

“Jesus’ Inaugural Address”

Luke 4: 14-30

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Presidential Inaugurals are interesting, aren’t they? Last weekend’s inaugural had all the ingredients necessary to make one memorable, a charming couple, an eloquent speech, an adoring crowd and even a contingent of angry protestors.

Watching the festivities last weekend reminded me of Jesus’ inaugural as recorded in Luke 4:14-30. I saw some similarities, in particular, an eloquent speech, an adoring crowd and a contingent of angry protestors. I don’t know how charming Jesus was, but I suspect he had a magnetic personality, too.

The purpose of an inaugural address is to reveal to an audience who the speaker is and what he or she intends to do. I thought President Bush did that quite well. I saw his heart and have a better understanding of what he wants to do. I give him high marks for the brevity and clarity of his speech.

If I may be a bit presumptuous, I also give Jesus high marks for the brevity and clarity of his inaugural address. Luke recorded that speech in 4:18-19. “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because He has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” Luke continued by telling his readers that Jesus rolled up the scroll of the prophet Isaiah and sat down. While all the eyes of the synagogue were fastened upon him, he said, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”

If, as I mentioned a moment ago, an inaugural address is meant to reveal to an audience who a speaker is and what he or she has come to do, then what did Jesus’ speech tell us about him? Who was he and what did he come to do? Let’s see what we can surmise from this inaugural address.

First of all, who was Jesus? To say the least, he was someone very special. He was more than merely Joseph’s son or a Galilean carpenter. He was even greater than the prophet he quoted, for he implied that he was the fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy. So, from this speech, we understand Jesus to be a bold, confident, and compassionate holy man who was filled with the Spirit of God. And what is the Spirit of God? It is the spirit of goodness, mercy, justice, honor, integrity, courage and love. It is the best of the best and the finest that mankind can know.

President Bush wanted us to know who he is, didn’t he? So, he used words like civility, courage, compassion and character. Jesus did not use those same words, but I have to believe he embodied those concepts.

What did he come to do? If I may refer to the President one more time, Mr. Bush told us that he “wants to build a single nation of justice and opportunity.” That’s an admirable goal.

What about Jesus? What was his mission? To help people. He came to give a beaten down people hope of a better way to live and a better life to have. He came to free people from bondage, physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually so they could achieve the potential God placed inside of them. He came to open people’s eyes so they

could see what had been hidden, especially the majesty and nearness of God. He came to change the world, the whole world, one person at a time.

Did Jesus succeed? Not that day. As a matter of fact, after Jesus spoke in the synagogue, the hometown crowd turned against him and tried to kill him. Why? It was not the theme of liberation that upset the people, it was who he wanted to include. He wanted to help everyone, Jew and Gentile. He wanted to save the whole world and that was unacceptable for his religious peers. And so, even his inaugural had protestors, dangerous ones at that, who tried to keep him from accomplishing his mission.

They did not have the final word, though. Jesus ministered for three years in the flesh helping people overcome all kinds of problems and has been doing so in the Spirit ever since the resurrection. Down through the ages, countless lives have been touched and changed by him, including mine and hopefully yours.

One of my favorite poems is by Lois Blanchard Eades, "One Solitary Life." Let me share the final paragraph.

"All the armies that ever marched, all the navies that ever sailed, all the parliaments that ever sat and all the kings that ever reigned, put together, have not affected the life of man upon this earth as has that One Solitary Life."

I hope this includes your life, too!