

SERMON  
January 21, 2007  
"Proclaiming good news"

The other day a young woman I know came into my Habitat office  
and held out her left hand.

"Look what I've got!" she said.

It was a brand new engagement ring.

"It's beautiful!" I said.

Her face glowed with pleasure

and she told me how her boyfriend asked her to marry him.

She'd come to me to share the good news of her engagement.

They've lived together four years, she said,

and this time they were going to have just a small wedding

that would be focused on them.

Both of their first weddings were lavish affairs

that tried to please everyone

but ended up just being stressful and empty for them.

She was just radiating with happiness as she told me how

her teenage daughters had come to accept her boyfriend

and how they call him 'Dad' now,

and how she and her boyfriend

are comfortable spending time with his ex-wife and his kids.

She glowed as she poured out her hopes and shared her good news with me.

I felt honored and blessed,

and I tried to reflect back all the joy she exuded.

"Wonderful!" I said. "I'm very happy for you."

Now that was *good news* she had to bring.

The [Collect for Sunday](#) says, "Give us grace, O God,  
to answer readily the call of our Savior Jesus Christ  
and proclaim to all people the *Good News* of his salvation."

We're called to tell the good news about Jesus.

It's not hard to tell good news if we really believe it's good news.

The young woman who came into my office  
was bursting with her good news –  
and I think that's the way it should be for us.

If we really believe the good news of Jesus,

It's not hard for us to share the good news.

What is the good news of Jesus?

I would guess that most of us have heard the good news of Jesus  
proclaimed in such a way that it didn't really sound like good news.  
It sounded more like narrow-mindedness  
or guilt  
or condemnation.

But the good news about Jesus really IS good news,  
and it's good news for all people.

The Collect says, "Give us grace to proclaim *to all people*  
the good news of his salvation.

What is the good news?

I think the good news is simply that God loves us.

Now that may seem like such a simple and self-evident message

that it doesn't have to be over-worked.

But we get so many messages  
that are exactly the opposite of that message.

We hear that we're not lovable because  
we're not good enough,  
we're not smart enough,  
rich enough, thin enough.

But the good news is that we ARE lovable  
and we're loved by God.

Sometimes it's hard for us to hear the message of good news  
because we're burdened by our inadequacies and our failures.  
How could God love me, we wonder.

But the good news is that in spite of everything, God loves us.  
We can't hear it enough.

I once heard of a priest who was being interviewed  
to be the rector of a church.  
The search committee sat him down at a big table  
and the chairman asked him very sternly,  
"What I want to know is,  
are your sermons based on the Bible?"

And he said, "Well, I really only have one sermon,  
and I just preach it over and over again in different ways.  
And my one sermon is basically this: God loves you."  
Well, he got the job.

People want to hear good news.

People NEED to hear the good news.

The Gospel story for today says.

“Jesus, filled with the Holy Spirit,  
came to Galilee and began to teach in their synagogues,  
and he was praised by everyone.”

Why was he praised by everyone?

Because he was bringing good news, that’s why!

Jesus came to Nazareth, his hometown,  
and he entered the synagogue there,  
and they asked him to teach from the scriptures.

He unrolled the scroll of the prophet Isaiah until he got to Isaiah 61.

He read, “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 release to the captives  
and recovery of sight to the blind,  
to set free those who are oppressed,  
and to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

When he got done reading, he sat down in the teacher’s chair.

The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were on him.

He said, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”

Well, they were stunned by what he said

because this scripture was talking about the Messiah  
who was going to come set the people free,  
and Jesus essentially said,

“This scripture is talking about me.

I'm the good news that Isaiah was talking about."

What Jesus was saying was that

his presence among them was the good news.

He himself was the good news.

"Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

The good news of the Christian faith is that Jesus was born for us,

he lived and died for us, he was raised for us,

he is present with us through his Spirit,

and he will come again for us.

Now that's good news.

God loves us!

And it's good news not just for us but for everyone.

It's such good news that it's hard to keep it in.

Just like the young woman in my office

bursting with the news about her engagement,

we ought to be bursting with the good news also.

God loves us.

Now each person needs to hear the good news in their own way.

To a person who is starving, good news is a package of food.

To a person who is lonely, the good news is a friend on the doorstep.

To a person who's discouraged, the good news is a word of encouragement.

To a person who is wracked with guilt, the good news is forgiveness.

But the good news underlying all these expressions of good news is this:

"You are loved by God,

and we know this in Jesus Christ.”

As followers of Jesus, we are called to proclaim good news.

We are anointed, sent out,

we’re commissioned to spread good news.

And we’re called to be a community of good news,

a place where people can come and find a welcome.

Give us grace, O God,

to answer readily the call of our Savior Jesus Christ

and proclaim to all people the good news of his salvation.

Amen.