

## Homily - the acceptable year of the Lord

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Psalms 19, Nehemiah 8:2 - 10, 1 Corinthians 12:12 - 30, Luke 4:14 - 21

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### **Theme:**

Epiphany/Theophany

### **Introduction:**

We are in the midst of the Epiphany season. The waters of baptism are cleansing and purifying our person, our homes, and the world. We are born anew so that we may enter the good pursuit, Lent. We do well-paying attention to seasons and holy days. Paying attention to those reminds us of a greater story and reality.

However, it is essential not to be waylaid and start to think and believe that life is all about observing seasons, exact times and dates and the way we measure time.

Life goes through seasons, but it is not about the seasons. It is about the One who made the seasons. If we observe them properly, seasons will point us to the one who reconciles time and who testifies through them. (Show Swedish almanac)

### **Thesis:**

**With Christ, the anointed One - this year, this season (now), is the acceptable year and season of the Lord.**

## **Transition & Question:**

There is quite a bit going on in the world, and the Church, the body of Christ, is tasked with being a good and steady presence in the world, proclaiming truth in love. Quite often, the Church and the human person, instead of doing that, react in two ways;

### **Intro extended**

Either the Church, and the human person takes the "new monasticism" approach and goes into the wilderness to preserve true Christian living a' la Hutterite or Amish. Often this withdrawal forms a certain regimen by and for the ones withdrawing.

Or, the Church goes into the legislature by supporting people who will "make the country Christian again" by enacting Christian legislation. Often, this reaction also forms certain days of celebration and seasons. The world is, in a way, "Christened." Sometimes, throughout the history of the Church, this has turned very dark and has been done by eradicating other peoples and cultures.

These two reactions set up the question: Does the Church have to escape from the world OR enforce its faith on the world to reveal the Way of Jesus? I don't think so, and the reason for my answer is found in today's gospel passage.

### **1. The Israelites.**

Up to the point in history when Jesus is proclaiming these prophetic words read in the Gospel, the Israelites had experiences of withdrawing from the world into the wilderness and the experience of implementing legislation into general society, forming a law that everyone had to obey in order to call themselves an Israelite. You

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were a member of the family if you adhered to the law. Circumcision, cleaning writes, offerings you name it. Your identity and political reality were dependent on religious laws.

After first being enslaved people in Egypt and then withdrawing/ escaping into a time in the wilderness then, the Israelites started to enact legislation. Their reality incorporated withdrawal from society (Essences) and engagement in society (Pharisees)

## **2. The Human Person**

The human person is much the same. We, like the Israelites find ourselves enslaved to sin and blind to see the way out on our own. We are at times oppressed by the whip of guilt and brokenhearted by unresolved shame. We keep on doing the same thing in our slavery until someone comes along and reminds us that life does not have to be this way. Then, we may be prompted to lift our gaze and our head and start walking in a different direction. Often, we withdraw from the world; we go into the wilderness to find our way. We identify our rule of life to preserve life. We establish days to celebrate and habits to keep. Once that is done, we often tend to want to assert that rule on the world beyond ourselves, and we introduce things into the legislature. We, I, bring our agenda so to speak.

## **3. Jesus - The Christ and his body the Church**

When we today read and hear that "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me [Jesus], because He has anointed me". (Luke 4:18) we hear what all the legislation, what time, the seasons and the days are supposed to point to and reveal, the Christ, the fulfilment of the law and the Word of God in the flesh. Anointed and empowered from on high to do the ministry of reconciling the world to God the Father.

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In Jesus the Christ, the unbalanced oscillation between too much withdrawal from the world and too overt trying to "engage to change the world" stops. In Jesus's Person, withdrawal and engagement live in one body in the present moment instead of being contingent on the right day, season, or political wind. Withdrawal and engagement find their right and true balance by being in this close proximity.

Jesus engages the world while withdrawing, as he can also withdraw while engaging. He is not bound by time, seasons, or days. He is present in the NOW.

Of course, Jesus also withdrew into the desert or to pray somewhere else. In fact, he had just done this before he said what he said today.

He also engaged the Sanhedrin, the scribes, the Pharisees, and the legislature.

But He did so as an integrated being, his body anointed with the Holy Spirit. It is as an integrated being, empowered with the Spirit that Jesus' body, the Church, has the power and mandate to:

Preach the Gospel to the poor.

To heal the brokenhearted.

To proclaim liberty to the captives.

To recover sight for the blind

To set at liberty those who are oppressed

To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.

What is "the acceptable year of the Lord"? Well if we look at 2 Corinthians 6:2 "'In an acceptable time I have heard you, And in the

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day of salvation I have helped you." Behold, NOW is the accepted time; behold now is the day of salvation.", we understand that the acceptable time of the Lord is NOW. The day of salvation is today.

### **Conclusion:**

We often oscillate between too much withdrawal and too zealous engagement. Sometimes, we pull out, and sometimes, we overcommit. Appropriate withdrawal is good, too much is not. Appropriate engagement is good, too much is not.

The times, seasons, and days marked on our calendar and, for example, the lectionary help us find a balance between withdrawal and engagement, fasting and feasting, and sound and silence. We do well in observing the times, seasons, and days.

Yet, this observation is not the fulfillment of the law. They cannot offer liberty to the captives, sight to the blind, healing for the brokenhearted, and the acceptable year of the Lord in themselves. To offer salvation in the present moment, the only moment that is acceptable to God, NOW, the times, seasons, and days need to be anointed in the present day.

The Spirit is upon Jesus, He is the Christ. We, as Christ's body, are anointed with the Holy Spirit as well.

We are empowered to do the things a sect or a legislature could never do, reconciling the world to God. In Jesus, with the Holy Spirit, we experience and can share salvation, not yesterday, not tomorrow, but NOW.