

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me...

Hi, My name is Melissa Logsdon, and I serve NCF as associate pastor.

I'll say it again: the Spirit of the Lord is upon me...

I say this, not to brag, but because I'm in good company in declaring this.

This is the same Spirit that Isaiah declared was upon him, and he went on to boldly declare God's invitational plan to set things back to right. Even when, or especially because, the circumstances in his country were about to go from bad to worse.

This is the same Spirit that was with Jesus in the wilderness for 40 days during his temptation and with Jesus as he unrolled the scroll to read this portion of Isaiah: declaring that this time of setting things aright had come to fruition.

This is the same Spirit that journeyed with Moses as he led God's people through the wilderness for 40 years.

This is the same Spirit that fell on 70 to help Moses lead God's people. And then Moses went on to declare in Numbers 11:29 that he wished this same Spirit would be upon all the Lord's people.

This is the same Spirit that came upon all Jesus' followers at Pentecost.

And,  
it is the same Spirit that was with those who gathered 50 years ago in forming New Covenant Fellowship.

The same Spirit that has been with this fellowship these past 50 years, that is with us today, and that will be with us, God willing, for the next 50 years.

So when I say "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me", I don't say this as one full of hubris, but rather, rightly declaring God's presence with me. Declaring as one among all God's people, sharing this same experience.

I stand here today, humbled to be part of what God's Spirit is doing among and through God's people to bring more of God's Kingdom into fruition—this setting all things to right.

When Isaiah declared these words, his nation was splintered; there was war all around them and the ongoing threat of siege. The people of God were very similar to the surrounding nations. They were living not relying on God, but rather on themselves. And not looking to help others, but only out for themselves.

And yet, in the midst of those circumstances, or maybe because of them, the prophet Isaiah boldly declared God's Spirit with him and shares about the vision of the kingdom of God: Good news for the poor. God's favor coming to all those people that have been the "other": the poor, the oppressed, the wounded, the imprisoned...all things being set aright.

When Jesus declared these words, his nation was controlled by the ruling empire of his day. There were many people oppressed under the ruling system. Even though Jesus didn't plan to overthrow the Romans, he was declaring a plan to work to bring true restoration to people in their relationship with God and with one another. But to the listener, for Jesus to declare the time of God's favor in the face of his current surroundings must have seemed like non-sense.

And yet, by God's Spirit, both Isaiah and Jesus were able to boldly declare freedom and restoration in the face of oppression all around them.

Our nation today, our world today, faces many of the same problems that Isaiah and Jesus faced when they declared these words.

Can I, can we, declare what they declared?

With God's Spirit with us—

bring good news to the poor?

bind up the brokenhearted?

proclaim release for captives?

liberation for prisoners?

A bit of contextualization that I obtained from "The New Testament In Color, a multi-ethnic Bible commentary":

When Jesus read this scripture and then went on to declare that it had been fulfilled that day...that the day of the Lord's favor had come...well, Jesus wasn't just talking about his people, his hometown. Jesus goes on to reference miracles Elijah and Elisha did outside Israel, and goes on to declare in Luke 4:43 NRSVUE

"I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other cities also, for I was sent for this purpose."

Sounds like good news to me, however, upon hearing Jesus say this good news is also for those considered "outsiders and nobodies" the villagers in his hometown were filled with anger. So what does Jesus do? Does he back peddle? Or put the mission on a back burner till a more convenient moment, or when he gets the support from his hometown? No, he goes on to do the very things he mentioned he was sent to be about.

So what does this mean for us, for NCF?

As you will hear in the service today, and know from our history, NCF has been and plans to continue to follow Jesus in being outward focused. Since coming on as associate pastor, I've helped our fellowship step out and reach out in even more ways with more people. For two years in a row, we have hosted a table at the CU Pride Fest Fair, giving cups of cold water,

candy, and love to the fair participants. And just last month, we hosted in our sanctuary a book reading by Nico Lang on transgender youth in America and had a little Q&A and resource fair for transgender youth and their supporters in our community.

What I love about Jesus quoting from Isaiah, is that Jesus says, it's not just for a distant time, it's not just for every 50 years at Jubilee, but rather, the year of the Lord's favor is here, now. And we get to join in this setting of all things to right!