

Daily *Reflections*

The Divine Intervention

January 24, 2016

Scripture

Luke 1:1-4; 4:14-21

Since many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the events that have been fulfilled among us,

just as those who were eyewitnesses from the beginning and ministers of the word have handed them down to us,

I too have decided,

after investigating everything accurately anew,

to write it down in an orderly sequence for you,

most excellent Theophilus,

so that you may realize the certainty of the teachings

you have received.

Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news of him spread throughout the whole region.

He taught in their synagogues and was praised by all.

He came to Nazareth, where he had grown up,

and went according to his custom

into the synagogue on the sabbath day.

He stood up to read and was handed a scroll of the prophet Isaiah.

He unrolled the scroll and found the passage where it was written:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,

because he has anointed me
to bring glad tidings to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,
and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord.
Rolling up the scroll, he handed it back to the attendant and sat down,
and the eyes of all in the synagogue looked intently at him.
He said to them,
"Today this Scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing."

Our Scripture Reflection

This Sunday's Gospel text from Luke contains two beginnings:

1. The beginning of the Gospel itself. There Luke lets us know that he is instructing in the faith a man named Theophilus with information he has received from eyewitnesses of Jesus.
2. The beginning of Jesus' public ministry in His hometown synagogue at Nazareth.

The section on the beginning of Jesus' public ministry is of particular importance because it sets the tone for everything He will do and say throughout the entire Gospel of Luke:

-Jesus will, indeed, bring glad tidings to the poor, both the economically poor and those who are downtrodden or "poor in spirit."

-He will proclaim liberty to captives, both those who are in physical captivity and also those who had been held captive by Satan through their sins.

-He will bring recovery of sight to those who had been physically blind and those who had been blind to God's way.

-He will set free those who have been oppressed by ways of thinking and living that ran contrary to the Gospel, especially because of the oppressive teaching of the scribes and Pharisees.

-In and through Jesus, an "acceptable year", that is, The Kingdom has come for all who are willing to listen and learn, including Dear Theophilus.

Finally, as Jesus lays out His mission in the synagogue, He also lays out what will become the mission of His disciples after His death and resurrection. Are you prepared to go to work?

Food for your Journey

This story comes from a Sunday school ministry in the part of New York City that has been rated the "most likely place to get killed." The pastor Bill Wilson himself has been stabbed twice, shot at, and a member of his team killed. But he stays there, and not without controversy, ministers in Jesus' name to people the rest of the church has largely forgotten. The largest bus ministry in America is not in the suburbs, but in Hell's Kitchen.

One Puerto Rican lady, after getting saved in church, came to me with an urgent request. She didn't speak a word of English, so she told me through an interpreter, "I want to do something for God, please."

"I don't know what you can do," I answered.

"Please, let me do something," she said in Spanish.

"Okay. I'll put you on a bus. Ride a different bus every week and just love the kids."

So every week she rode a different bus -- we have 50 of them -- and loved the children. She would find the worst- looking kid on the bus, put him on her lap and whisper over and over the only words she had learned in English: "I love you. Jesus loves you."

After several months, she became attached to one little boy in particular. "I don't want to change buses anymore. I want to stay on this one bus," she said.

The boy didn't speak. He came to Sunday school every week with his sister and sat on the woman's lap, but he never made a sound. And each week she would tell him all the way to Sunday school and all the way home, "I love you and Jesus loves you."

One day, to her amazement, the little boy turned around and stammered, "I-I love you, too." Then he put his arms around her and gave her a big hug.

That was 2:30 on a Saturday afternoon. At 6:30 that night, the boy was found dead in a garbage bag under a fire escape. His mother had beaten him to death and thrown his body in the trash.

"I love you and Jesus loves you." Those were some of the last words he heard in his short life -- from the lips of a Puerto Rican woman who could barely speak English.

Who among us is qualified to minister? Who among us even knows what to do? Not you; not me. But I ran to an altar once, and I got some fire and just went.

So did this woman who couldn't speak English. And so can you.

The days of religious rhetoric are over. People have to see the reality of the gospel. And we are the only Jesus they will see, folks.

You -- one person -- can make a difference. In Jesus' name, let yourself get close enough to people who hurt. Feel the pain. See the death. Feel the urgency. Then run to an altar and take your stand between the living and the dead.

--Bill Wilson, "Why I Chose to Live in Hell," *Charisma Magazine*, October 1996, 62.
What a witness to the mission of Jesus....

Prayer from the Heart

Dear Jesus, You are my Lord and Savior. Teach me Your way, Lord, so that I may bring Your way, Your Truth and Your Life and Light to this world. Please give me the joy that comes from imitating You. Amen.



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