

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

'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,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.'

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. Then he began to say to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.'

In these verses we have the framework for Jesus' ministry, he will do the work of the Father who has sent him. Jesus has been anointed, the literal meaning of Messiah or Christ. Because he is anointed to do the work and will of the Father, he lives the life he does, and he does so in word and deed. Throughout the gospels, Jesus makes reference to the fact that his work, his food, is to do what his Father has sent him to do. And Jesus, fully human even though he is the Son of God, has his good days, and he has days that aren't so good. His reception from his own people will range from outright hostility, even hatred, to "so what", to joyous acclaim. But he will not waver, he resists temptation and hunger, and he does what he has been sent to do.

He is calling his disciples, but note now that he doesn't ask them, nor does he ask us, to be him. We who belong to him have our tasks from before creation.

We heard this in our second lesson this morning, from First Corinthians. Here Paul is writing to a church full of conflict, division, strife, stemming at least in part from believers worrying about, and comparing, their status and standing among their brothers and sisters in the congregation. They've set up their own hierarchy and they're spending time and energy climbing the ladder they've made. This at the expense of mission and concern about the welfare of others. They are, even while thinking they're doing the right thing, forsaking the lives to which they have been called.

So Paul uses the analogy of the body to try to communicate that the essential thing is to do what God has called them to do, and to be who they are called to be. Not to worry about living up to their own expectations, or to the expectations of others.

Now we see a simplified view of the Corinthians, but life, and congregational life is never quite as cut and dried, as simple, as we might like it to be. So the illustration of the parts of the body fulfilling each one's purpose, for the good of the whole body, is apt. Each part of the body is created for specific purposes, arranged by the creator as he wanted them to be.

Now this means we don't have to compare ourselves to other members, nor do we have live up to our idealized expectations of what we imagine we should be, whether as individuals, or as the whole. In other words, we can trust our God, confident that the God who created us and knew us from the beginning, knows us best, and we can be to the best of our ability whatever he has called us to be.

Think of it like this: there is only one Son of God, one gospel writer named Luke, one apostle named Paul, you get the idea. We are each one of us unique, created for a purpose in the body of Christ. Each of us is vital for the wellbeing of the body of Christ that we are in this time and place. The gifts you bring, your spiritual gifts, your material gifts, your talents and abilities, are a gift of God, to be used for the sake of the body.

Those who have gone before us, some of you who are here now, trusted in God's love and the power of the Holy Spirit to step out in faith. We build on that foundation, that legacy, we are entrusted with good gifts to do the same, here where we might best live out the lives to which we have been called. We don't compare ourselves to brothers and sisters in the faith, we simply rejoice in the gifts, abilities, talents we have each been given, rejoicing all the while in Christ crucified, Jesus who did the will and work of God that we be saved by grace through faith.

Amen