



January 19, 2020

Title: *Freedom, Sight and Favor*

Scripture: Luke 4:16-30

Overview

It Jesus is the face of God – a living, breathing picture of what God’s character, love, and justice look like embody as a human. Jesus came as a “bringer of Justice.” There is perhaps no better illustration of this than how Jesus begins his ministry. In Luke 4:16-30. Jesus returned to his hometown and went to the synagogue. He is given a scroll to read and finds Isaiah 61:1-2. He reads the passage, makes a startling claim, and then rebukes those in the synagogue. Needless to say, it doesn’t go over well and those present try to kill Jesus.

The context of this passage is important to note. About 30 years prior to this day when Jesus read from the scroll, the Romans killed around 30,000 Jews in the region around Nazareth who were rebelling against the empire. The horror of that slaughter was still with the Jewish community and they were anxiously awaiting a Messiah King who would free them from the tyranny of Rome.

Theme

What does it mean that God offers redemption, renewal and liberation to both the oppressed and the oppressors?

Opening Question: *When have you felt there was someone against you? What was that like?*

Some questions for discussion:

1. Read Luke 4:16-22. Jesus is quoting from Isaiah 61:1-2. What is he claiming about himself as he reads from the scroll?
2. After he finished reading the scroll, what did the listeners at the synagogue think of Jesus? Why did they see him this way? What might have been their hope for who he was? (Verse 22)
3. Read Luke 4:23-30. Jesus refers to a couple of episodes recorded in the Old Testament. Both examples are when God reached out with his love and mercy and grace to the enemies of Israel (see I Kings 21 and II Kings 5). Jesus is indicating that God’s love and grace is not limited to the house of Israel. As a matter of fact, at times God’s grace is extended to the enemies of Israel and it appears there is more grace for them than for the people of Israel. Look at the change in response of the people towards Jesus. Why the shift?

4. Jesus is inviting the Israelites to respond, not with vengeance or retaliation toward their oppressors the Romans, but with grace and mercy? Why is this such a difficult response?
5. We tend to understand that the oppressed need grace, justice, healing, restoration and liberation – but how about the oppressors? The enemy? Those against us? Someone who seems evil?

6. Read and discuss:

We all become a well-disguised mirror image of anything that we fight too long or too directly. That which we oppose determines the energy, and frames the questions after a while. You lose all your inner freedom. (Richard Rohr, Falling Upward, p. 118)

7. What do you sense needs to change within you to be able to see and treat those who are against you as those who also need grace, mercy, forgiveness and liberation?

8. Use these three core questions – especially the last one – and discuss in light of the biblical passage and today's discussion:

- **What can I learn about God?**

What does he care about? What does he not care about? What makes him glad and joyful and what makes him sad? What does he think of you and me? What are some off-kilter thoughts or beliefs I may have about God and his ways?

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- **What does it mean to live fully as a human the way God created me?**

If I were living fully, what might I care about more or care about less? What would be on my mind? What would be on my heart? What does this teach me about me – how I tend to respond and react? What does this teach me about me - and who I am created to be?

- **So what? What's the point?** If these things do provide insight about life, then how might I live differently today? This week? What new thoughts do I have or what adjustments do I want to make? As a person? As a son or daughter? As a friend? As a student? As an employee? As a boss? As a mom, dad, wife, uncle, aunt, husband, grandparent?