

HELPING LIKE JESUS

Hillsboro Presbyterian Church

January 3, 2010

Pastor Michael McCall

Luke 4:18-19 (14-21) “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me (to heal the brokenhearted,) to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight to the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.”

Christians – or “Christ-ones” – seek to be like Christ. This is what we consider in this series...ways we are to be like Jesus. The background of our text is that Jesus began his public ministry at age 30, when after his baptism, Jesus went into the wilderness where God's adversary sought to tempt him. Then Jesus preached, healed, did miracles, taught, ministered in Galilee...the region of Israel Jesus was from...about the same size (area and people) as the greater Portland area. After a year of great success, Jesus returned to his hometown, Nazareth. This was a big event. Local Boy Makes Good. As part of his homecoming, Jesus goes to the synagogue he grew up going to.

“Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside. He taught in their synagogues, and everybody praised him.” Jesus was immensely popular. **“He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue as was his custom.”** Jesus went to church weekly...do you?

At the synagogue, Jesus was the guest speaker. The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Jesus specifically found **Isaiah 61:1-2**...a 700 year old prophecy about Messiah. Jesus unrolls the scroll to that specific spot and to his hometown crowd he reads what the Messiah is coming to do (top of page). **“Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down.”** Why? Because in those days the teachers sat down and everybody in worship stood... a very good idea! However if I sat when I taught and you stood, my sermons would be longer and you would be tired!

Jesus rolls up the scroll and sits down. **“The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him, and Jesus began by saying to them, ‘Today, this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.’** High drama of this moment. Jesus reads a famous passage about the coming of Messiah - and says “I am he!” Imagine the shock...and the comments: “I knew Jesus was doing all these things, but I grew up with this guy...Mary and Joseph's kid...Nazareth High, Class of 18.” Now Jesus returns after a year on the missionfield and says, “The time is now. These things are occurring. I am the One this prophecy is about.” What we like to do is announce what we're going to do. Jesus did the opposite. He went out and did these things for a year and came back and said, “This is why I'm doing it.” You've heard the phrase: “practice what you preach”? Jesus preached what he was practicing. Jesus was already doing these five things: preach the good news to the poor, heal the brokenhearted, proclaim freedom to the prisoners, recovery of sight to the blind, and release of the oppressed. To help others like Jesus, we (have been anointed) and should be about these 5 things.

First – Jesus came to preach good news to the poor...the Have Nots. Those with material poverty lack money. Half the world is very poor...over 3 billion people live on less than \$2 a day. In Rwanda, they grow coffee in Rwanda and sell it to Starbucks. The average farmer makes 68 cents a day...not enough to buy a cup of coffee. There is something wrong with that. Jesus cares about the poor and we should too. There are other kinds of poverty as well. Moral poverty is lack of integrity... lack of the knowledge of right and wrong. Many people have no desire to do the good or the right thing, just what is easiest and best for them. Spiritual poverty is lack of God and things of God. Most people in the world don't know the good news that God made them and loves them. They don't know that Christ came to die for their sins so that they could be alive to God now and forever.

Second - Jesus came to heal the brokenhearted...those Let Down. In Psalm 69:20 David says **“Insults have broken my heart.”** “Broken heart” comes from the Bible. Medically, there is a Broken Heart Syndrome of people who have gone through a traumatic event... and their brain releases chemicals to deal with that event...but those chemicals actually weaken the tissue of the heart. Many things cause broken hearts...disappointment, rejection, and resentment...just to name a few. **“God is close to the brokenhearted and saves those crushed in spirit”** (Psalm 34:18).

Third - Jesus came to proclaim freedom for the prisoners... the Locked Up...people who are imprisoned in some way. HPC has been supporting the prison ministry of a parishioner for many years. Jesus said we're to care about the 2½ million Americans are behind bars...and millions more around the world. But there are other kinds of prisons. Addictions and compulsions imprison us. People feel trapped. Secrets can imprison us...which is why we are to confess our sin to another. Ignorance or lack of education can imprison people. Half of the world cannot read or write...and in poverty...this why the Bible talks about the importance of education. Jesus was a teacher. The first school in almost every country of the world was started by Christian missionaries. The #1 thing that imprisons people is fear. **“The truth will set you free”** (John 8:32) said **“the truth”** (John 14:6).

Fourth - Jesus came to recover the sight of the blind...the Shut Out. When you're blind you're shut out of much of life...you are always running into walls. Over 50 million people in the world who are physically blind right now. Jesus cared about people who had lost their sight. There is also: night blindness; color blindness; motion blindness. There're many kinds of blindness physically. But there are other kinds of blindness. Relational blindness is when you don't see your self-defeating behavior and why every time you get in a relationship it ends. Spiritual blindness is when we close our eyes to the goodness of God in our lives. Jesus came to open our eyes.

Fifth - Jesus came to release the oppressed...the Kicked Around. They are put down, played, and taken advantage of. Political oppression in this world is real. There are over 35 million people living in refugee camps. 27 million people living as slaves. It is outlawed in America but not around the world. There are more slaves right now in the world than there were during the Civil War. The #1 cause of slavery is the sex trade...another kind of oppression. Then there is cultural oppression... especially against women in this world. Domestic violence, rape, sexual violence and gender violence is increasing in almost every nation globally. It's going up, not down. You think God cares about that? Absolutely! Jesus says I came for the oppressed. Religious oppression has decimated the number of Christians in Turkey and throughout Africa. Then there is spiritual oppression...aka depression...when people want to give up on life itself. Jesus came for and comes to the oppressed.

These 5 ways Jesus helps...are summarized: **“to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.”** May 2010 be a year that many discover the Lord's favor because Christ's people are Helping Like Jesus.