

[Spirituality](#)

[Pencil Preaching](#)



by Pat Marrin

[View Author Profile](#)

[patrickjmarrin@gmail.com](mailto:patrickjmarrin@gmail.com).

## [\*\*Join the Conversation\*\*](#)

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. [Learn more](#)

January 6, 2021

[Share on Facebook](#)[Share on Twitter](#)[Email to a friend](#)[Print](#)



“Today this scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing.” (Luke 4:18).

*1 John 4:19—5:4; Luke 4:14-22a*

Each of the Gospels seeks to show that Jesus was fulfilling the scriptures. Luke’s Gospel is especially intent on showing that Jesus was consciously discerning his identity and mission as he went by using the scriptures as a kind of script for his emerging agenda. When he was asked to read from the scroll in the synagogue in Nazareth, he found Isaiah’s description of a special servant overshadowed by the Spirit and anointed to bring good news to the poor, sight to the blind, freedom for captives and the oppressed.

Isaiah 61 is a continuation of a series of four Servant Songs or poems in Isaiah revealing an alternative to other more militant depictions of the promised messiah, son of King David, who would restore the glory days of Israel with royal power. Isaiah’s “Suffering Servant” would save Israel not by force but by offering himself as an offering for the sins of the people. He would not come from the top down but from the bottom up, a humble servant familiar with suffering and filled with compassion. By choosing this passage, Jesus was identifying himself with this servant. He shocks his hearers by saying, in fact, that the scripture is describing him.

To put this dramatic scene in context, Jesus had just come from his desert encounter with Satan, the “tempter,” who laid out for him three ways to succeed as messiah:

bread, power and miracles. Each temptation is clothed in a scripture quotation. Jesus replies with other scriptures that emphasize devotion to the Word, trust in Providence and obedience to God alone. In each instance, Jesus is refining his own decision to accept the role of Suffering Servant. And it is this role that he declares for himself in Nazareth. This will be his mission, and Isaiah 61 serves as his inaugural address.

This Gospel comes at a propitious moment with inescapable resonance to our national crisis of renewal and resolve going forward at the start of another political cycle and new leadership. The struggle we are witnessing in the transfer of authority highlights the contrast between two very different visions of public service. Whatever persuasion, party affiliation or agenda people might bring to this moment, it offers a timely chance to review our own ideals and vision of leadership to imagine the impact it would have if the following words were quoted in the next inaugural address we hear:

*The spirit of the Lord is upon me and has anointed me and sent me to bring good news to the poor, to proclaim release for prisoners and sight to the blind, to let the broken victims go free and to announce of year of favor from the Lord (Isaiah 61:1-2).*

Advertisement