

-Have you ever gone to hear someone really famous speak or to a concert of a really famous band that afterwards you were like: that's it? A couple of years ago, Abby and I stretched ourselves and got some expensive tickets to go see The Shins (a pretty well known band out of Portland) play at the Wilma. The first hour plus of the concert was filled with (not one but) two un-inspiring opener bands. When the Shins actually took the stage and started to play, they first looked overwhelmed by how Montana could produce such a large crowd. It also felt like they were playing a "dress-rehearsal" the entire night, like they were saving up their energy for "the bigger concert" the following night in Seattle or something. They didn't even play an encore set like most bands usually do. I remember, once they were done, turning to Abby who just looked at me and shrugged. "That's it?" I wondered.

-Now I want to not go too far in my associating Jesus with the "The Shins". But at the same time, we read in the Gospel of Luke: "Then Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding country. He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone."

-Jesus was becoming a super-star. Well-known and, at least in the beginning, well liked. Things were going well.

-So, I would imagine, by the time he returned to Galilee Jesus was popular enough to pack the synagogues. He was "The Shins" coming to Missoula and people wanted to hear him.

-So you can maybe imagine the disappointment when Christ reads a portion of scripture, goes and sits down, and then his sermon to them consists of 9 words: "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

- "That's it?" it seems like we should all be saying. We dragged our butts all the way out here for this?

-It's easy to feel disappointed, perhaps, but once you dig a little bit deeper you can find signs of Jesus truly "mixing things up" in a creative and revolutionary way.

-This first thing that is interesting to modern readers of this story is getting down to the question of "what was Jesus quoting?" The text says Jesus is quoting the book of Isaiah and that he is even "finding his place" in the scroll. The problem is no verse in the book of Isaiah matches Jesus' words in Luke exactly. Biblical scholars' best guess is that the words which Jesus is quoted in saying here by Luke is a rough "sandwiching" of Isaiah 61:1-2 and Isaiah 58:6. Key words from both of these Isaiah passages make an appearance. So was this Jesus making a scriptural error? Was it the scroll he was reading from? Was it Luke, the gospel writer? We have no idea. Clearly, however, (and this is quite difficult for all of those biblical literalists out there who believe that every word of scripture was written perfectly and inherently by God), the exact translation didn't matter compared with the point that is made.

-Beyond this fact, here is the other radical part of this sermon by Jesus that we aren't used to: he goes and sits down.

-One commentator I recently read on this section of scripture writes: "One thing that makes us in the modern era a little uncomfortable with is Jesus doesn't really preach here. He reads from the scripture and then.....sits down to have a conversation.

-When I was applying for colleges, I also was applying for music and voice scholarships. One of the top schools of my list was attending Luther College with the great Dr. Weston Noble of the Nordic Choir. Usually, applying for music scholarships meant doing the same thing for each school: record yourself singing, write a little essay, and then (if they invited you) come out and do a live audition in person. So, when I was asked by Luther College to come out and give an in-person audition, this is what I expected. Upon getting there, I realized this wasn't going to go like the other schools. First off, there wasn't any "scholarship committee" to audition with, it was with Weston Noble himself in his office. After knocking on his office door, he invited me to.....sit down instead of going to the piano and singing. "Now where are you from", he asked me. After talking for more than 20 minutes, he invited me to the piano where I sang my piece I prepared (with him playing the piano himself). Instead of singing the song and leaving, after I finished he looked at the piece and asked: "what do you think about this section? In my mind, it seems like it needs to be quieter due to the text that is there.....should we try it quieter and see what you think?" This wasn't a stilted, formal audition, I remember thinking just then. This was a conversation where the teacher cared about my thoughts, experiences, and vocal interpretation. It was a teacher wanting the conversation more than the audition.

-'Today this scripture has been fulfilled.' What does that mean? It's not the "I am going to stand here and tell you what it means" type of thing most people are used to. Jesus intentionally and purposefully opens up the conversation and lets us in."

-So what is created when we are let in? When Dr. Noble started asking me questions and we started doing the piece over and over again with specific differences which I was suggesting, it gave me a radical freedom unlike anything I had really ever experienced in an audition before.

- "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind..." Jesus is giving radical freedom to those gathered in the synagogue too: freedom to wrestle with (not be lectured to) how the scripture being fulfilled affects them and the world. This is God starting the conversation with God's people saying to them: "what do you think?"

-It's annual meeting Sunday today, if y'all didn't know. To me, this text is really pertinent to our action today of an annual meeting because an annual meeting (in a basic sense) is the wrestling together with the question of: "what does it mean for us in that this

scripture has been fulfilled?" What does it mean for us that God has done this work? What do you think? Now maybe some of you are expecting an epic "Shins concert" and instead are getting a conversation, and that might be a little shocking.

-But at the end of the day, our being invited into the conversation in how the Holy Spirit is working in our time and place is much more moving and powerful than some little sermon or pronouncement telling us how it works.

-You know what's interesting? We throw around the word "liturgy" a lot in this church. "Liturgy", when most people in our church are using that word, is referring to the order of our Sunday morning worship including music, sermon, Holy Communion, etc. But you know what the basic word in Greek means? *Leitourgia* or literary "work of the people". Our liturgy is our work here today: our gathering, our singing, our listening, our discussing, and our wrestling. Jesus, I believe, understood this when he went to go sit down that day. "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." What do you think? Let's get to work. Amen.