

Holy Textures

Understanding the Bible in its own time and in ours

Luke 4:14-21

*Short, easy to use, thought provoking background commentary for your sermon, bible study lesson, or scripture reflection.
Listed on The Text This Week, www.textweek.com.*

Year C, Season of Epiphany

Third Sunday After Epiphany

Sunday Between January 21 to January 27 Inclusive

Read the passage: [The Message](#) or [The New Revised Standard Version \(NRSV\)](#).

Click [here](#) for an easy to print or email Adobe PDF version of this note.

The context for this passage is Luke 3:22, Jesus' baptism:

and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in the bodily form of a dove. And a voice came from Heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."

Luke then provides 3 forms of evidence for the truth of this wildly outrageous claim of the highest possible honour for this lowest status hillbilly carpenter's son:

1. The genealogy of Jesus, Luke 3:23-38, which ends, "... son of Adam, son of God."
2. The 3 cosmic tests of Jesus' loyalty to God, Luke 4:1-13. "**If** you are the Son of God, ..." (Verses 4:3 and 4:9), and "**If** you will worship me (Satan), ..." (Verse 4:7).
[*Aside.* Similar testing will occur at the end of Jesus' life when the crowds watching his execution on the cross will taunt him, "**If** you are ..." (Luke 23:35, 37, and 39)]
Jesus passes these tests - honourably - not by demonstrating his own power / wisdom / glory, but by quoting from Scripture the power / wisdom / glory of his true Father - God. It is God who has ascribed to Jesus the honour of being a Son. And so, as any honourable, worthy son would do, it is God's wisdom and honour that Jesus defends in rebutting the tests of Satan.
3. Gossip spreads about Jesus and his public reputation grows as people speak well of him, Luke 4:14-21.

Verse 14. Note that the Holy Spirit **descends** on Jesus (Verse 3:22), then **fills** Jesus (Verse 4:1), then fills Jesus with **power** (Verse 4:14).

Holy Textures

Understanding the Bible in its own time and in ours

The baptism of Jesus took place in the Jordan River which in the south of Israel. Jesus returns to his home province of Galilee in the north. Jesus' words and deeds cause people to take favourable notice of him, and gossip begins to spread.

Verse 16. The true test of one's public reputation is what those who knew you before think about you now. Jesus returns to his hometown of Nazareth, "where he had been brought up."

Verse 18 and 19. Remember that Luke has already told us that the Holy Spirit has descended on Jesus, filled him, and filled him with the power of the Holy Spirit. Now, reading from Isaiah 61:1-2, we hear that the Spirit has "**anointed** me."

The passage from Isaiah reflects the themes that we have already heard in the songs sung at the conception and birth of Jesus by Elizabeth (Luke 1:41-45), Mary (Luke 1:46-55), Zechariah (Luke 1:67-79), angels (Luke 2:13-14), Simeon (Luke 2:29-32), and Anna (Luke 2:38).

A passage like this always reminds me of Jonah. When the Spirit of the Lord shows up - run away! Because a God-sized blessing always comes with a God-sized mission:

(the Spirit) has anointed me ... **in order to** ...
bring good news to the poor
(**the** poor - not just one or two, but all the poor)
Release to the captives,
recovery of sight to the blind,
let the oppressed go free,
proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.

Sure God. Easy. Consider it done. (Where's the nearest whale? I'm so outta here.)

Verse 21. So, just in case you've started to relax because you've noticed that this God-sized mission has been given to Jesus and not you, the first thing Jesus says is:

Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.

Yikes. Jesus gets anointed for the mission, but it turns out that it is only in our hearing of it - in our internalizing of it - in our realizing of it - in our living of it - that this God-sized mission will be fulfilled / completed / accomplished.

As we will see in next week's lesson, Luke 4:21-30, Jesus' hometown crowd are both amazed and challenged / insulted by Jesus saying this.

Holy Textures

Understanding the Bible in its own time and in ours

Amazed, perhaps, that a long-held hope is about to be realized.

Insulted, perhaps, by the unstated implication that the reason these long-held hopes had not been fulfilled sooner is that we had not "heard" them in spite of them having been read to us over and over again.

Hmm. What about us? What about our hearing of this scripture? Any hope of it being finally fulfilled in our hearing of it? (Where's that whale when we really need one?)

David Ewart,

www.davidewart.ca

* [Link to Amazon.com Bibliography for Bruce Malina, et. al.](#), Social Science Commentary on ... The Synoptic Gospels; The Gospel of John; The Book of Acts; The Letters of Paul; The Book of Revelation; and others.