



## Wednesday Prayer

3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday after Epiphany – Freedom for the oppressed

**When he came to Nazareth, where he had 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 he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” ~ Luke 4:16-21**

Professor Mitzi J. Smith, in her commentary on this lesson, shares, “In Nazareth of Galilee, to a synagogue audience of men, women, leaders, noble folks, the poor, the diseased and possessed, the wealthy, freedpersons, masters, and enslaved, Jesus preaches an abolitionist message. I imagine that Jesus read the text passionately, boldly, and with conviction, bringing the text to life.”<sup>1</sup> And then he sits down, declaring the scripture fulfilled in their hearing.

So...if you're *not* poor, captive, blind, oppressed – maybe this good news means something different for you. This justice vision makes those with riches, those who are doing the oppression against others angry. Jesus doesn't say more, he just sits down. Why are equity messages so angering? Well, I guess no one wants to be called out. No one wants to give up their own comforts. Some don't want to see or reimagine a life that offers universal access to opportunities and resources that *all* people need to thrive.

When we think of this in terms of preventing sexual exploitation and trafficking, we don't always want to think about the ways the powerful continue to oppress and abuse communities of color and LGBTQ folks – those who are significantly overrepresented in trafficking. Maybe we've played a part in this oppression through our actions or our inaction. On Sunday I heard preacher T. Michael Rambo share Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr's work with passion, boldness, conviction, bringing the text to life. May we live into this justice vision of Jesus, MLK, and so many others urging us in.

**God of justice and mercy, your Son proclaimed freedom for the oppressed. May we bring that proclamation to life through our words and actions every day. Amen.**

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Written by Joy McElroy, Cherish All Children Executive Director.

<sup>1</sup>[Commentary on Luke 4:14-21 - Working Preacher from Luther Seminary](#)