

Teaching and Miracles

Romans 6:3-8 1 Corinthians 11:23-31 Luke 4:16-21

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Pastor Dave Bolte



The focus of **Lutheran Worship** is on the Word and the Sacraments. Worship is *God serving us* through the proclamation of the Gospel -- in words (Scripture), in water (Baptism), and “in, with, and under” the bread and the wine (Communion). We worship today just like the people did in Jesus’ day.

In the Gospel lesson for today, Jesus was worshipping in the synagogue *that He grew up in*, and He read the Scripture lesson and explained it to the people. The Scripture lesson He read was several passages from the Old Testament prophet Isaiah:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." Luke 4:18-19

As the Gospel of Luke unfolds, this passage describes why Jesus came into the world. This passage is His “*mission statement*”. This passage is an *Epiphany spotlight* on Jesus, so we understand who He is and what He has done for us.

The passage begins with “*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me.*” That is virtually the definition of the word “**Christ**”¹. **Jesus** is the One *chosen* by **God the Father** and *anointed* by the **Holy Spirit** to do the work of salvation for us. The words, *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me*, echoes Jesus’ Baptism where the Holy Spirit descended on Him in the form of a dove.

The work of salvation that Jesus will do is summarized as “teaching and miracles” in this passage.

¹ Actually, the next phrase in the verse has a form of the word “Christ” in it: “He has **anointed** me to preach the Good News to the poor.” The English word “anointed” is translated from the Greek word *Christ*.

Let me show you. First, note the emphasis on *teaching*:

"The Spirit Of The Lord Is Upon Me,

because He has anointed me to **preach GOOD NEWS** to the poor. He has sent me to **proclaim LIBERTY** to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed, to **proclaim** the year of **THE LORD'S FAVOR.**" Luke 4:18-19

There is a **triple emphasis** on preaching and teaching: Jesus' words are **powerful**: they are **GOOD NEWS** – Gospel² -- that sets poor, broken, sinful people free; Jesus' words announce to the captives the **grace, mercy, and love** of God.

We all need to hear **Jesus' powerful words**, because we too are poor, broken, captive, slaves to sin who cannot break free. Satan is powerful; temptations tangle us up; guilt crushes us; and our own sinful nature betrays us. We are clearly poor, broken, and captive sinners who cannot break free from our sin on our own.

So, Jesus, *filled with the Holy Spirit*, does it for us. His death and resurrection breaks you free; this **GOOD NEWS** about Jesus is announced to you: it is **preached**, it is **taught**, it is **proclaimed**, and it is the power of God that sets you free from Satan, guilt, death, and your own sinful nature!

Jesus' powerful Word **WORKS!**
IT IS GOSPEL: it is good news for us!

That is why Lutheran worship is centered on the Word of God. The Gospel is an *Epiphany spotlight* even today, as we hear the Gospel in the liturgy, in our hymns and songs, in scripture lessons, confessed in creeds, and in the sermon! Jesus still preaches the Good News to the poor, He still proclaims liberty to the captives, and He still proclaims the Lord's grace, mercy, and love! **Conservative Lutheran worship is marked by the proclamation of the Gospel!**

That is why, when you worship, this needs to be the best hour of your week. Be fully alert and ready to hear the Gospel, learn Holy Scripture, and grow in faith. *Use the resources available:* use the sermon worksheet, use the family talk time;

² The English words "**preach Good News**" is the one Greek verb εὐαγγελίζω -- "*evangelical*". Interestingly, the next sentence in this same verse says that "**He has sent me . . .**" which is the word for "*apostle*". Jesus is the **Apostle** sent by God the Father to *proclaim freedom to us sinners* --- and that is the Good News!

use the hard copy of the sermon; [use the Bibles and Hymnals in the pews.] **God is here in worship with His Holy Word: make sure that you are here and fully alert and eagerly engaged to hear, learn and grow in the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ!**

The way that Luke wrote this account³ of Jesus in the synagogue, the emphasis is **not only** on *Jesus' teaching* -- **but also on His miracles**.

"The Spirit Of The Lord Is Upon Me,

*because He has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of **THE LORD'S FAVOR.**" Luke 4:18-19*

Throughout Jesus' ministry, He would use His mighty, divine power **to make the blind see, to heal the sick, to make the crippled walk, to raise the dead, and to cast out demons.** *Jesus' miracles "set free those who are oppressed"!*

The miracles prove that Jesus is the Messiah and that His Word is true. Miracles are *Epiphany spotlights* that shine on Jesus and show that He is the Christ, the Son of God, and the Savior of the World, and His Word is trustworthy and true!

Jesus has promised to work miracles in two places in our lives: in **Baptism** and in **Communion**; in the *water* and in *bread and wine*. That is why in conservative Lutheran Worship we focus on the Sacraments --- because those are the **only** two places where Jesus promises to work miracles and forgive our sins.

In the water of **Holy Baptism**, Jesus **raises the dead** as sinful people are united to His very own death and burial, and then raised to new life. When you were baptized, your sinful nature was drowned; it was crucified with Christ, and a "new creation" emerged; you were *born again* and given New Life in Christ. Holy Baptism is the miracle where Jesus raises the dead; He gives you new life, He changes you and He brings you into His family.

³ Luke 4:14-20 is a *double chiasm*! A "Chiasm" is an ancient way of writing that looks like the Greek letter "X" (Chi) – with each line making its way down to the center main point, and then the following lines working their way outward with matching words or ideas from the corresponding lines above the center main point. The double main points are **Jesus' teaching**; and **Jesus' miracles**! **These are the two key points of Jesus' "mission"; they are the focus of conservative Lutheran Worship, and they are important for us to learn, know, and understand today!**

In **Holy Communion**, Jesus promises to work a miracle as He gives you His very Body and Blood in a miraculous way when you *take and eat* and *take and drink* the bread and the wine. The miracle here is that Christ Himself is present for you, to forgive your sins, and to assure you of His love.

We live in a day and age where there are many false teachers who claim all kinds of false miracles, and biblically illiterate Christians are so eager to believe ANY miracle someone claims to have experienced. The truth is that the Sacraments are the ONLY PLACE where Jesus has promised to work miracles: He raises the dead in water of Holy Baptism; and His crucified and risen Body and Blood are actually present to forgive your sins in Holy Communion.

Do not believe any other miracles you hear about, no matter who tells you. You have no way of knowing whether they are from God or if it is Satan at work to lie and deceive you!⁴

As Jesus read the Scripture lesson and preached to the people in the synagogue that Sunday, He revealed to us who He is and what He would do for us.

He is the CHRIST: He is filled with the Holy Spirit to preach the Gospel and work miracles – both which “set people free” from Satan, sin, and death! The *Epiphany spotlight* continues to shine on us even today, as Jesus continues to preach the Gospel and work His Sacramental miracles among us – to set us from Satan, sin, and death!

As conservative Lutheran Christians, we value, cherish and fully engage ourselves in Jesus’ Word and His Sacraments: where He continues to preach the Gospel and work miracles in our midst! Amen!

⁴ Note **2 Corinthians 11: 14-15** : *And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness. (Note these powerful warnings also, Mark 13:21-23, 2 Thess 2:10, and Rev 13:13-14).* Modern day “miracles” are not of the same nature as Christ’s miracles, they never point to Christ and His Gospel, AND there is no way to verify if they are from God or not. **DO NOT BE DECEIVED! It is best to completely ignore and dismiss any “modern day miracles” you hear about.** Jesus promises to work miracles only in two places: His Water (Holy Baptism) and His Meal (Holy Communion). Our faith rests and His Word and Sacraments, where God places His promise of forgiveness as He teaches us and works “miracles” in our lives.