

Third Sunday after Epiphany
January 27, 2019

Text: Luke 4:16-30

Theme: “Anointed for Good News”

Christ, Messiah, Anointed One, such is our Lord Jesus. To be anointed is to be set apart for a purpose. For Jesus it is a wonderful purpose and empowered to carry it out. It flows from God’s steadfast love, that love which keeps on loving. Jesus is God’s anointed, the One long prophesied and awaited.

Anointing can be a very physical act. *Christos* is the Greek that we translate Anointed One. One of my Greek lexicons tells me it comes from *chrio* which means “to touch with the hand.” (Thayer by way of Bibleworks). The anointing we are familiar with in the Bible may include the pouring out of oil on the head of the one anointed, like David. Webster tells me our word *anoint* has the root for *inungere*, *in--on*, plus *ungere*—smear, so to smear on.

Anoint or smear, which would you prefer. I have two substances here. Both have a nice color. They are both liquids but one has a much higher viscosity. With which would you like to be anointed? Now you can see one is olive oil and the other is bearing grease, clean bearing grease. With one we would think of smearing and the other anointing. Smear often has a negative flavor to it. You smear mustard on your bread. You probably would not think in terms of anointing your bread with mustard, nor would you want mustard smeared on your head.

Jesus is the Anointed. He reveals that in His hometown of Nazareth today. He is anointed to proclaim the good news. He does and as He does the smearing begins.

We could say it's Jesus big moment in Nazareth, the town where He was raised by Mary and Joseph. Matthew and Mark record this event later in their Gospels, after Jesus has been about His work for a while. Which is probably when it occurred chronologically, would have been enough time then for those things the Nazarethians had heard were happening in Capernaum to have happened (v 23). Perhaps Luke puts it here to emphasize the work of the anointed reaches the unexpected, those beyond Israel just as it had in the days of Elijah and Elisha.

Here He is, back home. He is given the opportunity to express Israel assembled in the synagogue. Unlike what we read of in our lesson from Ezra this day when the giving of the message lasted from morning until midday, Jesus' message is quite short. Jesus stands up, walks to the front, take the scroll, unrolls it to the place He wanted (a feat more difficult than turning to chapter and verse in our Bibles) and reads. It's Isaiah 61:1-2 in our Bibles. It's not long. Let's hear it again. ¹⁸ "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, ¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

The section being read, He rerolls the scroll, hands it back to the attendant and finds His seat. We read, "And the eyes of all in the synagogue were all fixed on Him." Maybe they were thinking, "That's it. After all we have heard about him, that's all we're getting here?" Were they disappointed? But there is more. "Today, this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." (v 21) He's saying, 'the Spirit of the Lord is on me, folks, I have been anointed to proclaim the good news, to bring liberty and sight. It is the year of the Lord's favor right here, right now. I am anointed for this very thing.' We are reminded of Peter's words in the house of Cornelius that we find in Acts 10, 'You know the matters

that have happened...Jesus from Nazareth, God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went around doing good and healing all under the devil's power for God was with Him.' (Acts 10:37-38) Jesus is saying, 'I am the One Isaiah wrote of. Yes, me, Jesus, the very anointed One you have been waiting for. God's oil of blessing is on Me that I may be the One bringing blessing.' We could say it was more than the hearers could swallow on that day.

We are here because those words of Jesus were and are true. The good news is still proclaimed and we have heard. It is good news like no other. We are given eyes to see our sin and eyes to see our Savior. In Him there is freedom from the captivity of sin. There is liberty from the oppression of the devil. Jesus is the good news. We are given faith through the Holy Spirit to believe this. We are given gifts by the same Spirit that the manifestation of the fruit of Spirit might be multiplied in the body of Christ. Every gift has value and purpose for building up self. We focus on the work of getting the message of Christ out that changes everything.

We, brothers and sisters, can even consider ourselves anointed. In Jesus we have the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit (Isaiah 61:3). The Holy Spirit is poured out on those baptized, the same Spirit that came down in the form of the dove when Jesus was baptized. We have been freed from a life of selfishness and disappointment to a life of service and fulfillment. It is a blessed anointing.

But the anointed can be met with smearing. No one wants to be the object of a smear campaign. The message of Christ, the Gospel is smeared. 'We don't need the oil of your message. We like life the way it is, at least when it comes to our immoral moral decisions. How can anyone come off setting standards for moral behavior for me especially in matters of sexuality?' It's pretty narrow minded, backward, even mean to

speak of Jesus as the only way to eternal bliss. My god is a god of love, and could a god of love ever condemn anyone?’

Yes, the Gospel is smeared and sometimes it is smeared by the proclaimers. This happens when the lives of the proclaimers look no different than the lives of those who would smear the message, or the smeared react with smearing of our own. It happens when lips are silent about the words of Christ and simply parrot prevailing attitudes of the times.

Back in Nazareth, yes the message was more than most could swallow and the smearing begins. After Jesus spoke the words about fulfillment we read, “all spoke well of Him and marveled at the gracious words coming from His mouth.” (vs 22) So they spoke well, or “they bore witness about him.” There are only three places in the ESV where this Greek verb (*martureo*) is rendered “speak well of.” Maybe it should only be two, or maybe none and leave it to the reader to determine from context if the testimony was speaking well or speaking ill or somewhere in between. What could they have been testifying to? We can speculate such things as, ‘Jesus was always such a good boy, never gave his parents any trouble. He grew into such a fine young man. He always had such a grasp and understanding of the law and the prophets beyond his years.’

So they were marveling at the gracious words coming from His mouth. The words themselves from Isaiah certainly were gracious. Maybe the marveling came with His assertion about those words being fulfilled. The marveling will increase as He goes on to talk about God’s work bypassing Israel and going to the Gentiles with His words about the widow of Zarephath and Naaman the Syrian leper. These are examples of good news for those thought to be totally unworthy of good news. Jesus’ words certainly were not good

news to those who thought they had him all figured out. ‘This is Joseph’s son! How can he say these words are fulfilled in him!’

The smearing continues. They are filled with wrath, maybe furious is a good translation. It’s an anger that comes up all and once and is not necessarily guided by the head in its actions. They lead him up to the brow of the hill and are ready to toss him. This is what they think of his words about being anointed.

The smearing is great on this day, but we could say this is just the beginning. It will happen as Simeon had said in the temple, “This child is destined for the falling and rising again of many in Israel and for a sign to be spoken against.” (Luke 2:34) These hometown folk will be only a small part of the many. There will be those saying he could not be from God as he healed on the Sabbath (John 9:16). Others would accuse him of casting out demons by the power of the devil himself (Luke 11:15). Later when they finally have in hand and want to pin Pilate down to nailing him to the cross they say he’s leading insurrection against Rome (Luke 23:5; 13-15).

Jesus is smeared. He is not the anointed of their dreams. Some were not looking for such an anointed, thought they really didn’t need any delivering, peaceful existence with Rome was pretty good. Others were frustrated as they didn’t see the life of plenty they were expecting with the coming of the Messiah. Still others were more than a little upset that Jesus could speak of the tax collectors and prostitutes entering heaven before them (Matthew 21:31, 32). They would smear on accusations and lies in contempt.

But there will be more smearing. They get their way. He’s suffering and dying and there is none to deliver. ‘He saved others, let him save himself!’ “He trust in God; let God deliver Him now, if He desires Him. for He said, “I am the Son of God.” (Matthew 27:43) He is even smeared by one of those crucified with Him. Is there not anyone

speaking well? Those who love Him have fled or are there mourning and lamenting helpless to do anything. And there is only silence from the Father.

The Anointed is smeared. But in the smearing there is good news. He is smeared for us. He is smeared over with all our sin, even made sin for us. In Him there is a greater cleansing than that of Naaman from his leprosy. The smeared Anointed will cry out “It is finished,” the atonement for sin, all sin is completed. He commends His spirit to the Father in peace. The One smeared is now the risen, living, and reigning One.

Today the Scripture stands fulfilled. There is freedom and redemption in the name of Jesus. There is life today in the risen and returning King of kings. There will be life forever with Him in glory. We, brothers and sisters are anointed for life. We were once darkness, but now are light, once no people, but now God’s people, once dead, but now alive. We have been set apart to declare the wonders of the One who has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light. We may be smeared for speaking the truth, but God continues to work through His Word. We fall short and bring dishonor on our Lord. In Him there is forgiveness and restoration. Now is the time of the Lord’s favor, but One day comes the day of Judgment. We have been made new in Christ that more may know of His grace.

Jesus was anointed for good news. He is the good news. We are those anointed to serve Him. In His name. Amen