

## **Sermon on Luke 4:14-21**

In the unique passage that we read today, Jesus announces, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing”. Jesus announces that he is the **long-awaited Savior.**

We can easily understand from this passage that Jesus is talking about his mission. He is going to preach good news to the poor, proclaim freedom for prisoners, release the oppressed, and announce the special year of the Lord.

In summer 2007, there was a program in Ontario in which I took part. The conference was about the spiritual movements in 21<sup>st</sup> century. One of the presenters in this conference said:

*“I know that Jesus wanted to preach good news to the poor, to release the oppressed, and so on. It's very beautiful. But, lots of wise men and women before and after him, announced the same plan, and tried to do something. There is no unique thing about Jesus. I personally rely on scientific tools and methods”.*

After the conference, a discussion was held by a group who believed in Jesus Christ. All of these Christians agreed with the presenter in two respects:

1. First, they agreed that science should be used in the search for a better world.
2. Second, they acknowledged that there were sages, prophets, and leaders before and after Jesus who announced the same mission as Jesus did.

Now, the question is: 'what is so special about Jesus?' Then, they turned their attention to the passage we read today. They tried to read it properly and carefully, with patience.

**They meditated on the environment** in which Jesus grew up, the language and literary devices that Jesus used, the things that Jesus said and did during his unique mission. And, in time, this group gained unique insight into this passage.

They realized that the terms "**the poor, the oppressed, the prisoners, and the blind**", on the basis of Jesus' teachings, have inclusive and broad meanings.

We have poor in spirit and poor in material wealth, blind in sight and blind in spirit. There are those who are imprisoned in civil prisons and those who are imprisoned by darkness and hopelessness. **At the same time**, we have the jailor who is in charge of the prison. The jailor himself is a prisoner. The jailor is imprisoned in an environment that fosters loneliness, anger, and animosity.

On one hand, we have the oppressed who suffer from lack of freedom, wealth, and security. And we have another kind of oppressed who do not have any access to spirituality, morality, or a belief system. **Even an oppressor may be oppressed**. He is involved in an unhealthy relationship, one that leads him to feel lonely, hated, angry, or hopeless.

The presenter, in his interview, did not mention the Lord's special year, because God had no place in his ideology. But the Christian discussion group, realized that no one before or after Jesus did this. Only the Lord was able to announce his special year.

The Christian group acknowledged that there are lots of ideologies, philosophies, cults, and movements that recognize human problems and want to improve the human condition. These ideologies discern our problems and prescribe some prescriptions.

For example, they say, 'have a loving relationship with your family and friends, attract positive energy, help the poor and the needy, get rid of bad energy, exercise and pray every day, be optimistic, make a plan for your life and actualize it'.

These are very good commands, commands of change. We have to change our attitudes, behavior, and the style of our life. But the question is 'how can we change'?

Change requires incredible strength. Change requires very special power. These ideologies dictate change, but do not give us the **power to change**. If we had had this power inside us, we could have actualized a better world by now. No, this power comes from somewhere else.

Jesus, as the Son of God, freely gives this power to us. All that we have to do is **to ask**. The Christian experience tells us that by this power we

will be transformed into new people, people who are able to start over and forget the past.

This Jesus-granted power gives us spiritual wisdom, mental brightness, and physical strength to embrace a new and holy life and possess a healthy body and soul.

This power is one of the qualities that make Jesus unique and matchless.

**Let us pray:** Almighty God, help us to consider Jesus' words deeply and realize the incredible importance of his announcing the year of the Lord's favor. In this New Year, help us to embrace and gain new understanding, new freedom, and a new and complete type of liberation.

O Lord give us this understanding that we may have true healing and transforming power, power to change, in 2010; In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen