

2016 HT
Luke 4

I just started taking an American sign language class...I've been interested in sign language for a long time and in fact have taught myself some signs so that I could teach children songs more effectivelyit is interesting and challenging but I believe I'll get it!

And as I studied today's gospel it made me think about hearing...and language of all sorts because today's gospel story is all about listening

today's Gospel finds Jesus preaching the very first sermon of his ministry and explains how shocked the people were who heard him

The gospel of Luke was written in the early 80s and Luke is careful to keep all his stories in chronological order

So, a couple of weeks ago the scripture was about Jesus baptized in the Jordan river, then He was whisked away to face 40 days of temptation in the wilderness

directly after that he heads to the temple in his hometown of Nazareth and preaches

Jesus has returned to galilee from the wilderness and word is getting out about him. It must have been favorable because he is praised by everyone in their synagogues. But he waits until he is in his hometown to reveal that this scripture is fulfilled in their hearing this is the public announcement of the anointing by God

Somebody would have handed Jesus a scroll with holy scripture written on it....and Jesus would have read it.

That night the passage was from Isaiah 61:1-2

"The Spirit of the Lord GOD *is* upon Me,
Because the LORD has anointed Me
To preach good tidings to the poor;
He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted,
To proclaim liberty to the captives,
And the opening of the prison to *those who are* bound;
²To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD,
And the day of vengeance of our God;
To comfort all who mourn,

so the people listen to these familiar words which promise a messiah and then they sort of sit back to see what Jesus will say next and Jesus sits down too, that was the custom so picture it.....

Jesus begins his sermon with the word TODAY

Today this word is fulfilled these are bold words and a bold claim today is jesus' first public word in Luke's gospel

There is no mystery as to Jesus' vocation or how he will be the revelation of God now in his hometown he announces what he has come to do

Bring good news to the poor, proclaim release to the captive recovery of sight for the blind and freedom for the oppressed not just in some far off future but today

The spirit has empowered Jesus to bring transformation and Jesus continues to bring transformation

But this proclamation, this good news would not have been received well at all

The audacity of this home town boy saying that HE is the fulfillment of this prophecy from Isaiah

The nerve of him!

The people wanted fresh insight...but Jesus has crossed the line...this is too much! Remember that these people are the poor the oppressed and the lower parts of society of that day so the specific promise of what the Messiah will do are not what shocks Nazareth the shock in Nazareth is Jesus' claim that now is the time and that he is the one

That is not shocking to us at all...we have the perspective of 2000 plus years and we know most of the rest of the story....

As we listen, we know that Jesus can transform lives...many of us have witnessed miracles...many of us have been able to face trials and tribulations, pain and suffering, challenges of all sorts because of our walk with Jesus...the Jesus who fulfills promises and transforms lives

So how do we in 2016 listen? And what word do we want or need to hear?

Ask yourself what word you would want to hear if you were afraid, or happy, or scared?
(What words do you like to hear?...no wrong answers)

Jesus said "today" these words are fulfilled...I'm the one....I'm the messiah....I can transform your life

AS we listen to these words and wonder how they apply to us today....i want to unpack two ideas with you.....the first is how important words are.... Or sign language....or communication of any kind

The people in Nazareth weren't educated and had to rely on the words of others to learn

That is not the problem today...most of us are surrounded by words but as 21st century Christians, how do we use our words....we are exhorted in the Bible in numerous places on how to use words do we use them to build others up? To celebrate accomplishments? Or do we use them to point out imperfections, belittle others? Laugh at other's expense?

I've had a couple of people in my life who always had to find the flaw in anything....the house could be clean the meal could be seemingly perfect but there would always be something wrong...have you ever known anyone like that? It's really disheartening

We would be better served to save our words until we could find some way to build another up

As it says in Colossians 4:6

Be gracious in your speech. The goal is to bring out the best in others in a conversation, not put them down, and not cut them out.

Great advice to live by –as true now as it was when Paul wrote that advice

And of course the second idea to ponder is the word Today....it was a super important word in this gospel and it is still important to us

Close your eyes?

Today Jesus stands among us ready to bring comfort and hope, healing and justice

Today Jesus walks with us sharing our pain strengthening our courage

Today Jesus invites you to turn to him to lean on him to love him just as he loves you

Today Jesus is here to bring you abundant life

Today Jesus wants you to be filled with joy...don't wait until you are richer or thinner or have the house clean be filled with peace and joy today

Today Jesus encourages you to reach out to others in love and with words of compassion and affirmation

Today the prophecy continues to be fulfilled Jesus our master is here... and that is good news indeed Amen