

January 24, 2016

Luke 4:14-21

1 Corinthians 12:12-31a

Nehemiah 8:1-3, 5-6, 8-10

Grace and peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!  
Amen.

I was reading somewhere this week and came across one author's guiding principle when speaking publicly; especially, on a challenging topic. It's called KISS. No, not literally and not the rock band. It's an acronym short for: Keep it Simple, Stupid. However, she modified it slightly to say, "Keep it Simple and Straightforward." Probably a good idea to take the negative word out as many of us are our own worst critic and speak words to our own souls we probably wouldn't say to someone else, which, in the can have very damaging consequences to our self-esteem and mental well-being. Probably gospel in and of itself right there: be kind to ourselves and gentle to our souls. That after all is part of the transforming power and freedom Jesus speaks about today in our gospel lesson. Freedom to be who God created us to be. Freedom to trust that is enough. Freedom to let go of expectations we place on ourselves or be bound to those set upon us by others. Freedom to know we are loved unconditionally by God. We often forget that, don't we? That is, the power of Christ present here and now in our lives, in our community of faith, and beyond these doors in the world where God is on the loose. We often forget the good news He came to reveal, to usher in, to proclaim, to live out in His very real human body on earth prior to his death and resurrection

didn't end but continues each and every day. He is our Savior – not in some far off and unknown time in the future when He will come again but today. He is our Savior now! Jesus states at the onset of His ministry in Luke, “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 let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor” But Jesus doesn't stop here, does He? He doesn't leave the audience hanging wondering when this will happen as He concludes, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” Today, He says. Not in 100 years. Not in 50 or 10 years. Not in 1 year or 1 month but today. Right here, right now! The Lord has drawn near and the in-breaking of God's kingdom is at hand.

Keep it Simple and Straightforward. We tend to have a tendency to discuss, debate, and dissect even the simplest of things to uncover something that yet remains hidden, something that will unlock the door to the future, something that will heal our hurts and solve our problems of today. That's part of our human identity and it's what makes us unique. It's a gift from our Creator and at times it's a very good thing that has indeed brought the kingdom of God near today – the possibility there is yet another planet billions of miles away has unlocked once again the magnificence and breadth of all God has created. Science continues to discover new species of plants and animals which further highlights this fact while also revealing God's continuing power to create

new life. Or the fact science continues to discover new medicines, new technologies and treatments to bring the healing power of God to the world.

Keep it Simple and Straightforward. Jesus does just that. He is here. God is here. This is what He has come to do. This is the good news He ushers in. This is the mission the church is joined to and called to partner with Him and with God via the power of the Holy Spirit. Keep it Simple and Straightforward. Exactly, what Paul does as He writes to a community of faith continuing to be immersed in an ongoing struggle over practices that create division within the community, exalt some over others, and even exclude some from the community Christ has called them to and is the head of. Keep it simple and straightforward. You need one another as he uses the metaphor of the church as a human body and not any ordinary body but the body of Christ. Each member, or body part, has a vital role. It's fairly simple isn't it – no one part is more important than the other. No one part has greater value and significance than another. No one part is indispensable. Each and every member was joined to the body bringing a unique set of gifts to make the body whole and to be used by the body in fulfilling God's work in the world. St. Teresa of Avila puts it this way, "Christ has no body on earth but ours, no hands but ours, no feet but ours. Ours are the eyes through which the compassion of Christ looks out upon the world. Ours are the feet with which he goes about doing good. Ours are the hands with which he blesses his people now."

Simple and straightforward. Here we have in these two passages words from God that help shape who we are and what our mission is. Words that set our sights today on the One who is the head of the body and continues in our midst, in the struggles of our own lives, in the unrest in the world in which we live the promise that today God is at hand. God is at work. God is bringing good news to the poor, proclaiming release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, letting the oppressed go free, and proclaiming the year of God's favor. Today, for the world, for the church, for every single member of it no matter how insignificant at times we may seem.