. The Spirit is actually God's mission statement to the world, since prior to Jesus' coming. God's love in mission is first revealed by the Spirit's activity in creation. We can only know the "inside" mystery of God through the "outside" manifestation of the action and presence of the holy in the world and in human experience.

Scripture scholar Stephen Bevans has elaborated a missionary theology of the Spirit, naming it "God inside out." Today's gospel says that this Spirit now rests upon Jesus, who makes humanly visible and tangible the inner heart of God, who desires healing, wholeness, and jubilee justice. Luke says, "the eyes of all in the synagogue looked intently" at Jesus when he read from the prophet Isaiah. Could they see "God inside out" as he interpreted the Scriptures passages as fulfilled in their hearing?

Similarly, in the first reading, Nehemiah stresses that all the people listened attentively as Ezra read forth the law and interpreted it for them. For our ancestors in the faith, it was through the law that the Spirit made known the inner heart of God, Nehemiah says, "all the people were weeping as they heard the words of the law." He urges them not to be sad or weep but does not explain what caused their weeping. Were they tears of joy to have returned home from exile in Babylon to their own homeland, with their own temple being rebuilt and their customs restored? Were they tears of grief over all that had been lost in the intervening years: those who had died or who had not returned with them, the land despoiled, the temple in shambles? Maybe they were tears of repentance. Or were they tears of gratitude for the gift of the law from a God whose words of undeserved love and mercy rained down upon them from the mouth of Ezra? Perhaps the tears were for all of the above. When God reveals outwardly the bounteous heart of divine love, our first response is often to be overwhelmed to the point of tears.

It is easy to imagine that as Jesus announced this embodiment of this divine mission there may have been a similar reaction, as those who felt exiled in body or spirit heard a new promised of restoration and release, a new time of jubilation.

Paul uses a vivid metaphor to describe the way the Christian community continues the mission of being "God inside out." The Spirit, as love in mission, creates unity and harmony within the very diverse body, where the many parts are all unique, precious, and equally important. The mission is especially focused on attending to those members who are the most vulnerable. As within the divine being, so within the united community of believers every joy felt by one is shared by all, and every suffering is borne by all.

Old/New Testament and CCC links

First Reading — Nehemiah 8:2-6,8-10

² And Ezra the priest brought the law before the assembly, both men and women and all who could hear with understanding, on the first day of the seventh month. ³ And he read from it facing the square before the Water Gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of the men and the women and those who could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive to the book of the law. ⁴ And Ezra the scribe stood on a wooden pulpit which they had made for the purpose; and beside him stood

Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiyah, Uriah, Hilkiah, and Maaseiah on his right hand; and Pedaiyah, Mishael, Malchijah, Hashum, Hashbaddanah, Zechariah, and Meshullam on his left hand. ⁵ And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was above all the people; and when he opened it all the people stood. ⁶ And Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God; and all the people answered, "Amen, Amen," lifting up their hands; and they bowed their heads and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground. ... ⁸ And they read from the book, from the law of God, clearly; and they gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading.

⁹ And Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, "This day is holy to the LORD your God; do not mourn or weep." For all the people wept when they heard the words of the law. ¹⁰ Then he said to them, "Go your way, eat the fat and drink sweet wine and send portions to him for whom nothing is prepared; for this day is holy to our Lord; and do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength.

Responsorial Reading — Ps 19:8, 9, 10, 15

R: "Your words, Lord, are Spirit and life."

The law of the Lord is perfect, refreshing the soul;
the decree of the Lord is trustworthy, giving wisdom to the simple. **(R)**

The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart;
the command of the Lord is clear, enlightening the eye. **(R)**

The fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever;
the ordinances of the Lord are true, all of them just **(R)**

Let the words of my mouth and the thought of my heart find favor before you,
O Lord, my rock and my redeemer. **(R)**

Second Reading — 1 Corinthians 12:12-30

¹² For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. ¹³ For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.

¹⁴ For the body does not consist of one member but of many. ¹⁵ If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. ¹⁶ And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. ¹⁷ If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hear-ing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? ¹⁸ But as it is, God arranged the organs in the body, each one of them, as he chose. ¹⁹ If all were a single organ, where would the body be? ²⁰ As it is, there are many parts, yet one body. ²¹ The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you," nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." ²² On the contrary, the parts of the body which seem to be weaker are indispensable, ²³ and those parts of the body which we think less honorable we invest with the greater honor, and our unrepresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, ²⁴ which our more representable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior part, ²⁵ that there may be no discord in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. ²⁶ If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.

²⁷ Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. ²⁸ And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of

miracles, then healers, helpers, administrators, speakers in various kinds of tongues.²⁹ Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles?³⁰ Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?

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544. The kingdom belongs *to the poor and lowly*, which means those who have accepted it with humble hearts. Jesus is sent to "preach good news to the poor";(Lk 4:18; cf. 7:22) he declares them blessed, for "theirs is the kingdom of heaven."(Mt 5:3) To them - the "little ones" the Father is pleased to reveal what remains hidden from the wise and the learned.(Cf. Mt 11:25) Jesus shares the life of the poor, from the cradle to the cross; he experiences hunger, thirst and privation.(Cf. Mt 21:18; Mk 2:23-26; Jn 4:6 1; 19:28; Lk 9:58) Jesus identifies himself with the poor of every kind and makes active love toward them the condition for entering his kingdom.(Cf. Mt 25:31-46)

695. Anointing. The symbolism of anointing with oil also signifies the Holy Spirit,(Cf. 1 In 2:20:27; 2 Cor 1:21) to the point of becoming a synonym for the Holy Spirit. In Christian initiation, anointing is the sacramental sign of Confirmation, called "chrismation" in the Churches of the East. Its full force can be grasped only in relation to the primary anointing accomplished by the Holy Spirit, that of Jesus. Christ (in Hebrew "*messiah*") means the one "anointed" by God's Spirit. There were several anointed ones of the Lord in the Old Covenant, pre-eminently King David.(Cf. Ex 30:22-32; 1 Sam 16:13) But Jesus is God's Anointed in a unique way: the humanity the Son assumed was entirely anointed by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit established him as "Christ."(Cf. Lk 4:18-19; Isa 61:1) The Virgin Mary conceived Christ by the Holy Spirit who, through the angel, proclaimed him the Christ at his birth, and prompted Simeon to come to the temple to see the Christ of the Lord.(Cf. Lk 2:11,26-27) The Spirit filled Christ and the power of the Spirit went out from him in his acts of healing and of saving.(Cf. Lk 4:1; 6:19; 8:46) Finally, it was the Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead.(Cf. Rom 1:4; 8:11) Now, fully established as "Christ" in his humanity victorious over death, Jesus pours out the Holy Spirit abundantly until "the saints" constitute - in their union with the humanity of the Son of God - that perfect man "to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ"(Eph 4:13; cf. Acts 2:36) "the whole Christ," in St. Augustine's expression.

2443. God blesses those who come to the aid of the poor and rebukes those who turn away from them: "Give to him who begs from you, do not refuse him who would borrow from you"; "you received without pay, give without pay."(Mt 5:42; 10:8) It is by what they have done for the poor that Jesus Christ will recognize his chosen ones.(Cf. Mt 25:31-36) When "the poor have the good news preached to them," it is the sign of Christ's presence.(Mt 11:5; cf. Lk 4:18)

Sharing and Discussion

1. What authority should sacred Scripture have in our lives?
2. To what extent are we to identify with the mission of Christ as seen in verses 18-19?
3. How can we, as a community, bring "good news" to those who are poor or struggling? And how can we practically support those who feel blind emotionally, or spiritually—so they can experience healing and restoration?

Closing Prayer

All: Loving God, you hear us always in our needs. Listen to our prayer this day and fill us with your Spirit so that we might be your witnesses to all the world. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Leader: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life.

All: Amen.

Living The Gospel bible study/sharing via Zoom.

Every Wednesday

Time: 8 – 9.30 pm

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/2760073734?pwd=cDRZR2JQMGRobVkwdTY3ZVF5L1BwZz09>

Meeting ID: 276 007 3734

Passcode: 1WordOfGod

All are welcome!

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References:

- (1) Gospel Notes are taken from The Navarre Bible
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