

THE HOPE JOURNAL

LEARNING TO LOVE, TOGETHER

January 26, 2025



PROCLAIM

being on the hook for good things

by Drew Downs

This week's gospel invites us to consider Jesus's purpose through the lens of Isaiah. In his visit to the synagogue, he reads the prophet's words about being called to proclaim release to captives, sight to the blind, the year of the Lord's favor, and to let the oppressed go free.

Then Jesus says that in their hearing, this scripture has been fulfilled. A challenge which is as much for them as it is for us.

The people then get angry at Jesus, not for attempting to speak for God, because most people don't have a problem with that when they like what they hear, but because he says we are to set prisoners free and they don't want to. Instead, they make excuses about why they shouldn't listen.

We are called to proclaim these things. But we're also called to do them, too. So now we're all on the hook.

AFTER THE EPIPHANY

2025

WHAT'S GOING ON

*"You know we've got to find a way
To bring some loving here today".*

-Marvin Gaye

Disciples, Apostles, and Saints!

Congregational Meeting

This Sunday, we gather for our primary congregational meeting for the year. We often refer to it as *The Annual Meeting* with capital letters and everything (to show how important it is!). This is the time when gather to receive reports, elect leaders, and hear about our plans for 2025.

My goal every year is to develop a sense of anticipation for the meeting. We ought to be excited to share in the Good News of where we are seeing Christ in our neighborhood and what commitments we are making to ensure Christ's love is known in word and deed.

While this is always true, it is also a meeting, however. And for many of us, meetings don't have the best reputation. What with all of the different personalities, all the boring business, and whatnot – I can see why it is rarely the highlight of anyone's year in the church. I don't think it *should* be. But there is something about these meetings that *should* feel like the light of Christ would be known here. As if a person walking into church the first time would say *I want to go where these people are going!* Perhaps this is too tall of an order to ask of a congregation, but I doubt it. It seems right in line with an honest expectation for the congregation. Whether we meet that expectation – that's on us.

Our annual congregational meeting will be this Sunday after the 10:00 service. We plan to start at 11:30 am in the Great Hall.

With love,
Drew

AFTER THE EPIPHANY

2025

FOR SUNDAY

Epiphany 3C

January 26, 2025

Collect

Give us grace, O Lord, to answer readily the call of our Savior Jesus Christ and proclaim to all people the Good News of his salvation, that we and the whole world may perceive the glory of his marvelous works; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

Amen.

Reading

Luke 4:14-21

Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding country. He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone.

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 let the oppressed go free,
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."

AFTER THE EPIPHANY

Reflection

As we move back to the gospel of Luke, we attend Jesus's first act in this gospel. After his baptism, he is drawn into the wilderness by the Holy Spirit to confront Satan with his three temptations to power. This story, which we'll come back to in Lent, offers us a preview of Jesus's relationship to power — which is to say he is not interested in the forms of power that Satan offers him. Power over desire, over people, and over God. This sequence helps prepare us for what is to come.

Now, we see that Jesus does have power already. He is filled with the power of the Holy Spirit. And that power is performing before a crowd gathered in the synagogue in his hometown.

The passage offers us a fascinating juxtaposition between the humanness of Jesus and the divine power flowing through him. We get to see what a sort of *real* power looks like, as long as we remember what it is Jesus came to do, which is articulated afresh here from Isaiah.

The challenge for many of us is that we receive this message like the town does (will, in the next section of the story) — with amazement in the hearting, then anger at what it implies about us, our relationships, and ultimately how we relate to this person named Jesus. For his message appeals to them, the dream of God is attractive to all who hear it, but in the realizing the messenger is the carpenter's son or that the church has lost moral standing in the modern world or that releasing captives and restoring sight and letting the oppressed go free means not only changing our current practices, but our own relationship to wealth, power, and control. And suddenly, were less interested in the day of the Lord's favor being today. Maybe tomorrow. When other people get their act together.

ST. STEPHEN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH
215 N. 7TH ST TERRE HAUTE IN 47807
812.232.5165

STSTEPHENSTH.ORG
