

January 23, 2022

Luke 4:14-21

1 Corinthians 12:12-31a

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

“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.” Jesus opens his ministry with this declaration. He is the fulfillment of the prophecy in Isaiah. But Jesus doesn't stop here. He doesn't leave the audience hanging wondering when this will happen. We don't have to wait until next Sunday, next month or a new season such as is the waiting game with our favorite TV shows. No, Jesus concludes, “*Today* this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” *Today*. Right here, right now! The Lord has drawn near and the in-breaking of God's kingdom is at hand.

Today, this morning He is here. *Today*, making himself known through the word of God proclaimed. *Today*, offering forgiveness and healing as we confess our wrongdoing, releasing us from those things that separate us from him. *Today*, the body of Christ gathers as one, in which all are welcome, all are precious and beloved children of God, all are sent forth to “bring good news” to all in need of a liberating word of promise and hope from God.

This is the mission the church is joined to and called to partner with Jesus via the power of the Holy Spirit. We are united in this mission. United with Christ. With each other. With the church on earth.

This is what Paul was doing as He wrote to a community of faith continuing to be immersed in an ongoing struggle over practices that created division within the community, exalted some over others, and even excluded some from the community Christ had called them to and is the head of. 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. 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 put 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."

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 Jesus is near. God is at work. 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. We are joined to that mission. We are gathered to praise the one who breaks the darkness!