

**“Good News, Good Ways”**

**January, 24 - 2010**

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Gods' peace with u!

Let us read together from the bulletin Luke, chapter 4, the verses 14-21. We read without the headlines.

The Beginning of the Galilean Ministry

14 Then Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding country. 15 He began to teaching their synagogues and was praised by everyone.

The Rejection of Jesus at Nazareth

16 When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read,  
17 and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

**18‘ 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, to let the oppressed go free,  
19 to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.’**

20 And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him.

21 Then he began to say to them, ‘Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.’

Amen.

In a few minutes we will welcome 8 people as new members in our church family. They are in alphabetical order: Dwight and Kenya Davis and their 3 wonderful kids Isaiah, the Joe of our Christmas Pageant and one of our 6 confirmands, Desmond and little Daniel. Then Eda Uca-Dorn, one of our Confirmation Class leaders and her husband Mike. Both belong also to our 20ies/30ties Stammtisch. And last, but not least our friend Nathan Jerrigan, who will candidate today already for Care of Parish.

Each new member changes the organization for ever. With your joining our church will never be again the church like before. You will change us and we welcome you to change us. Called to be one body  
In Christ, our old relationships will be renewed and get opened to you. This is the reason, why the whole church today will renew its covenant – among each other and with God. You are invited to the table of inclusiveness and to take part on the journey of faith.

I couldn't have picked by myself a better reading for your joining of our church and the renewal of our covenant. Our reading from Luke follows Jesus temptation in the desert. Jesus fasted for 40 days. It is Christian tradition to do the same during Lent, which will start in 4 weeks. With fasting in the desert Jesus started his public ministry. Desert, fasting, and temptation are one. The devil offered Jesus a carefree life – the ability to transform stones into bread. With other words: to have always a filled fridge. I must confess – this is tempting! The 2<sup>nd</sup> temptation is power – how much could u change and to good things with this power! And the third and last temptation: To be like God, almighty creator. Jesus refused all 3 temptations, the devil retreats frustrated, but Jesus starts his public ministry strengthened and refreshed in the Spirit.

The same happens, when we join a church. We have realized how tempting the world is. But our faith tells us that the promises of the world wouldn't be fulfilling in the end. So we look for a faith community, in which we find people, who share

with us the same yearning and the same values. We join THIS church, because there is a longing in our hearts for justice, for freedom, and mercy / for wisdom, for courage and for comfort / for healing, for wholeness and new life. We join this church, because there is a longing in our hearts for love in grief, fear and death. We join this church, because we don't accept the world as it is. We join this church, because we have the certainty that God is there and that there is with God no fear anymore.

The prophet, your parents have named u after, Isaiah said the words, Jesus quotes to his listeners. Jesus starts his public ministry with the word of the prophet Isaiah, I think with a reason. I think with good reason we can assume that Jesus shares in his first public speaking the essentials of his faith. So let us hear again the words, Jesus quotes from Isaiah. Please allow me to change the masculine language of the New Revised Standard Version: **“The Spirit of the Living God is upon me, because she has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. She has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Living God’s favor.”**

Jewish-Christian faith is never impartial. Our faith tradition is to the core partial – in favor of the poor, captives, blind and oppressed. This means that people on the bright side of life are called to stay in relationship to the disadvantaged. We call this justice. Our faith has clear social critical character.

But: Nobody comes to faith without doubts. Without struggle no faith. No faith without questioning. Only who asks comes forward.

One of these questions I received this week via email from our Barbara Hayes. She gave me permission to talk about it. Barbara referred to last weeks sermon about Haiti. I asked last week, having the victims of the earthquake in mind: “Does God drop or lift his thumb like a Cesar in the arena – u die, u live – u die, u live...?” And I answered this question with the comment: “What a horrible

imagination – God as judge about dead or life. This is not the God I believe in. This is not the God I WANT to believe in – and I CANNOT believe in this kind of Dictator God.”

Barbara wrote to this piece: **“I certainly don't believe that God is vengeful, punishing humans in such horrible ways. But I have a problem: I *do* believe that God watches over me in potentially disastrous situations.”** And some lines later u wrote, Barbara: **“It seems I am *not blaming* God for the bad things, but *crediting* God for the good things. I'm not sure how to reconcile this.”**

When I read these lines I got spontaneous up from my chair, started to pace excited up and down my little apartment, and repeating all over again: “Go, Barbara, go!” And I thought: “Yes, this is exactly the way what faith is about: That we cannot explain everything, but that we stick with faith even we don't have the last answers.” Tested Faith, which has gone through doubts and grief knows about God with a certainty, an atheist cannot understand. The question Barbara asked is the old theodicy [theó-dicy] question. theodicy [theó-dicy] is consisting of two Greek words – theos for God and dikae for God's justice. The word itself goes back to the German philosopher Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, who used this word the first time in 1710. But already the Hebrew Bible knows about this conflict. The book of Job asks the question all over again: How can we explain that there is suffer, pain, grief and injustice in this world, when there is an almighty God? How does it come that people of faith, who do the utmost to live a just life, have to suffer injustice?

I remember sophisticated discussions with colleagues about this problem. We all here in this Sanctuary might give different answers. There is no right or wrong. We are in the field of faith, not of knowledge. But u should know that I never had this problem... Because I never believed an almighty acting God. I always believed that it is Gods nature to love. And who ever loves gives freedom. All parents of teenagers know that. God is not different. God might have the power to intervene, but if God intervenes in ones person life, then we God would need

to intervene in all people lives. Everything else would be unfair. The bible, this wonderful wise book, describes this drama with the story of the fall out of the paradise. The fall out of the paradise is for me the wonderful archetype for the development, we all went through as baby when our basic trust to our parents experiences the first self-consciousness. The baby experiences this first perception of self-consciousness as very painful. This is like being thrown out of the garden of Eden. The unity with the mother is disrupted. The basic trust existentially challenged. We have to learn, do develop and to discover our own personality. Finding identity IS a painful process. We all know this. Genesis 3 is very clear that consciousness about the nakedness and the knowledge about good and bad is like leaving the paradise. This leaving of the garden of Eden is the price we human beings have to pay for the freedom God has given us.

But I agree with you, Barbara and I ask you to defend your faith against who ever wants to doubt it. With u I feel also protected. And for nothing in this world I would give up this assurance. U can laugh or u leave it. I believe in angels. And before u start to scoff that this is all catholic bushwa I will quote u the last 2 verses of this story of the fall in Genesis 3: <sup>23</sup>therefore the God Adonai sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from which he was taken. <sup>24</sup>God drove out the man; and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim, and a sword flaming and turning to guard the way to the tree of life." The bible mentions cherubim over 90 times, here the first time. 2 Cherubim are later also on the Arc of Covenant. Cherubim, angels can show us the way to the tree o flife. I, Barbara, believe that God has to give freedom, so that we can be free. But I also believe that God can sent guardian angels. And I will stick with this faith against all pseudo [psido] enlightened modernists. I cannot proof it, but deep in myself I feel that God doesn't leave us alone. I don't know if this answers your question, Barbara, but this is the only one I can give u as person of faith. And in faith we are all equal.

All of u, who will join today this church, are welcome to go with us together on the journey of faith. We might don't know the last answers – last answers only belong

to God. We don't know why we know sometimes so well that God is watching over us and sometimes we don't know. Is God maybe always there and we just don't see her? It is my faith experience that God is there for me in Spirit or through an Angel. Maybe an angel is nothing else than the embodiment of Gods spirit. Who knows. But we know that we are Gods children, that we are created and loved. That we are with our birth separated at first glance from God, our mother. But that we are connected with our mother God in the same spiritual and close loving way as we are with our fleshly mother. And we know, that we are called on our way back to God to be partial for the disadvantaged, the poor, the captives, blind and oppressed. Because justice is God's other side. Each mom, who loves, will love her children equally and will not favor one child over the other. But will try to be just to them and to strengthen the different gifts. Our job as Christians is to be a good child and to support the mother in her effort for justice as expression of real love. All human beings, if black or white, red or yellow, if straight or LGBT – all are Gods children, we are all siblings.

We are happy that today 8 people will join the church and commit themselves to live out Gods given freedom for love and justice. On this journey of faith we all are allowed and called to to be human. This is God's invitation to us. Welcome!

Amen