

Luke 4:16-21 (The Message)

16-21 He (Jesus) came to Nazareth where he had been reared. As he always did on the Sabbath, he went to the meeting place. When he stood up to read, he was handed the scroll of the prophet Isaiah. Unrolling the scroll, he found the place where it was written,

God's Spirit is on me; he's chosen me to preach the Message of good news to the poor, Sent me to announce pardon to prisoners and recovery of sight to the blind, To set the burdened and battered free, to announce, "This is God's year to act!"

He rolled up the scroll, handed it back to the assistant, and sat down. Every eye in the place was on him, intent. Then he started in, "You've just heard Scripture make history. It came true just now in this place."

Llegó a Nazaret, donde se había criado, y según su costumbre, entró en la sinagoga el día de reposo, y se levantó a leer. ¹⁷ Le dieron el libro del profeta Isaías, y abriendo el libro, halló el lugar donde estaba escrito: ¹⁸ EL ESPÍRITU DEL SEÑOR ESTÁ SOBRE MÍ, PORQUE ME HA UNGIDO PARA ANUNCIAR EL EVANGELIO A LOS POBRES. ME HA ENVIADO PARA PROCLAMAR LIBERTAD A LOS CAUTIVOS, Y LA RECUPERACIÓN DE LA VISTA A LOS CIEGOS; PARA PONER EN LIBERTAD A LOS OPRIMIDOS; ¹⁹ PARA PROCLAMAR EL AÑO FAVORABLE DEL SEÑOR. ²⁰ Cerrando el libro, lo devolvió al asistente y se sentó; y los ojos de todos en la sinagoga estaban fijos en Él. ²¹ Y comenzó a decirles: Hoy se ha cumplido esta Escritura que habéis oído. (Luke 4:16-21 LBA)

SUMMARY

Jesus begins his ministry by announcing that he is called to liberate the oppressed: the economically, physically, spiritually, and socially oppressed. This is scandalous. He upsets assumptions, comforts and norms – in his pronouncement, through his ministry and even in his death and resurrection.

We are the poor, we are the captives and prisoners, we are the blind, we are the burdened and battered for whom Jesus was raised, rises and will be raised in and through us – if we are willing to follow the Rule Breaking, Love Making, Rabble Rousing ***Scandalous Jesus!***

Scan- dal-ous: Adjective /'skandl-əs/

Causing general public outrage by a perceived offense against morality or law, e.g., a series of scandalous liaisons Or maybe – The life, ministry and mission of Jesus?

Look, if there is a scandal in the church – it is that we have forgotten our purpose – as individuals, as a community, as children of the living God, as a body – as THE BODY of Christ. Instead we have been conditioned by a tradition which lulls us into believing that worshipping status, comfort, tradition, doctrine, dogma and ourselves are somehow pious and good and right.

At one extreme is the tradition of damnation, hell fire and brim stone command our attention; get us to open our wallets; and to come to church every Sunday – this I can't deny – however this is a religion of coercion and manipulation.

And at the other are traditions where we talk about love, deny suffering, avoid conflict and sing love songs to “MY Jesus” and leave feeling really really really good about myself and my relationship and my justification and my sanctification and my salvation and my, my, my oh my...

And so as an MCC-clergy candidate in seminary I so hungered for legitimacy and acceptance from my professors and peers – and I so worried about being deemed heretical or illegitimate that I would try to temper the scandal of this amazing boundary defying movement by showing, mimicking and even saying things like... “we are just like every other mainline church – only smaller.” – We're not and I pray we never will be like every other mainline church!

And so a youth who represented a very large community organization resigned this week from LAC because though he joined in order to give youth a voice, he found that his enthusiasm was being contained and controlled by the executives at the large community organization because they – “didn't want us ruffling feathers.”

A revised version of the NIV translation of the bible is out this week and controversy¹ surrounds it as many are rejecting it because there are place where the translators have been intentionally inclusive so the new translation more accurately reads “everyone” when we the writer meant “everyone” but used “man” or “men” as was the convention of the day. The issue is theological and sad reality is that people are upset because in the new translation women and children might actually believe that they have a place at the table and in the leadership circle of

¹ <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1367570/New-Bible-translation-causes-controversy-addition-women-gender-neutral-language.html>

the local and universal church! Look it ancient times the texts read “man” and “men” even when they meant “everyone” because women and children did not count... they were pushed to the margins and left out of the stories passed down through the generations. To preserve exclusive language is to preserve male-privilege and male-power and societal injustice. The very kinds of injustices Jesus himself was seen over and over again speaking against and putting his life on the line to defy! If we mean EVERYONE let’s say and sing EVERYONE and let the inherited prejudice and exclusivity die already!

And if you think – “it doesn’t matter” – or “but I like the old language” understand that such an ethos permeates every aspect of our lives and we unintentionally begin policing each other at the earliest of ages. In the Saturday Trib² at the end of the summer a mother writes how she was so proud of her 5 year old boy... “My boy loves PINK” she lamented and last year when we went to the store to buy him a backpack he instantly and unequivocally wanted the pink one – the brighter than the sun Barbie Pink one. “What was I to do?” I wrestled it from him, explained that pink is for girls and encourage – well forced him to pick another. “This year as we readied for our back to school shopping trip, I was filled with anxiety” she say. “I love my son and I really want to support him, but I just don’t want him to endure the pain of walking around with a pink backpack and all the teachers wondering what kind of mother would allow a little boy to do that.” And so “this year” she continues “I was so happy, we got to the display with all the backpacks and I could see his little eyes gravitating on the Barbie pink ones. His little hands even seemed to begin to reach for it – but then shouted – This one – THIS ONE IS YUCKY. Its not for me, its for GIRLS! He grabbed the GI Joe camo pack and we went home smiling.”

And where is Christ in any of this or that? The body is scarred into passivity or lulled quietly in a peaceful coma and with every subsequent generation we intentionally and unintentionally police ourselves, our children, our communities and others into following the same-ole’, same-ole’ scripts of man-made self-ingratiating, individualistic dogma... lest we find ourselves pushed to the margins and excluded from the popular, privileged and power-filled stories of the religion of colonial comfort, materialism, liberty for some and justice for those who can afford it.

Now mind you – there are good Scandals and there are not so good scandals. There are scandals that raise eye brows and create headlines that are – frankly nothing more than people

² *Shades of gray mean nothing to a boy who likes pink*, By Lisa Pevtzow; Chicago Tribune September 10, 2010.

behaving badly and acting on their self-centered, selfish interest in satisfying their own need for attention, money, power, physical gratification, and ego.

No, what I'm talking about here are the kinds of Scandals which are in step and in keeping with what Jesus' ministry was all about.

Look... as it was and has been throughout human history, the world was created and declared GOOD³ – however not perfect. The stories we have inherited in the bible are after all the stories of a world in which there are haves, the have-nots and the have-a-little-want-some-more.

Jesus goes to the town where he was raised, he rises to read the WORD. He is handed the scroll – the script – to read lest he be read into the margins.⁴ Can you see this? Can you see us in this? We are given scripts dictated by the expectations of family and friends and society – and here he is. And HE is the script by his people – his family and friends and friends of the family – his people – they know him – they have raised him and they give him the script to recite... is this not our story... every last one of us...

and so he unrolls the scroll and EUREKA – this is the verb here... the Spirit is upon him and he is CAUSED to FIND his place – Do we take the script we've been given by our tradition? Our society? Our system so filled with comfortable injustices? Do we take the rhetoric from every political party and wrap it into pious words and fall in line? Or do we go deeper? Do we engage in knowing ourselves more deeply? Do we let our lives speak and the Spirit of the living God guide us that we might be caused to find our true meaning and true purpose and to dare to find our place written in the margin?!

And so BEING CAUSED TO FIND HIS PLACE he then announces before his friends and family what he has been called to do... he comes out to them, unashamedly and unabashedly there in the Synagogue... AND – is – Costly!

And he begins...

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon/over me for God has set me aside to good news⁵ the poor, oppressed, blind: Let's pause here for a moment – GOSPEL a word we are all too familiar with is the word here and in the ancient Greek it is a verb which literally means to

³ Gen 1; it begins and evolves in each day and then Gen 2:18 "not good to be alone" so even in the beginning it was Good... though not Perfect

⁴ Translation notes and interpretive comments for the Luke 4:16-21 follow at the end of this document.

⁵ εὐαγγελίσασθαι verb infinitive aorist middle from εὐαγγελίζω

GOOD NEWS. “GOSPEL” is a VERB not a noun! It isn’t something we have, control, memorize, it is a way of being – and as with Jesus, we are “to gospel” the poor, oppressed, and blind. Gospel is an action verb rather than an object or a subject; a way of living a way of being; a spiritual practice not rhetoric or dogma and not for the privilege and powerful- **THIS IS SCANDALOUS!**⁶

And he continues, I’ve been sent to announce the sending off of whatever is holding them captive, to help those who can’t see to recover their vision and to delegate/appoint the broken, fragmented, down trodden and oppressed ones to this divine mission. And I have been SENT to cancel all debt and obligation and guilt as God’s time has begun - **THIS IS SCANDALOUS!**

TO ALL of us who have lost hope, who have been made to forget our purpose and feel like life has no meaning –Christ is reacquainting us with our purpose – with our divinely appointed life’s purpose! He is quoting from ISAIAH who also says:

Isa 42:16-18 I will lead the blind by a road they do not know, by paths they have not known I will guide them. I will turn the darkness before them into light, the rough places into level ground. These are the things I will do, and I will not forsake them.⁷

AND to WHOM is he speaking? Who are the broken, fragmented, down trodden and oppressed? **Gen3:15** says – WE ALL ARE! Jesus is undoing the fragmentation in our lives and relationships with self, others, creation and CREATOR! We are oppressed by privilege and power, we are blind to the subtle injustices that occur as we police the stories of others and push people to the margins based on a false sense of righteousness that makes us judge and jury of good and bad, right and wrong, male and female, in and out, sacred and secular, us and them. - **THIS IS SCANDALOUS!**

AND an ending of the oppressive guilt laden systems that presume our stories are the only stories that matter - **THIS IS SCANDALOUS!**

Jesus unrolls the scroll, writes us in, and gives us a place of honor in the margins! - **THIS IS SCANDALOUS!**

⁶ I was recently informed that Peter Gomes published a book entitled *Scandalous Jesus* in 2007. I have not read it yet but I sure will have to now.

⁷ See also **Isa 60:2** For darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the I am Who I AM will arise upon you, and God’s glory will appear over you.

Isa 42:3 a bruised reed he will not break, and a dimly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice.

Isa 57:15 For thus says the high and lofty one who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with those who are contrite and humble in spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite.

We have a choice – today – individually and as a community – we have a choice. God gives us choice – free will... we can choose the path of least resistance – we can take the scripts we've been handed:

- of Blue pack backs,
- NARROW Male-centric Exclusive language, 'cause that's the way its been,
- Staying put and not making waves
- Of mimicking oppressive popular theologies and avoiding scandal at all cost

No Scandal. No incarnation. No Christ within or among us – No reconciliation and no transformation of ourselves or our world!

AND THIS IS TRULY SCANDALOUS!

OR WE CAN CHOOSE – CHOOSE THE SCANDALOUS WAY OF JESUS...

We're talking PINK BACKPACKS, INCLUSIVE/EXPANSIVE language, and moving out of this building that we might be a lot more scandalous in order that our youth truly have voice, and our elderly are served; and safe and nurturing spaces become SAFE and NURTURING SPACES.

Participating wholly in THE God ordained, Spirit-inspired, Christ-like scandals that liberate the oppressed, open our eyes, and free us from the messages and systems that hold us captive.

Scan- dal-ous: Adjective /'skandl-əs/

Causing general public outrage by a perceived offense against popular morality or laws that preserve power and privilege, e.g., a series of scandalous liaisons Or maybe – The life, ministry and mission of You and Me and our congregation - aChurch4Me?

Metropolitan Community Church!

Pastor Kevin (PK)'s translation from ancient Greek and interpretation notes

16 And/when he came/went into Nazareth, who/which is where he was reared/trained/raised up; and he went into as was his custom on the Day of the Sabbath the Synagoue and he

ἀνέστη verb indicative aorist active 3rd person singular from **ἀνίστημι**
(to cause to stand/ to cause to rise up by bringing back from the dead / to cause to be born / to carry out a function/purpose /) or appear or
and read (as the eunuch read in Acts 8)

17 and the book/scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. And he unrolled the scroll to find/discover **εὑρεν** verb indicative aorist active 3rd person singular from **εὕρισκω**
the place where it is written: {they give him what to say and yet he uncovers/discovers/finds himself in this place... the authorities give us what to say and do.. tradition dictates what to say and do... an unjust society puts us in our place... and we can stay there... or open to/guided by the Spirit we can **εὕρισκω** – find ourselves – our meaning and purpose and joy... not by opening a book... but by opening up the story of our lives and those around us.. by finding our story intertwined with the stories of the ones we journey with and with the ONE who journeys with us}

18 The Spirit of the Lord/God is upon/over me for he has anointed/set me aside (to) good news **εὐαγγελίσασθαι** verb infinitive aorist middle from **εὐαγγελίζω** {Good NEWS is a verb and not a noun... that is GOSPEL is a VERB not a noun... we are "to gospel" the poor, oppressed, blind... it is an action verb rather than an object or a subject... }

to the poor/oppressed/impotent **πτωχοῖς** (Luk 4:18 BGT); {ref **Isa 57:15** For thus says the high and lofty one who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with those who are contrite and humble in spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite.}

I've been sent (on a divine mission) by him to declare/proclaim/announce to captives **αἰχμαλώτοις** **sending off** {I'VE BEEN SENT TO CAPTIVES TO ANNOUNCE THE SENDING OFF OF WHAT IS HOLDING THEM CAPTIVE}

and to the blind seeing {RECOVERY OF VISION, when we lose our understanding of purpose and meaning we languish and Jesus is reacquainting us with our purpose – our divinely appointed purpose; **Isa 42:16-18** I will lead the blind by a road they do not know, by paths they have not known I will guide them. I will turn the darkness before them into light, the rough places into level ground. These are the things I will do, and I will not forsake them.

Isa 60:2 For darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the LORD will arise upon you, and his glory will appear over you. }

to delegate/appoint in divine mission the broken ones/fragmented/down trodden/oppressed {and who are the broken ones? Gen3:15 says we all are... this is an undoing of the fragmentation we have in the gender-gap/gender war; in the false dichotomy and negative cosmology which has further fragmented ourselves and our souls; an undoing of the age old assumptions of clean and completeness and whole and holy... and to presume that we can make ourselves whole by doing anything... is a travesty and the opposite of the good news-ing Jesus... Good newsing is the

recognition and seeing as whole... seeing the authentic full potential in people and living as though this is so... to encounter the other as another and to see each as holy whole without need for completion... those empty spaces... those times when we set our emotions in one place and our intellect in another and our spirituality we take out for an hour or so and never the twain shall meet... this is a symptom of the bruised and brokenness of the world... (and ref **Isa 42:3** a bruised reed he will not break, and a dimly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice.)}

in sending off/cancellation of debt/obligation/guilt { **Isa 57:15** For thus says the high and lofty one who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with those who are contrite and humble in spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite. & **Isa 66:2** All these things my hand has made, and so all these things are mine, says the LORD. But this is the one to whom I will look, to the humble and contrite in spirit, who trembles at my word. cf Mat 12:20}

19 to announce publicly a favorable year of the Lord (vs year of Emperor) {time has come} The year of freedom for those who have sold themselves into service/slavery to other people. According to Jewish law they would be freed at the end of the 7th year.

20 and having rolled up the scroll and having given it back to the helper/assistant; all the eyes in the synagogue were staring intently upon him

21 and/but he began/started to say to them that today was brought to completion/was made to be fulfilled *πεπλήρωται* verb indicative perfect passive 3rd person singular
from the writing this one in the ears of you {that you have heard}