

“Christ’s mission is now yours” Luke 4:14-21

And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and a report about him went out through all the surrounding country. And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all. And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. 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, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.” And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. And he began to say to them, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”

How would you answer if someone asked you what is the Bible about? Or what is the Christianity about? Of course, there are many ways to answer this question. But there is one particular answer, which cuts to the heart of the matter – the Bible and the Christianity is about God’s mission.

Or we can say it is about God, who is on mission. We can see it from the first pages of the Bible. Since the day when our first parents Adam and Eve rejected their creaturely nature and wanted to become like gods themselves, the Triune God has been on His mission to restore the wonderful goodness of His creation.

As soon as Adam and Eve turn away from their Creator, the Son of God Himself came looking for them: “Adam, where are you?” This is when God’s mission begun, when the Creator came looking for His lost creatures.

This is when the Son of God promised that He will restore what sin had broken, even if it costs Him His own life. Already then He knew that He will sacrifice His life for us. Already then He knew you, and He knew that He will call you to be with Him in His Kingdom.

God continued His mission speaking to His rebellious creatures as we can read it in the books of the Old Testament. He used chosen people as His spokesmen to deliver His message to us, to remind us about His promises of salvation.

Many centuries and millennia passed by, and God never stopped speaking to us, He never stopped our conversation, He has been on His mission since the beginning. Seven centuries before Jesus Christ was born, God spoke through Isaiah the prophet.

The Almighty God foretold that He Himself will come to fulfill His promise given to Adam, that He will live among His little creatures, created in His image and

likeness and will bring them the Good News of forgiveness and eternal life. These are the words which we heard in our today's reading.

The words from Isaiah the prophet. **“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news ...”**God was on His mission in Jesus. The words spoken through Isaiah the prophet had come alive. Jesus from Nazareth, conceived by the Holy Spirit, was anointed by the Holy Spirit.

As Jesus begun to make known His mission publicly, the Spirit descended on Him – the Spirit of the Lord is upon me – and the Father spoke from the heaven: “This is my beloved Son, listen to Him!” You, listen to Him!

Now **“Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee... and He taught in their synagogues... and he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was His custom, He went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and He stood up to read.**

It is not the main point here, but it is still important for us to notice. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Lord of the Sabbath went to the synagogue, to the service on the Sabbath day, as was His custom.

He was the Word of God, He was the Creator of the Sabbath, and still He kept the Sabbath day holy, that was His custom on the seventh to be where God has commanded us to be, to hear His word, to receive His Spirit, to be together with fellow saints and to support one another in our sacred calling.

If it was important for Jesus, if Jesus kept the Sabbath regularly, how much greater is our need to be in God's presence when He invites us and commands us to be with Him. As often as He comes to us.

And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him [Jesus]. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written, “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 liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.”

What exactly was God's mission that Jesus came to fulfill? To proclaim good news to the poor, liberty to the captives, recovering of sight to the blind, liberty to those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. What does this mean?

To proclaim good news to the poor. For those poor in spirit. For those who suffer seeing and experiencing the corruption of this world and who long for God's salvations and His presence, who are conscious of their sins and desire forgiveness.

But also for the poor economically. So often poverty is not a choice, but a result of injustice and oppression. Christ came to bring justice and peace, protection and security. This is what Jesus began, this is what we are sent to continue; to restore lives and wellbeing for all in need. Good news...

Liberty to the captives. The captives of sins. To those whose lives are destroyed by sin. Who are enslaved to sexual sins, to pornography, and sexual promiscuity. To those who are slaves of addictions, be it alcohol or drugs, or gambling, or some compulsive thoughts or behaviors. Liberty...

Recovering of sight to the blind. So that we don't live in darkness of our self-centered sinfulness, but can see the light that comes from God's Word. So that we can see things as they are; our sin and our need for Savior, so that we can learn the truth about God's love and salvation that He has prepared for all people. Sight...

Liberty to those who are oppressed. Those who are oppressed by injustice. And those who are oppressed by Satan, and occult powers. Those, who are haunted by loss of a child, or by abortions done long ago, by unfaithfulness, yours or someone else, by betrayal from the closest, by abuse, by violence, by failures to be a good spouse or parent, by inability to live up to expectation of others or your own, by shame and guilt. Liberty...

These are the good news that Jesus knows and understands your problems and temptations, all of them. He has experience your worst nightmares and He can relate to whatever struggles you are going through. He is here for you, and He wants to have you in His Kingdom.

To proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. What was that? In the Old Testament God cared for justice and wellbeing of all. He had commanded that every 50th year should be the year of Lord's favor. That is, on that year all the debts were to be forgiven and all slaves set free.

That was to be a fresh start for everyone. God's gift, a new life, and new hopes given by the Lord. In these words Jesus summarizes His mission. Forgiveness and freedom and eternal wellbeing for all.

And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. And he began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

This is something really profound. Jesus read these words. He rolled up the scroll and sat down. The eyes of all were fixed on Him. ... "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." Or, we could say, as you listen to these words.

The same is true now. These words, Jesus promises are being fulfilled as you hear your pastor speaking to you. All people were looking at Jesus... trying to see something unusual with their eyes. With their eyes!

But the fulfillment comes through ears. Through hearing. God is God who speaks. He is God who does everything by His words. As He speaks things happen. They may not be seen by our eyes, but they happen as we listen to the words of our God.

What Jesus said then and what He continually says today through your pastors comes to fulfillment as God's message is spoken and you hear it. All the people looked at Jesus, but they didn't see anything extraordinary. Just a carpenter.

And you don't see anything extraordinary, just a pastor, imperfect and fallen human being, speaking in your own language, with his Latvian accent. You can't see God's works with your eyes. You can only see them with your ears.

As your pastor speaks and as you listen, God is in His mission, He delivers what He has promised. It is the Triune God Himself, who demands and commands you to live according His will, and who convicts you of your sins.

And it is the Triune God Himself who forgives and liberates, who opens your eyes, sets you free, who heals your wounds and restores your brokenness, who gives you eternal life. We can't see it with our eyes, we can only see it with our ears.

In the Lord's Supper, you don't see the Christ's body and blood; with your eyes you can see only bread and wine. But with your ears you can see what God is doing here. With your ears you can see that in the Supper of your Lord, you indeed eat His forgiveness, and you drink eternal life.

You are fed with the Holy Spirit, and the Triune God covers you in His holiness. It is the work and the gift of the Holy Spirit, if you can see God's reality. Blessed you are, if the Holy Spirit has given you spiritual sight.

Now, the last thing. Aren't you curious how does Jesus carry on His mission today? You may not like the answer. But it is as it is. He does it through you. Yes, He does it through His body, the Church, through all Christians.

Remember, we discussed it a few weeks ago, that the same Spirit which was given to Jesus to carry on God's mission, on the Pentecost was given to the Church. Now you have the same Spirit so that you could continue the same mission.

You like it or not, but you are on God's mission. This is how He does it, through us. Through all of us. We are here to proclaim the Good News, to set people free, to open their eyes, to work for justice and so on.

All of these are your responsibilities, this is what your God and Savior expects from you. It is not optional. It is not something that only pastors are to do. Not at

all. As Jesus has given you His Spirit, you are now on Jesus' mission for all people in your live. You have to be Jesus for them.

Let this thought sink in. It is not your pastor's idea. If it was, you could ignore it. It is what your God sends you to do. Remember Jesus words: "Everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven." (Mt 10:32-33)

Yes, but what can we do? Practically. Each of us. We have different gifts, different strengths and different weaknesses. But there is something common. We all know other people. We all know someone who needs to hear the Good News.

We all know someone who needs forgiveness and restoration, who needs justice and security, who needs freedom and peace, who needs love and who needs their eyes to be open. What can we do?

Let's approach God's mission one person a time. Let's do this. Pray and think about one person in your live, in your family, among your friends or neighbors who needs to hear the Good News, and to whom you could possible reach out.

Jesus was ready to suffer and die, so that we can be saved. What are we ready to do, so that more people could be brought into God's Kingdom? What are we ready to do? I know these are heave words, but we need to think them through.

I invite you to think about it seriously. Try to choose this one person, or may be one family. Pray for God's wisdom and opportunities to approach to them. Talk to your pastor, I'll be happy to help with all that I have. Discuss the situation with other brothers or sisters in Christ. Pray, pray, pray...

One person. Just one person a time. But what impact it may have. Remember, the Bible is about God's mission, being a Christian is about participation in God's mission. Jesus Christ has already saved you, now He makes you His partner in His mission. Rejoice, for that is a great honor, and it is a great responsibility. Through you someone else can meet Christ Jesus and inherit God's Kingdom.

And now, let's feast with the Lord, let us eat His forgiveness and let's drink eternal life, so that we are filled with the His Spirit and ready to go on His mission.

Amen.