

because of the preacher. He not only told us the truth about God but also enacted the truth about God. Thus, Jesus set high the bar for evaluating the truth of any preaching purported to be “in Jesus’s name.”

2. It’s not his peculiar truth if it is not truth followed, obeyed, truth embodied, enacted.

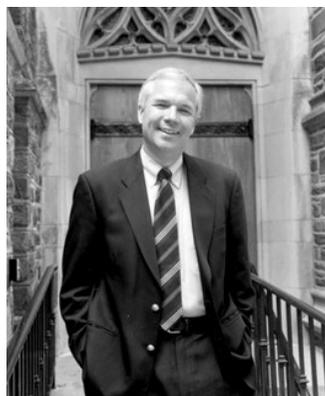
3. Jesus would talk to anybody. It’s not his truth if it’s not true for all. At Pentecost, when a mob in the street demanded an explanation for the ruckus in the upper room after the descent of the Holy Spirit and the birth of the church, Peter referred to an obscure passage from the prophet Joel: “I will pour out my spirit upon everyone; your sons and your daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, and your young men will see visions” (Joel 2:28).

Through most of our history with God, Holy-Spirit-induced-talk (preaching) was limited to a few charismatic or simply offensive truth-tellers: the prophets. But there will come a day, when Messiah comes, that God’s Holy Spirit will be poured out on all. Young upstarts, women and men, maids, janitors, people who never got to the microphone will speak up and speak out. Everyone will preach truth to power. Everybody, a preacher. That

promised age of free speech is now. The real preachers of Jesus are not ordained clergy like me but spirit-filled laity like you.

That’s why Jesus’s people tend to be big talkers. They’ll go anywhere for the privilege of preaching and they’ll talk to anybody. And they won’t shut up, no matter what the government says. Jesus not only preached but also sent out his disciples to all the villages of Galilee to preach. The Christian faith is an auditory phenomenon. Saint Paul said that all faith “comes through hearing.” So when we gather to worship Jesus there is some silence, but there is more time where we talk, shout, sing, and read about Jesus.

And then the service comes to a close and the preacher says to all the preachers: Get out of church and into the world and preach!



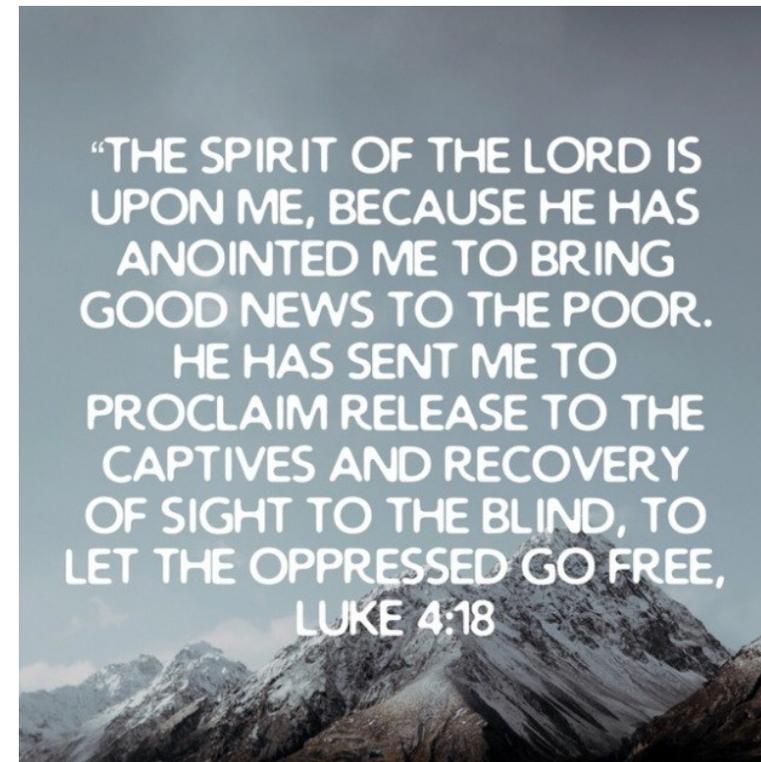
Will Willimon’s **Lectionary Sermon Resource, Year C** Part 1 (p. 109-115). Abingdon Press.

# NAMBUCCA VALLEY ANGLICANS WORSHIP at HOME

Epiphany 3  
23.01.2022

## SUPPLEMENT

### SENTENCE, COLLECT, READINGS & HOMILY for today 23 January 2022



## THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

## Sentence

Jesus read from the prophet Isaiah:

'The Spirit of the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives.'

Luke 4.18

## Collect Prayer of the Day

Life-giving God,  
who sent your Son Jesus to proclaim your kingdom  
and to teach with authority:  
anoint us with your Spirit,  
that we too may bring good news to the poor;  
bind up the broken-hearted,  
and proclaim liberty to the captive;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord,  
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.  
Amen.

## Collect Prayer of the Week

O God,  
the strength of all those who put their trust in you:  
mercifully accept our prayers,  
and because through the weakness of our mortal nature  
we can do nothing good without you,  
grant us the help of your grace,  
that in keeping your commandments  
we may please you both in will and deed;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen.

here in Israel during the famine when prophet Elijah was representing Israel's God, but Elijah fed none of those good Jewish women—only an alien woman of another nation and race." Sullen silence in the once adoring congregation.

"Again, quoting from our own cherished scripture, surely there were many sick among us during the days of the great prophet Elisha. The only person healed was this violent, non-Jewish Syrian army officer." To be reminded by the young preacher that God had come but had not come as we expected, that God had worked the wrong side of the street before and might well do so again was quite a blow to the spiritual sensibilities of the good synagogue-going folk at Nazareth.

Fifth, all hell breaks loose in response to the sermon. They rise up with one accord and attempt to throw him off a cliff. His sermon at Nazareth was not Jesus sharing his feelings or exchanging religious ideas (what preaching sometimes is today). Rather it was his "first inaugural presidential address," an official announcement of the coming invasion. And in so doing, he really rattled the cages of the faithful.

Now, you have never reacted this way to one of my sermons. But just knowing this little story of Jesus's

sermon keeps me nervous!

Sixth, Jesus's sermon is about God. In an age when many of us show up at church expecting to hear sermons about how we can better our lives or how to muster the courage to get out of bed tomorrow morning, it's good to be reminded that Jesus spoke in Nazareth primarily about God and only secondarily, and then derivatively, about us. The primary purpose purpose of scripture, Luke 4 or nearly every other part, is God, not us: Who is the God we've got? What's God up to today?

Jesus's pronouncements of judgment show him to be a true prophet who loved God's truth more than popular acclaim. He criticized or condemned in order to instigate a dramatic movement of heart, mind, and hands called "repentance." Thus, he not only preached the good news as truth that could be known but also as truth that could free, though he knew firsthand that the truth could make us mad as hell, his sermon in Nazareth being a prime example. He was truth and light. But something in us, John warns, loves the dark and hates the truth.

The good news (gospel) not only was the content of Jesus's sermons but also was Jesus.

I. He is the truth. This preacher's sermons took on deep significance

his feelings with them or to speak from personal experience. They handed him a scroll of the prophet Isaiah and demanded that he work from that. Jesus quotes directly from Isaiah:

“The LORD God’s spirit is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me. He has sent me to bring good news to the poor, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim release for captives, and liberation for prisoners, to proclaim the year of the LORD’s favor” (Isa 61:1-2).

Third, Jesus clearly believes that these ancient writings provide an accurate clue to what is going on in the present: “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.” This ancient, written word is presumed to be none other than God’s word here, now.

The gospel is the good news that is Jesus Christ. In a sense, every time someone faithfully preaches in a church, the church believes it’s like that fateful day in Nazareth all over again—Jesus is preaching to his people. As Saint Paul put it, “We don’t preach about ourselves. Instead, we preach about Jesus Christ as Lord” (2 Cor 4:5). True, the preacher is not speaking directly for God in the way that Jesus spoke. Any preacher, other than Jesus, is a flawed, imperfect human vessel. Fortunately, that which makes preaching effective

is not the goodness of the preacher but rather the truthfulness of the news that is preached, along with the energizing breath of the Holy Spirit.

In saying, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled,” Jesus’s sermon hits home. It’s one thing to say that God will move, act, and save one day, someday. It’s quite another thing to say God is doing so today, here, as you listen. Surely there was an excited stir among the congregation. At last God is coming to save, to set things right. And who is more deserving of that divine deliverance than we are—with the heel of Rome on our necks, languishing in poverty and oppression? Sure, it took about four hundred years for God to get moving and come for us, but now the preacher has announced our deliverance. Hallelujah! It was about then that the preacher’s sermon went south and the good news got bad.

Fourth, Jesus preaches to a specific group of people in a specific time and place who in the sermon come face-to-face with a specific and always surprising God. Jesus said, “No prophet is accepted in the prophet’s hometown.” (A nasty little proverb sure to incite the home folks.) “Let’s see now,” says the preacher, thumbing through his floppy, black leather-bound Bible, “as I recall (quoting from your own scriptures) there were lots of poor widows right

## THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD

### Reading from the Old Testament: **Nehemiah 8.1-3, 5-6, 8-10**

- <sup>1</sup> All the people came together as one in the square before the Water Gate. They told Ezra the teacher of the Law to bring out the Book of the Law of Moses, which the Lord had commanded for Israel.
- <sup>2</sup> So on the first day of the seventh month Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly, which was made up of men and women and all who were able to understand.
- <sup>3</sup> He read it aloud from daybreak till noon as he faced the square before the Water Gate in the presence of the men, women and others who could understand. And all the people listened attentively to the Book of the Law.
- <sup>5</sup> Ezra opened the book. All the people could see him because he was standing above them; and as he opened it, the people all stood up.
- <sup>6</sup> Ezra praised the Lord, the great God; and all the people lifted their hands and responded,  
**‘Amen! Amen!’**  
Then they bowed down and worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground.
- <sup>8</sup> They read from the Book of the Law of God, making it clear and giving the meaning so that the people understood what was being read.
- <sup>9</sup> Then Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest and teacher of the Law, and the Levites who were instructing the people said to them all,  
**‘This day is holy to the Lord your God. Do not mourn or weep.’**  
For all the people had been weeping as they listened to the words of the Law.
- <sup>10</sup> Nehemiah said,  
**‘Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is holy to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.’**

## Psalm 19

- <sup>1</sup> The heavens declare the glory of God:  
**and the firmament proclaims his handiwork;**
- <sup>2</sup> One day tells it to another:  
**and night to night communicates knowledge.**
- <sup>3</sup> There is no speech or language:  
**nor are their voices heard;**
- <sup>4</sup> Yet their sound has gone out through all the world:  
**and their words to the ends of the earth.**
- <sup>5</sup> There he has pitched a tent for the sun:  
**which comes out as a bridegroom from his chamber,  
and rejoices like a strong man to run his course.**
- <sup>6</sup> Its rising is at one end of the heavens,  
and its circuit to their farthest bound:  
**and nothing is hidden from its heat.**
- <sup>7</sup> The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul:  
**the command of the Lord is true,  
and makes wise the simple.**
- <sup>8</sup> The precepts of the Lord are right, and rejoice the heart:  
**the commandment of the Lord is pure,  
and gives light to the eyes.**
- <sup>9</sup> The fear of the Lord is clean, and endures for ever:  
**the judgements of the Lord are unchanging,  
and righteous every one.**
- <sup>10</sup> More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold:  
**sweeter also than honey,  
than the honey that drips from the comb.**
- <sup>11</sup> Moreover, by them is your servant taught:  
**and in keeping them there is great reward.**
- <sup>12</sup> Who can know their own unwitting sins?:  
**○ cleanse me from my secret faults.**
- <sup>13</sup> Keep your servant also from presumptuous sins,  
lest they get the mastery over me:  
**so I shall be clean, and innocent of great offence.**
- <sup>14</sup> May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart  
be acceptable in your sight:  
**○ Lord, my strength and my redeemer:**

Israel does in the synagogue.

We will have a good bit to say about the context and meaning of today's Gospel lesson from Luke in the context of our proclamation today as we walk people through the text, so we won't repeat it here. This Sunday's proclamation will be a meditation upon the significance and the challenges of preaching, a sermon about preaching that is primarily addressed to the listeners of sermons.

The beginning of Mark's Gospel—right after Jesus spends forty days in the wilderness and John is arrested—says, "Jesus came into Galilee announcing God's good news, saying, 'Now is the time! Here comes God's kingdom! Change your hearts and lives, and trust this good news!'" (1:14). What did Jesus do for a living? He went preaching. Jesus the Christ is God garrulous, loquacious, and graciously talkative.

### Proclaiming the text

This Sunday's appointed Gospel is Luke's rather detailed report of Jesus preaching his first (and I presume last) sermon at his hometown synagogue in Nazareth. They hand him the scroll of the prophet Isaiah. He reads the stirring words, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me . . . to preach good news to the poor." Then Jesus interprets

the scripture, saying that this prophecy is taking place right now. He recalls two episodes from the work of Elisha and Elijah, great prophets of the past. The congregational response? Murderous rage.

From our Gospel I'd like to note a few things about sermons and those who listen to sermons.

First, the preacher speaks under the power of the Holy Spirit. What the preacher says is not just one person's outburst; it is divinely derived testimony. The preacher speaks under Spirit-induced compulsion. It's not a sermon unless the words of the preacher are empowered by the Holy Spirit and made understandable to the listening congregation through the work of the Holy Spirit. In some mysterious way, God tells the preacher what to say.

The Holy Spirit is the brooding wind, the descending bird from heaven, the empowering fire of God's closeness. The Holy Spirit is that mysterious force from God that brings new worlds into being, that enables truthful, creative, godly speech (preaching), and that enables hearing that could not be without God's near presence.

Second, the sermon is based upon scripture. Note that the Nazareth congregation didn't ask Jesus to share

# Third Sunday after the Epiphany

Nehemiah 8:1-3, 5-6, 8-10 Psalm 19  
1 Corinthians 12:12-31a Luke 4:14-21

## People of the Word

Selected reading Luke 4:14-21

Theme Jesus came preaching. He launched God's promised revolution and inaugurated the God's kingdom on the basis of words. Even today, this Sunday in your church, the revolution continues; the realm of God takes form through preaching. Preaching is a primary means whereby God loves God's people through words.

## Introduction to the readings

**Nehemiah 8:1-3, 5-6, 8-10** During the rebuilding of the walls in Jerusalem, after the exile, a scroll is discovered. All of Israel gathers before the water gate and listens to the reading of the long-forgotten law.

**1 Corinthians 12:12-31a** Paul writes to the congregation at Corinth, speaking to them about the diversity of gifts within the church.

**Luke 4:14-21** Jesus returns to his hometown synagogue at Nazareth where he is handed a scroll. He reads

and interprets the faith of Israel. The congregation will soon respond with anger.

## Prayer

Lord Jesus, we are convened today because you have called us together. Each of us has, in some way, heard your word and sensed your vocation. Speak to us, Lord; speak to us so that we might speak for you in the world. Give us the right words to testify to your reign, and then give us the courage to preach that the world might know your name, might hear your summons, and come to your salvation. Amen.

## Encountering the text

During renovations of the Jerusalem city wall, after the people returned from exile, a scroll is found. It is the lost scripture of Israel, lost and forgotten during the disastrous years of exile. The people are assembled and all day long they listen to the rediscovered word of God. As they listen, they are helped to discover the great gap between their lives and God's will for their lives.

Jesus returns to his hometown synagogue. What do his neighbors do? They hand him a scroll and ask him to read it to them. This is what

## A reading from The New Testament: 1 Corinthians 12:12-31

- <sup>12</sup> Just as a body, though one, has many parts,  
but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ.
- <sup>13</sup> For we were all baptised by one Spirit so as to form one body –  
whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free – and we were all given  
the one Spirit to drink.
- <sup>14</sup> And so the body is not made up of one part but of many.
- <sup>15</sup> Now if the foot should say,  
'Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,'  
it would not for that reason stop being part of the body.
- <sup>16</sup> And if the ear should say,  
'Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,'  
it would not for that reason stop being part of the body.
- <sup>17</sup> If the whole body were an eye,  
where would the sense of hearing be?  
If the whole body were an ear,  
where would the sense of smell be?
- <sup>18</sup> But in fact God has placed the parts in the body,  
every one of them, just as he wanted them to be.
- <sup>19</sup> If they were all one part, where would the body be?
- <sup>20</sup> As it is, there are many parts, but one body.
- <sup>21</sup> The eye cannot say to the hand,  
'I don't need you!'  
And the head cannot say to the feet,  
'I don't need you!'
- <sup>22</sup> On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem  
to be weaker are indispensable,
- <sup>23</sup> and the parts that we think are less honourable  
we treat with special honour.  
And the parts that are unpresentable  
are treated with special modesty,
- <sup>24</sup> while our presentable parts need no special treatment.  
But God has put the body together,  
giving greater honour to the parts that lacked it,

see over >

- 25 so that there should be no division in the body,  
but that its parts should have equal concern for each other.
- 26 If one part suffers, every part suffers with it;  
if one part is honoured, every part rejoices with it.
- 27 Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.
- 28 And God has placed in the church  
first of all apostles,  
second prophets,  
third teachers,  
then miracles,  
then gifts of healing, of helping, of guidance,  
and of different kinds of tongues.
- 29 Are all apostles?  
Are all prophets?  
Are all teachers?  
Do all work miracles?
- 30 Do all have gifts of healing?  
Do all speak in tongues?  
Do all interpret?
- 31 Now eagerly desire the greater gifts.  
Love is indispensable  
And yet I will show you the most excellent way.

## Gospel of Luke 4:14-21

- 14 Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit,  
and news about him spread through the whole countryside.
- 15 He was teaching in their synagogues,  
and everyone praised him.
- 16 He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up,  
and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom.  
He stood up to read,
- 17 and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him.  
Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:
- 18 'The Spirit of the Lord is on me,  
because he has anointed me  
to proclaim good news to the poor:  
He has sent me  
to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and  
recovery of sight for the blind,  
to set the oppressed free,  
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour'
- 19
- 20 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.
- 21 He began by saying to them,

'Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing'