

Today is our first attempt at an on-line interactive worship experience at Allison Creek. We are experimenting. What happens today may very well be the Orville and Wilbur Wright of worship services. Orville and Wilbur, as you may know, were the bike mechanics from Ohio who had an idea that they could build a contraption that would fly. They built their contraption in Ohio and then shipped it to the Outer Banks of North Carolina.

With their ingenuity, technical skill, and the right environment, they set us on the course toward airplane travel. Of course, the people stuck in the Charlotte airport over the past 2 days are probably not real thankful for Orville and Wilbur right now. So my hope and prayer is that today is similar to Orville and Wilbur's first flights at Kitty Hawk.

My fear is that today is the invention of New Coke. Many of us in my generation remember the catastrophe of that Coke experiment 30 years ago to change the flavor of Coke. Funny thing. When I visited the World of Coke in Atlanta a couple of years ago I don't remember anything in that museum dedicated to the invention of New Coke. Anyone who does not know what I am talking about let me explain.

In 1985 Coke moved into second place behind Pepsi in popularity. So the leadership at Coke decided to change the formula of the drink. Their decision was a disaster which led them to eventually bring back the old Coke formula. First as Coke Classic and now just as Coke.

Sometimes experiments lead to great things. Sometimes they flop. Sometimes they inspire variations to the original idea. So today we are dealing with snow and ice that has led to the cancellation of lots of worship services up and down the East Coast. We at Allison Creek are going to be open to how the snow and ice may lead us to think differently.

In fact, I know of at least 2 churches that are doing what we are doing today because they have been inspired by us. We may be starting something today.

Why are we experimenting today? Because as a church we are called to offer faithful worship, quality Christian Education, Relationship building, and opportunities to serve. Nowhere does Jesus say we are obligated to offer these opportunities inside this building only. Worship can be offered in a building and all over the internet. Christian Education can be offered in a building and all over the internet.

Relationships and opportunities to serve can be offered in a building and all over the internet. We are not called to attract people to an institution but to invite people into a deeper relationship with God. Our ministry is here and also out there. So let's get to the text before us from Luke.

Luke begins his gospel by telling us stories about the birth of Jesus. Then he tells us the story about the baptism of Jesus. Then Luke gives us a genealogy of Jesus. The genealogy that Luke gives traces Jesus through his father Joseph to David and then to Abraham. Luke actually traces Jesus all the way back to Adam.

Luke is not interested in the origins of humanity. Luke is interested in explaining who Jesus is to his audience by connecting him to the Old Testament characters of David, Abraham, and Adam.

Luke then gives us the story of Jesus being tempted in the desert by the devil and then we get to the story that we are going to be reading. In this text Jesus is going to be reading a scroll. A couple of pieces of information about Jesus reading the scroll. First of all, Jesus is introduced as a teacher. He has been teaching in several synagogues around Galilee.

But now he arrives in Nazareth which is his home town. So in this synagogue would be his people, his family. These are probably his aunts and uncles, cousins, other family members and friends who know him as the son of Joseph. These people know him personally.

As we read this text there are a couple of observations I invite you to pay attention to. The first observation is where Luke places this story in his gospel which is a different place from the other gospel writers. Even though the story we are about to read is found in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, only Luke places it at the beginning of his account while the others place it at the end of their account of the life of Jesus. Why is that? Be asking yourself this question. Why does Luke put this story early in Jesus' ministry?

The second observation in this text that I invite you to notice is the Old Testament text that Luke records Jesus quoting. It is the text you were also invited to read. Pay attention to the Old Testament text because Luke or Jesus is not going to quote it accurately. There is an interesting omission in what Luke records Jesus saying.

Read Luke 4:14-21

Luke places this story early in Jesus' ministry and many people think that he did this so that this Isaiah text becomes Jesus' mission statement. That these words guided his life and ministry. But there is something interesting when Luke quotes Jesus speaking these words. A part of the Old Testament scripture is left out.

So did you notice what part of the Isaiah passage was omitted? Take a look at the two passages. Isaiah 61:1-4 and Luke 4:14-21. What is left out in Jesus' words that was in Isaiah?

The phrase "the day of vengeance of our God" is missing in what Jesus is quoted by Luke as saying. Interesting. Was this simply an omission? Does Luke have a reason in leaving this out? Did Jesus leave this out? We obviously don't have an answer except to say that vengeance of God does not seem to be important to Luke or Jesus. The vengeance of God is not included in what Jesus says.

So what does Luke include that Jesus says. Luke includes these words that Jesus quotes:

“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.

He has sent me to provide recovery of sight to the blind.

He has sent me to let the oppressed go free.

He has sent me to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

So this is where you come in to finish the sermon. This is Jesus’ mission statement, according to Luke, about what he came to earth to do. If we are followers of Jesus and we are called to live our lives in obedience to the ways of Christ, how then, do we live out these callings? How do we live out Jesus’ mission statement?

You finish the sermon: How do we:

Bring good news to the poor?

Proclaim release to the captives?

Provide recovery of sight to the blind?

To let the oppressed go free?

Proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor?

You are invited to reply on Facebook with your answers or respond to the email.

The next step is to follow Jesus and live out some of the ideas we have just generated.
AMEN.

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-Given: January 2, 2016 in Allison Creek Presbyterian and Facebook