

January 27, 2019  
Third Sunday after Epiphany  
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## You've Been Anointed

First impressions are important, right? Meeting the parents of your beloved for the first time. Checking out a new church ("church shopping" as we sometimes call it.) First day at a new job or new school. Our appearance, what we say, and our general vibe all get read in the first moments we interact with something or someone.

Jesus faces a similar situation in the gospel reading today. After he was tempted in the wilderness for 40 days, we see him now in his first public event. It's our first concrete glimpse of what he hopes to accomplish. If there was not enough pressure already, here he is preaching in his hometown, a situation always loaded with baggage. Imagine the tension as Jesus takes the scroll and rolls it to the place he wants. All eyes are on him. There is an anxious silence.

Then Jesus begins to read from the prophet Isaiah: "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." Then he rolls the scroll up and sits down to teach as was customary in worship.

But here's the kicker! His teaching, or "sermon," is only nine words long. **"Today, this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."** Jesus uses this moment, his first sermon, his first impression as a hometown boy, now prophet, to boldly proclaim that the prophecy is fulfilled in him. It's quite a first impression. It may even be a little provocative or presumptuous.

Can you imagine a nine-word sermon today? "Jesus loves me this I know for the Bible..." Oh no, I've already used up my nine words so I can't even finish that line. Some people might love a nine-word sermon; yet many I think want a little bit more. But certainly not more than 12 minutes, right Craig?

My sermon today could be **"You've been anointed for Christ's work in the world."** Done. Now let's sit and enjoy the silence.

No, wait! I might need to flesh this out a little bit more. But seriously, **"You've been anointed for Christ's work in the world."**

Jesus uses his "first impression moment" to lay out his vision; and tells the people gathered, and us, that the prophecy is fulfilled in him. Jesus embodies a spirit-led movement that is first and foremost for the poor, the captives, the blind and the oppressed.

In baptism our mission is joined to the mission of Jesus: to liberate people. To set people free from violence, poverty, fear and stress. To release people from systems and sins that blind them. To care for the earth and release it from the damage we have done.

In today's reading from Corinthians, Paul uses the metaphor of the body as a call to mission. He uses the physical body to make a point. Would an eye say to the hand, I don't need you? No, because the body needs all the different parts. And when one part suffers, all suffer. If one member is honored, all

rejoice. So, each of us has different gifts or callings to celebrate and use for the flourishing of human community.

Some of us have a hunger for justice and work tirelessly as advocates and system changers. Our own anti-racism team here at Holy Trinity is committed to doing anti-racism work and dismantling systemic racism, not only for themselves, but as one part of this body, so we all can break down barriers that divide us. We also seek justice and advocate for our transgender siblings-so that the system that tries to separate us in binary ways and build walls of distrust and hatred, will be broken, and we all can will be valued members of the human community.

Some of us are drawn to beauty and its capacity to transform lives. Members of this body sing in the choir and play musical instruments, that inspire us to sing along and praise God. Others beautify our worship space with floral arrangements, candles, even pumpkins and gourds in the right season, so we can celebrate the blessings of creation.

Some of us are drawn to the truth of things. Scholars and teachers among us help us to grow in faith. And some are truth tellers, calling out the injustices and sin that surround us. Telling the truth about abuse of power and the abuse of people. Telling the truth about climate change and our complicity in it. Telling the truth about the lives of immigrants, refugees, asylum seekers and how we can help, not harm them.

Some of us are inspired by goodness and kindness. These people are naturally drawn to service in a multitude of ways. During the recent government shutdown there was an abundance of people willing to donate meals, gift cards, money and even therapy to the people in our congregation affected by the furlough. Through your generous gifts of time and money we support a variety of services through the Night Ministry providing meals for homeless youth, the Lakeview Pantry providing groceries and clothing to those in need, through the ELCA World Hunger program providing sustainable living resources for people all over the world.

Our mission at Holy Trinity has a bit of all of these: advocating for justice, delighting in God's beauty, being open to questioning, engaging with intention.

We are the body of Christ. Filled with the Holy Spirit, and anointed in baptism, we are called to carry out Jesus' mission.

May the liberating word, fulfilled in our hearing, set us free. May our lives be full of praise and our hearts full of compassion. The living Christ is among us here and now. He liberates us from bondage, and draws us near to the broken hearted, the poor and all those waiting for good news.

Now I don't know if there is going to be a State of the Union Address in the coming days or not, but I do know that today our community gathers at noon for our annual celebration about the state of this body. We'll hear what we've been up to this year, celebrate accomplishments, be informed about how we use our money and about dreams for the coming year. And no doubt we'll be reminded as we gather for delicious food and holy conversations, that **"You've been anointed for Christ's work in the world."**