Jesus’ Mission on Earth (and Ours)

Read Luke 4:14-21

Key verse: “He began to explain to them, ‘Today, this scripture has been fulfilled just as you heard it’” (Luke 4:21).

Today as I read this familiar text, I was struck by how vast and inclusive is the mission of Jesus and of his Body, the Church. Too often, we have reduced the gospel by reducing the mission of Jesus.

One group has thought that the mission is only about evangelism. Another group has acted as if the mission is only about social justice. One group has stressed spiritual transformation only, while others have focused exclusively on changing unjust political and economic systems. Could it be that the mission of Jesus is much larger than we have often imagined?

Here, according to Jesus, is his mission statement (and ours): “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me. He has sent me to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the prisoners and recovery of sight to the blind, to liberate the oppressed, and to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor” (Luke 2:21).

What if “good news to the poor” includes both spiritual and physical poverty?

What if “release to the prisoners” includes both those imprisoned by sin and those imprisoned by unjust political and economic systems?

What if “recovery of sight to the blind” includes both spiritual and physical blindness?

What if liberating “the oppressed” includes those oppressed by the devil and those oppressed by social injustice? (Sometimes, by the way, liberating people from spiritual oppression can lead to their liberation from the oppression of social injustice: “There’s nothing more radical, nothing more revolutionary, nothing more subversive against injustice and oppression than the Bible,” said Bishop Desmond Tutu. “If you want people subjugated, the last thing you place in their hands is a Bible.”)

If the mission of Christ really is this vast and inclusive, it means that the Body of Christ must be concerned with all of these areas. It means that
feeding people’s stomachs and feeding their souls are both vitally important! It means that none of us can do it all but each of us must do something. And it means that we shall need a power beyond our own to accomplish so vast a mission.

Here’s the good news: Jesus planned for it to work just that way!

“I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father” (John 14:12).

What could Jesus have meant by these words? First, Jesus knew that as powerful as his brief, earthly ministry was, the global Body of Christ could do far more. Secondly, just as Jesus’ ministry was empowered by the Holy Spirit, so can the ministry of every believer be empowered by the same Holy Spirit. “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you” (Acts 1:8).

What are your spiritual gifts? What is your calling? How will you do your part to fulfill the mission of Christ in the world? In what ways will you and your church join hands with the wider Body of Christ to fulfill the mission of Christ?

None of us can do it all, but each of us can do something to fulfill the mission of Christ in our world!

“God has created me to do Him some definite service,” wrote John Henry Newman. “He has committed some work to me which He has not committed to another. I have my mission. Therefore I will trust Him. Whatever, wherever I am, I can never by thrown away. If I am in sickness, my sickness may serve Him; in perplexity, my perplexity may serve Him; if I am in sorrow, my sorrow may serve Him. My sickness, or perplexity, or sorrow may be necessary causes of some greater end, which is quite beyond us. He does nothing in vain.”

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