

**Luke 4:14-21**

December 14, 2008 – WELS Jubilee Sunday

## **This is the Year of the Lord's Favor**

✧ **Jesus comes to worship. (vv.14-16)**

✧ **Jesus proclaims freedom. (vv.16-21)**

In the name of Jesus Christ, our Jubilee, dear grateful Christians:

The first half century my Lord has given me on His earth has seen a fairly stable economy. I grew up hearing about the Great Depression and the way my great grandfather lost everything in the “Crash” of 1929. We were always told, “Only invest in the Stock Market what you can afford to lose.” Was it 20% unemployment? Does that mean 80% had jobs? “Is the glass half empty or much closer to full?” And why did our media for the past decade keep reporting the economy was so bad with unemployment about 3%, the Stock Market making millions, gas prices and interest rates low, and more people buying homes than ever before? If we Americans constantly complain when things are good, what does that leave for God to do but let us see reality by withholding some of His blessings?

“Good times” are challenging for our Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. In the “Roaring 20’s” we went deeply into debt. Two decades ago we amalgamated several preparatory schools and our two ministerial colleges. Then we nearly closed another prep school. Good times are not always good for the church. But the WELS paid off its debt during the Great Depression. I’m confident we will do the same in these tough times. God does not live on Wall Street. He lives in our hearts through His Word and sacraments. God loves to surprise us because **This is the Year of the Lord's Favor** when...

✧ **Jesus comes to worship. (vv.14-16)**

The more sophisticated a society becomes, the more susceptible they seem to political rhetoric. Throw in at least the perception of hard times and government easily becomes the modern “messiah” for the masses. People worship “the beast” in Revelation which pictures humanistic reliance on government as if government is god with solutions to every problem. Look at old movies of Hitler stirring the Germans or Stalin the Soviets, Mao Zedong in China or Fidel Castro in Cuba. Some might ask, “Was Jesus doing the same in Galilee nearly 2,000 years ago?” Where will we find **the Lord's Favor**?

**“Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside. He taught in their synagogues, and everyone praised him.”** Was he just a good man with charisma? Pay attention to not one, not two, not even three, but four witnesses named Matthew, Mark, Luke and John who independently report this Jesus is both God and Man. Luke, an educated medical doctor, put together an **“orderly account”** (1:4), impressive in its own right. But all four evangelists are certified holy writers inspired by God the Holy Spirit with the exact words He breathed into them. Luke reported Jesus’ miraculous birth by the virgin Mary, prophesied by Isaiah seven centuries before. The good doctor laid out Jesus’ impressive genealogy all the way back to **“Adam, the son of God.”** (3:37) Jesus has been **“anointed”** in His baptism **“with the Holy Spirit and power”** (Acts 10:38; Luke 3:21-23). He defeated forty days of temptations by the devil with **“the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”** (Ephesians 6:17) No political leader has ever come close to Christ’s credentials.

And **Jesus comes to worship. “He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom.”** “The home boy did good,” and now He’s back in town. And where does Jesus go on the Lord’s Day? This is how He was raised by Mary and stepfather Joseph. There was no other destination **on the Sabbath** but **the synagogue** because that’s where God’s Word was preached. Nor did Jesus go off to college and quit church like so many American kids when Mom and Dad aren’t around to make them go. For Jesus through His teens to His thirties this **“was His custom”** to go to church and hear God’s Word. Is there any reason we should not have the

same habit of regular, weekly attendance? Or do we by our actions despise preaching and God's Word, shattering the Third Commandment, spoiling Christ's Jubilee? Under God's law this is as evil as murder or adultery. Jesus was active in worship, qualified and called to read the Holy Scriptures publicly.

Not by the economy, but **This is the Year of the Lord's Favor** because Jesus still comes in Advent and throughout the year wherever and whenever His Word is preached and His sacraments administered according to His command. His Jubilee points back to when the LORD Jehovah freed His people from slavery in Egypt. Liberty was proclaimed throughout the land of Israel for freedom from slavery and debt, and the joy of land returned to the family homestead. And Jesus has come to set us free from the burden of our debt to God for sin, from slavery to the fear of death, for liberty to serve God in holy joy. **Jesus comes to worship.** How can we but praise Him here and everywhere as...?

☆ **Jesus proclaims freedom. (vv.16-21)**

With deep reverence and respect Jesus *"stood up to read. The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written...."* Before **Jesus proclaims freedom** He lives His **freedom** to find His way around in the Bible. He did not need page numbers or paragraph headings, chapters or verses. He could stand up in public before His own townsfolk and turn to exactly the right place for that day and time, the designated reading just right for proclaiming **the Year of the Lord's Favor**. When was the last time you read the Bible through from cover to cover? One Chinese man read the whole Bible the first month he was a Christian. In my class a few months later Xiao Qing could find any scripture I quoted. Now he could point you to the Jubilee law of freedom in Leviticus (25:1-13,54f) and Isaiah's (61:1-3) prophecy of the jubilee Christ in our Second Lesson. English is Xiao Qing's second language. Could some of us be missing **the Lord's Favor** simply by neglect?

Jesus then applied this to Himself: *"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."*

Jesus was fully qualified for His work: *"The Spirit of the Lord is on me,"* He said. He was publically commissioned at His Baptism, *"because he has anointed me to preach...."* So qualified and commissioned, Jesus truly is the great Prophet foretold by Moses, Isaiah and all the prophets of the LORD God of Israel. But not just *"to preach,"* Jesus was *"anointed"* by the Holy Spirit *"to preach good news,"* literally, *to evangelize*. Proud hearts would crumble when Christ proclaimed God's law. They would melt into the joy of springtime with the sweet Good News that our sins are all forgiven and heaven is won as a free gift of God's grace. And who was to benefit from His powerful preaching of this Good News? Not the high and mighty, imprisoned by arrogance. *"He has anointed me to preach good news to the poor."* In poverty of spirit we honestly confess, "Nothing in my hand I bring. Simply to thy cross I cling." (CW 389:3) From our prison of guilt and shame, Christ's preaching sets us free. From the blindness of our natural born unbelief He favors us with sight for life and insight into God's Word. Bruised by heartache, we still find full release since Christ came *"to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."*

The Lord's Apostle Paul informs us, *"Now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation."* (2 Corinthians 6:2 NIV) This is why we don't want to waste precious energy rehashing why WELS got into debt. Corrections have been made. It's time to move on with the Good News entrusted to us. And since *"the borrower is servant to the lender."* (Proverbs 22:7 NIV), it's time for us to pull together and eliminate the interest payments that shackle our outreach. Our resources should be used to free other prisoners from the sin and shame God so graciously took off our back. This Year of Jubilee in the WELS was proposed by our Synod Convention delegates. Eliminating \$22.4 million of synod debt would free up to \$2.7 million a year to *"proclaim the year of the Lord's favor"* to prisoners of darkness around the world. Based on last year, that's only about \$78 per communicant. Christ our Prophet, Christ our Great Physician, Christ our merciful Redeemer – has already paid full price with His holy precious blood. He has proven our heavenly Father's love for us and His unfettered ability to care for all our needs. May our Lord say in our generation too, *"Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."* Amen.

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