

### 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time - Year C 2006 Lk 4:14-21

1. For several years in a row I spent part of my summer vacation visiting with friends on Nantucket Island off the coast of Massachusetts.
  - a. Nantucket is a favorite vacation destination for people, although in recent years it has become increasingly difficult to rent there.
  - b. Why? Well, one day I was sitting on one of those little buses that take people all over the island listening to two women talk - one was as mad as hell.
  - c. “Can you believe it???” she said. “The carpets!!! they peed on the carpets!!!”
  - d. “Disgusting,” the other replied, “and what about the furniture?”
  - e. “Ruined!” she said “It’ll all have to be thrown out. There’s beer stains, food, God knows what else. And the smell!”
  - f. “I don’t understand about the neighbors” her friend continued “. . . didn’t they complain?”
  - g. “Are you kidding?” she cried. “The neighbors were rentals too - the whole thing was one big party!”
  - h. “Thank God you have insurance.” her friend added.
  - i. “That is not the point” - she said. “These kids; what did they think, they owned the place?”
  - j. After a moment, her friend said, “Well evidently at least for the weekend they thought they did.”
2. Maybe you have had such experiences; or maybe not - nevertheless, it should sound familiar or at least it should look that way.
  - a. For let me ask you-
    - i. Why is it that militias fight, millions and millions suffer and very countries that they claim that they are fighting for: Somalia, Darfur and of course, Iraq are destroyed in the process?
    - ii. Why is it that glaciers melt, the icecaps shrink, sea levels rise and in the face of universal scientific consensus that we are destroying the environment, we do nothing?
    - iii. Why is it that millions die each year from hunger when only a few hours away by plane there are whole nations that are eating themselves to death?
  - b. Why? Maybe because we think we own the place.
    - i. Oh not forever, because we know we are not forever.
      - (1) But if we have enough money, and enough power we think we can
        - (a) use what we want,
        - (b) abuse what we want
        - (c) do with our world and with others whatever we want.
3. The Romans in Jesus’ day felt thought the same.
  - a. For in fact they believed they did own the place;
    - i. That their emperor had the divine mandate to bring Roman culture and civilization to all the world.
  - b. Thus it was only logical that mandate would extend to a little backward piece of land on the eastern edge of the empire called Judea.
    - i. Here was a beautiful piece of property ripe for development
    - ii. A wonderful climate, close to the sea, perfect for farming.
    - iii. During the first century Romans began arriving in great numbers.

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- (1) they bought up land, built cities, laid miles of road.
    - (2) it was a time of incredible economic change in Judea.
  - iv. There was only one problem;
    - (1) there already WERE people in Judea; the Jews
    - (2) They had lived on that land for thousands of years;
      - (a) and now they were being evicted.
    - (3) they had farmed the soil for millennia
      - (a) and now it belong to someone else.
    - (4) for centuries they believed that God gave this land to them;
    - (5) and now all of the sudden they woke up one day to discover their farms their homes their land belonged to someone else.
      - (a) and they were suddenly unemployed, poor and increasingly homeless.
- 4. These were the day laborers, the widows, the poor and dispossessed who fill Jesus stories, victims in a land where some thought the world belonged to them.
  - a. These were undoubtedly the people, who were with Jesus that Sabbath morning in his home town, when he got up to read from the prophet Isaiah.
  - b. His words might seem strange, even inappropriate to us;
    - i. After all, what could promises of liberty, healing, and freedom,
    - ii. mean to people who were poor oppressed and suffering?
- 5. Perhaps nothing to us; but they meant everything to them.
- 6. Because they knew that Jesus was quoting from that part of Isaiah where he speaks of a year called a Jubilee year.
  - a. And while that word might sound quaint to our ears;
    - i. what it should do is strike fear in our hearts.
  - b. For imagine a world where every fifty years,
    - i. any land we bought had to be returned to its owners?
  - c. Any property taken as repayment for a debt
    - i. had to be returned to the person to whom it once belonged
  - d. All debts had to be forgiven, all money lent, forgotten;
  - e. The land had to lay fallow
  - f. and all creation was given a year long Sabbath day of rest?
- 7. To the capitalist heart of our culture
  - a. which sees the world as ours to use and abuse
  - b. like a bunch of fratboys in a summer rental,
  - c. a jubilee year is a nightmare;
  - d. because it proclaims that the world does not belong to us; but to God.
- 8. Exactly. And that is why Jesus read that promise of jubilee
  - a. and why he promised the poor, the oppressed and the suffering people there listening to him, that this promise was fulfilled in him.
    - i. And thus reveals to the rich as well as the poor,
    - ii. the powerful as well as the powerless;
    - iii. those who think they own everything,
      - (1) and those who know they do not.
  - b. He would now be that jubilee; the way God reveals who the world really belongs

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- to; and that to follow him means to make those promises true.
- i. NO wonder they killed him.
  - (1) because no one wants to be reminded that we are not in control.
- 9. But Jesus doesn't need to remind us of that;
  - a. No; global warning reminds of that;
  - b. Famine and AIDS remind of that
  - c. Escalating violence and the threat of war without end reminds us of that
- 10. What Jesus does is promise us that it doesn't have to be this way;
  - a. That it is within our power to work for justice for the poor,
  - b. Liberty for those who are oppressed
  - c. And peace for those who suffer the effects of our wars.
- 11. And we begin by realizing the meaning of that word, jubilee.
  - a. That our job is not to abuse what we have been given,
    - i. but to use it, wisely for the benefit of others and not just ourselves.
- 12. Because one day we will have to give it back to the one who truly owns it;
  - a. for that too is the meaning of jubilee.
- 13. *Jubilee* might seem a strange topic to preach on today, when I know that so many of you here were expecting me to speak about the addition of Nativity parish you our own.
  - a. But in reality this is the whole reason I focus on it.
    - i. Because the temptation will be to see this in terms of acquisition and merger
    - ii. To see it in terms of ownership-
    - iii. to see it in terms of them belonging to us.
    - iv. But Jesus isn't just preaching to those people in his synagogue 2,000 years ago about jubilee; he is preaching to us
    - v. He is reminding us that it isn't about them becoming part of us
      - (1) because we are all of us already part of him, members of his body as St. Paul puts it.
    - vi. He is reminding us that it isn't about ownership or merger;
      - (1) because we are all of us already one in him.
    - vii. No he is promising us that when we worship together, pray for each other and serve one another as members of his body
    - viii. We don't have to wait for some jubilee year to make things right;
      - (1) when we do things every year is a jubilee year; because that jubilee present in Jesus and is made real in us.