**Today is the Day**

今天就是這一天

Luke 4: 14-30 2.2.2025

Search through your memory bank, and you will find a moment of beauty—whether recent or from a long time ago. I remember coming home from school in the third grade with a satisfying test paper in hand, walking and chatting with a few good friends. I imagine you’ve all had a moment like that too. In those moments, we see a version of ourselves that we like, where the energy and values that drive our lives are aligned with what we are doing. Everything fits just right, all aspects of life are smooth and flowing, and it feels like life is coherent and in sync.

However, there are also other times when things are not going well or are out of sync. Everything feels off, and no matter what you do, it doesn’t seem to work. I suspect we’ve all had days like that too. Without motivation or passion, you start to wonder if this is really all there is to life. It feels like life is sluggish and out of alignment.

And then there are moments when we look back at things we’ve said or done and ask ourselves, "Where did that come from? Why did I do that? Is that really me?" In those moments, old wounds, fears from the past, voices from childhood, or deeply ingrained survival mechanisms subtly take over us without us even realizing it.

When reflecting on our good times or difficult ones, behind each situation is a question about “Who am I?” and “What is my life like?” The answers we give to these questions today are likely different from the answers we had thirty years ago, ten years ago, or even two years ago.

This is what Jesus is responding to in today’s Gospel. I believe this is always an ongoing matter, even for Jesus. In his conversation with the Syrophoenician woman, the deliverance of the demon-possessed daughter, and in the Garden of Gethsemane, wasn’t he still wrestling with these two questions?

Jesus was baptized and heard a voice: “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.” Then, after forty days in the wilderness, he was tempted and ate nothing. I view these two experiences as images of love and suffering.

Love and suffering are two great teachers in our lives. They have the power to capture our attention, to prompt deeper self-reflection, and to change the course of our lives. More than anything else, they have the ability to shape who we are and what our lives become.

In today’s passage, Jesus returns to Nazareth, the town where he grew up, back to the synagogue where he had worshiped as a child, and to the people who knew him. He picks up and opens the scroll of the prophet Isaiah and reads:

“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 freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.” (Luke 4:18-19)

Jesus began his public ministry by announcing the "release" (aphesis) of captives and the oppressed. In front of the congregation, he declared that the prophecy of Isaiah had been fulfilled, and the year of the Lord's favor had arrived.

There is only one power that can "release" you from prison, and that is the power of forgiveness. Because when you cannot forgive, or find forgiveness, you are essentially in prison.

Think about the energy we waste over sleepless nights filled with guilt or resentment. Consider the effort we spend avoiding certain people because of our anger, or theirs. Think about how many people have changed jobs or even moved far away just to escape the presence of one particular person. When that energy is "released," we find ourselves free, we experience peace in our hearts, we feel joy…

It is precisely this radical power, and the overwhelming energy it releases, that Jesus came to bring into the world.

This power is not limited to individuals. Forgiveness is not just about letting go of the bitterness you feel toward the person who betrayed you or caused you to lose your joy, or the guilt you feel toward a deceased friend you never visited because you didn’t know how sick she was.

Forgiveness also concerns the prisons that whole nations place themselves in, the guilt and paralysis experienced by entire races, cities, or genders. Imagine what it would mean if the feeling of forgiveness could be translated to the entire world. That is what the Kingdom of God means—it's not just about individual forgiveness, but also about societal forgiveness.

This is exactly what Jesus is talking about in Luke chapter 4, when he walks into the synagogue in Nazareth. This is the moment when the Gospel of Luke truly begins. We’ve heard the Christmas story, the baptism of Jesus, and his temptations. Now Luke says, “We are all in prison, and Jesus has come to set us free.”

In Nazareth, Jesus makes five important proclamations: He announces good news to the poor, freedom for the prisoners, recovery of sight for the blind, freedom for the oppressed, and the year of the Lord’s favor. The key point here is that all of these are social dimensions of the power of forgiveness. They are all areas where resentment, cold-heartedness, bitterness, and cruelty have built up and left entire groups of people in prison—whether literally or metaphorically. This is about economic, legal, physical, and relational bondage. Jesus came to set all peoples free.

For us, it may seem unclear, like Jesus is speaking in code, but to his childhood friends in the synagogue in Nazareth, it would have been very clear. The key to understanding this code lies in two chapters from the Old Testament—Leviticus 25 and Deuteronomy 15. Jesus is talking about the Year of Jubilee. The Old Testament law was very realistic about the fact that, despite being God's chosen people, Israel would still take advantage of each other and fall into patterns of social inequality. Inevitably, some people would become landless and vulnerable. That is human nature. You can’t legislate perpetual economic equality. You can give everyone the same amount of money at the beginning of the year, but by the end of the year, through bad luck, cold-blooded exploitation, and sometimes poor judgment, a large group of people will find themselves in poverty. In the ancient world, that often meant slavery.

So the law stipulated that every fifty years, all slaves and debts would be released, and land would be returned to its original owners. This was how Israel was to express its gratitude for being delivered from slavery in Egypt by showing mercy to the poor, the needy, and the enslaved within their own community. When Jesus came to Nazareth and proclaimed “release for the captives, freedom for the oppressed,” everyone knew he was talking about the Jubilee. And when he declared “the year of the Lord’s favor,” it couldn’t have been clearer that he was inaugurating the year of debt forgiveness and the release of slaves.

But everyone knew that the Year of Jubilee had never really been put into practice because Israel had never truly believed that, having escaped slavery, they would ever find themselves in it again. So when Jesus opens the scroll in Nazareth, he’s essentially saying, “Hey, we are back in slavery again, aren’t we? But this time, there really will be a Jubilee, and it starts today. And I am that Jubilee.” Jesus brings bad news, good news, and a challenge. The bad news is: “You are in prison.” The good news is: “I am here to set you free.” The challenge is: “Today.”

Jesus’ baptism and the temptation in the wilderness show that love and suffering were always working in his life. Is Jesus the only Anointed One to fulfill the Scriptures? But what about you and me? Aren’t we also called to do the same?

Jesus said, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” Indeed, February 2, 2025, *today* is that day. Every day is today.

**Today, the Spirit of the Lord is here.**  
Today is the day of anointing.  
Today is the day to bring good news to the poor.  
Today is the day to announce the release of captives and the recovery of sight to the blind.  
Today is the day to set the oppressed free.  
Today is the day to declare 2025 as the Year of the Lord's favor.

Jesus speaks of today. This day is the fulfilled day. Therefore, we can also say:  
Today is the day of love.  
Today is the day to speak the truth.  
Today is the day of forgiveness.  
Today is the day to end racism.  
Today is the day to welcome immigrants.  
Today is the day of forgiveness.  
Today is that day.

Jesus is speaking to those who have stopped believing in the power of forgiveness, to those who believe they will forever carry their debts, to those who know that God is all-powerful but don't believe that power will bring change, to those who feel the Year of Jubilee will never come. Here is what He says:

If you are poor, if you carry heavy debts with no stable source of income, then you are bound by chains. I have come to set you free.

If you are in prison, if you are trapped in a narrow space and cannot express yourself, grow, play, or dance, if you have done something wrong and will forever regret it, then you are bound by chains. I have come to set you free.

If you are imprisoned in your own body, if your limbs, organs, or senses no longer function properly, if your mind is beset by panic, anxiety, or depression, then you are bound by chains. I have come to set you free.

If you are dominated by the oppressive power of others, if your home is a place of hidden violence and suffocating secrets, if your workplace is a place of exploitation and fear, if your society is one in which you cannot show your true face, if your nation is controlled by greed and apathy, then you are bound by chains. I have come to set you free.

If you are struggling with guilt, if you long for an honest life but feel crippled by shame and fear, if you spend every day worrying about being found out, then you are bound by chains. I have come to set you free.

What Jesus offers is a personal, spiritual, social, political, psychological, and physical plan beyond our limited imaginations. It is the greatest power in the universe, and if this power were fully unleashed, the world would almost be a completely different place. This is the forgiveness of sins.

This is the meaning of the Year of Jubilee, the meaning of transformation, and the meaning of salvation. It is the energy released when you are reconciled with God. It is the social dynamism sparked when we reconcile with one another.

Happy New Year! This is the Year of the Lord’s favor.  
Here’s the bad news: Jesus says you are poor, imprisoned, and oppressed.  
Here’s the good news: Jesus wants to set you free.  
May we open our lives to receive the most powerful force in the world. He wants to make this your Year of Jubilee.  
Here’s the challenge: Will you let Him do it today?