

Epiphany 3 1/24/16
Luke 4:16-30 C

THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME...TO PROCLAIM THE YEAR OF THE LORD'S FAVOR.

On the 10th day, of the 7th month, in the 50th year, a trumpet blast marked the beginning of the year of Jubilee, the year of the Lord's favor.

When Israel entered the land of Canaan, God made provisions for each tribe and family. God commanded His tenants to care for His land with a period of Sabbath rest every 7th year. For six years, they could plant and harvest, but the 7th year was to be a year of Sabbath rest for God's land. And that year following the 7th – 7th year was to be a most wondrous year, "The Year of Jubilee," "The Year of the Lord's Favor." In the year of Jubilee, every debt was to be erased, every slave was to be set free, every parcel of land was returned to its original owner, for, as God says in the 25th chapter of Leviticus, "the land is mine...for you are strangers and sojourners with me." In the year of Jubilee, no one could hold anything in terms of debt against another person. The year of Jubilee was a special year to "proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants." In essence, the year of Jubilee was a fresh start, a new beginning.

I could guess what you're thinking about right now. "Thanks for the history lesson, Pastor. But, we're not Israel. We don't need a Year of Jubilee."

Oh, really? You are not captive to sin and its wages of death? You don't need liberty and freedom from sin and its curse? Quite the contrary, your life is a living witness to the truth of Scripture, "The soul who sins shall die." Every ache, every pain, every tear, every heartache, every sorrow, every terrorist attack, every trip to the doctor's office, every tiff between

husband and wife, every time a child breaks a parent's heart, every time you use your tongue to speak evil of your neighbor, every time you covet and are jealous of your neighbor, every time your grumble against God and feel sorry for yourself, you are reminded that your life is cursed by sin.

You know what else sin does to us? It binds our conscience; it enslaves without mercy the soul that it accuses.

The ancient Greeks knew all about the power of the guilt-ridden conscience to rob a soul of peace and joy and they referred to it as the "cranes of Ibycus".

The pious poet Ibycus was on his way to the games in Corinth when he was attacked by two robbers, Timotheus and another unnamed man, who beat him to death and took his possessions. As he lay dying, Ibycus saw some cranes flying overhead and, since there were no human witnesses to the crime that had been inflicted upon him, he appealed to the cranes to avenge his death and bring the criminals to justice.

The next day, satisfied that they would escape detection, the robbers went to the stadium to watch the games. Suddenly, without warning, a flock of cranes flew overhead and, when one of the robbers saw them, he cried out in fear, "Look! Look, Timotheus! The cranes! The cranes of Ibycus!" The turmoil led to the arrest and ultimately the execution of the two criminals for the death of Ibycus.

My Fellow Redeemed in Christ Jesus, do the cranes of Ibycus ever fly over your head? You know the torment of Satan. He puts before the weakness of your flesh the pleasure and treasure of sin, as something you can't live without, something that your life will have no joy without. And besides, go ahead, everybody else is doing it. Then, when you have succumbed to its forbidden fruit, Satan torments and accuses and you can

almost see those cranes of Ibycus flying over your head and shame and disgrace fill your conscience, so you know no peace, no joy.

Maybe about now, you are thinking, “Jees, Pastor, maybe this Year of Jubilee, this year of the Lord’s favor, is something we should celebrate.” No, we don’t have to celebrate it. And, no we don’t need to, for the same reason that we do not celebrate the Passover, the Feast of Tabernacles, or the Day of Atonement. “These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ,” the Bible teaches us. (Col 2:17).

Always we must remember that the Old Testament looks forward to the cross. God established the year of Jubilee as a sign of the freedom, the liberty, that the Messiah would bring His people. This is why the Messiah, when He has come to God’s people, stands in the synagogue to “proclaim the year of Lord’s favor.”

The Bible teaches us that we are “prisoners,” held captive by the guilt and shame, the death and damnation that sin has cast upon us. But, Epiphany. Jesus has appeared to us. He has come to us to give us forgiveness of our sins and freedom from the curse and the guilt of sin.

Jesus brings the year of the Lord’s favor because He takes on human flesh and blood to be our kinsman and redeemer. When we were captive to sin, death, and the power of the devil, Jesus redeemed, that is, He bought us back

from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil; not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death, that I may be His own.”

Remember, in the Year of Jubilee, all debts were cancelled. Be of Good Cheer: God has cancelled your debt of sin because Jesus paid for it all.

In the washing of water in the Word, your baptism, Jesus made you're his own child. He came to you poor and blind in sin, captive to sin and death and the devil, oppressed by the world, the lies of the devil, and your own conscience, to proclaim to you the Good News that He died and rose for you; you are free from death and hell; the grave cannot hold you in fear; and, the world, the devil, and your own conscience can torment you no more, for all of your sin, and its curse, and its shame, and its condemnation are all gone in His blood. Because you are Jesus' very own child, every year is the year of Jubilee, every year is the year of the Lord's favor. Every year is the year of freedom and liberty from the curse and condemnation, the guilt and shame of sin. Every year, indeed every day, in Christ represents a fresh start, a new beginning.

And that is good news for us because we still, this day as strangers in a fallen world, bear the cross and that cross can be heavy. We are daily tempted to mold ourselves to the will and the way of this fallen world, and when we don't mold ourselves to its will and ways, the world is quick to condemn us; the devil remembers well our sins and still accuses us; and our own conscience, our own conscience feels all too often those cranes flying over us.

“And He came to Nazareth...And as was His custom, He went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and 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...to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.”

Hear the word and the promise of God: "As a called and ordained servant of the Word I therefore forgive you all your sins in the name of the

Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” “Take, eat; this is the true body of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ given into death for your sins. Take, drink; this is the true blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, shed for you for the forgiveness of your sins.”

These are the words that make the forgiveness Christ won upon the cross for the forgiveness for the sins of all the world, your very own forgiveness, your freedom and your release from your sins and guilt and shame. This, My Christian Friends, is God's favor. Today, the Scriptures are fulfilled in your hearing. This is why we, “with angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven laud and magnify” the glorious name of God and forever praise Him.

The good news of the Christian faith is that the curse and guilt of sin can no longer hold us prisoner, because Christ Jesus has freed us and released from its curse and condemnation.