

Reflections from a United Methodist Pastor

January 10, 2021

Lesson 6

Jesus Announces Good News

Luke 7:18-28

This week's text has me wandering off into several random thoughts.

In Luke 7:22, Jesus says that in his ministry, there is good news for the poor. We usually think of the poor as those without economic resources. The word being translated is *ptōchōs*, a word that literally means someone who is cringing or bent over (as a beggar might be). Think about it: You may have food in the refrigerator and money in the bank, but you are still bent over with concerns. You are *ptōchōs*. Bent over with worry. Bent over with doubt. Bent over with anxiety. Bent over with loss. And the word is that the power and presence of Jesus Christ comes as good news to such people.

Now, take that thought a little farther down the road. The apostle Paul wrote that the church is the body of Christ (Ephesians 1:22-23; Colossians 1:18). In what ways are we, the church, ministering to the *ptōchōs* among us, in our neighborhood, around our world? How are we bringing good news to such individuals?

John the Baptizer had a limited view of what the Christ would be like. In Luke 3:17, John says that he thinks the Messiah will separate the wheat from the husks and then will burn the husks with fire that cannot be put out. So, when John heard about Jesus who was involved in works of healing and restoring life, he must have wondered, "Is this the one? It's not what I expected." So, John sent a couple of his followers and instructed them to go and find out about this Jesus (Luke 7:18-19). This is when Jesus talked about all the healing and helping he had been doing. He wanted, as we say, to put the *em-phas-is* on the right *syl-la-ble*. (Sorry, I couldn't resist!)

What place and privilege do you have? What recognition do you receive from others? What office do you hold in the church? How comfortable are you with our cultural values? Don't put too much stock in all of that; Jesus said the least in the kingdom is better off than any of that.

Prayer: As you prepare this lesson, let your prayer begin: "Surprising God, you have shown us in Jesus Christ what our journey is to be like; that makes me a bit nervous. Help me move on this path, knowing that your grace is sufficient."

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