

<sup>14</sup>Then Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding country. <sup>15</sup>He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone. <sup>16</sup>When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, <sup>17</sup>and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written: <sup>18</sup>“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, <sup>19</sup>to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” <sup>20</sup>And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. <sup>21</sup>Then he began to say to them, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”

For the past several weeks, you have heard sermons from this pulpit telling you to Re-Think the idea of “Church”. To think about how it would be if instead of thinking of the church as a building, as a place you go on Sunday morning, you thought of church as something you did. What if the United Methodist slogan of “Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors” wasn’t a description of who we are, but rather a description of What We Do! In our sermons, we’ve heard themes of Searching for answers as the Wise Men did, of Committing your life to following Christ, and of using our gifts to Act as the body of Christ in the world. And today, ironically enough, my sermon is titled, Teach.

I say ironically, because I have a long history in my family with teachers. See, my mother was a teacher. My sister and her husband, both teachers. My step-sister? Teacher. When I got married, I married a teacher. However, I had always

said that I didn't want to be like everyone else in my family. I always said that I did not want to be a teacher. Well, we can all see how well that turned out.

You see, I was active in the church, helping with a Sunday School class and serving on committees, but I felt like I should be doing more. I felt like I should be working within the church, but I didn't know what that would entail. At the time, I was thinking of working in a church office as an administrator or support staff. Teaching was the furthest thing from my mind. But one Sunday, the youth director came up to me and told me he was leaving for another church. He said it wasn't being announced yet, but he wanted to let me know. And the entire time he is talking I am thinking, "Why tell me?" See, we had been friendly to each other in the halls, but never been close. So why tell me?

As I was sitting in the sanctuary during worship and pondering this question, a voice said to me, "Well, you wanted to work in the church didn't you? Here is your chance." And so I went for it. And I have to tell you, I was terrified. I was worried that I wouldn't be any good at it. Worried the kids wouldn't like me, that I wouldn't be able to form a connection. And I was worried that I wouldn't enjoy it.

Well, I tell you...I was. They did. And I didn't just enjoy it, I loved it!

In our reading today, it doesn't say that Jesus decided he wanted to be a teacher. It says that Jesus was filled with the power of the Holy Spirit and he began to teach. And the lesson he taught, from Isaiah, says the same thing; that the

Spirit of the Lord was upon him to bring the good news to the poor. I am reminded of the story of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came down upon the disciples like a fire and they rushed out into the streets and began teaching to any and all who would listen.

This is the kind of teaching I want to talk to you about today. For many of you, the word “Teach” may draw up memories of boring lectures delivered in front of a blackboard to snoozing children sitting in rows. Well, I want you to put those memories away, because that is not the kind of teaching I want to talk to you about. When you hear the word “Teach”, I want you to think of those disciples on Pentecost, filled with the Spirit, teaching so enthusiastically that people around them thought they were drunk. When you hear the word “Teach” I want you to picture someone who is **SEARCHING** for the answers in their faith; who is **COMMITTED** to following Christ; who is willing to **ACT** out their convictions in the world, and **TEACH** them to others!

Now there are a lot of different ways that people can Teach, aren't there. To paraphrase today's reading, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to **TEACH** release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to **TEACH** the year of the Lord's favor.” The word I replaced in those verses was “proclaim”. Because, the way I see it, there are two main methods used to teach

someone. You can teach them by talking; whether it is a lecture or discussion or giving someone guidance; or we can teach through actions and by example. Jesus used both methods in his lifetime delivering sermons and parables, telling stories and answering questions; as well as eating meals with those who were outcast, healing the sick, and protecting those unfairly judged. Everything we know about Jesus, all the tales retold for us, tell of constant teaching. Good News to the Poor, Release to the Captives, Sight to the Blind, Freedom to the Opressed, and above and through it all, the idea that all of this came from a God who loves us and wants us to love Him in return.

When Jesus appeared to his Disciples the final time after his resurrection, he gave them one last task, what we call the Great Commission. Jesus said to them, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Jesus' last command to his disciples was that they should teach the nations of the world, and that command comes down to us today. Understanding this, when we look at today's reading we see that we, like Isaiah, whose words Jesus read, are anointed by the Holy Spirit and called to bring good news to the poor, proclaim

release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

Now...when Pastor Bromliegh, Pastor Ronnie and I sat down a month and a half ago to plan these sermons and this series...this seemed like a simple sermon. I could talk about the teaching and the words of Isaiah calling us to do good works in the world. I would tie it back in to Pastor Ronnie's sermon on Acting in the world, and it would all come together as a nice, fairly generic, sermon on social justice.

But then, less than two weeks ago, the earthquake hit Haiti. And suddenly, my generic words just don't cut it anymore. I have watched the last two weeks as the sorrow and the reality of the situation became more and more clear; over One hundred and ten thousand people are dead...over 600 thousand additional people are without homes, the countries life-line, the port, is destroyed, and many of the places that you would need to help in an emergency like this, places like police stations, hospitals, and yes, church buildings, were left nothing but rubble.

I watched with sadness and anger as supposed Christians preached their gospel of hate to the media saying that all of this was the hand of God punishing the people of Haiti for the supposed sins of their ancestors, and I prayed for them, as well as for the people of Haiti.

I watched the pleas for help and supplies fill my e-mail inbox, and I thanked God that the College youth had been able to spend a day, during their retreat the week before the earth quake, filling boxes with the exact health kits that the people would need in Haiti. The same kinds of health kits that our Sunday School classes (are/were) assembling today.

I have watched with joy as governments, corporations and millions of individuals around the world have stepped forward to lend aid to a country and a people in terrible need. And I watched Friday night as dozens of networks used their primetime slots to televise musicians, actors, reporters and doctors trying to use their fame and their gifts to help gather more funds and support for the beleaguered people of Haiti.

This is no longer just a generic sermon. This is a teachable moment. This is a time where we can either gather as a congregation and just GO to church or it is a time where we can step forward as a congregation and BE the church in the world! This is a time where we can go out and Teach the world through our words and our actions what it means to be a follower of Christ!

As with Isaiah, the Spirit of the Lord is upon us. God's grace is active in all of our lives, affirmed by our baptism into the body of Christ and Confirmed by our acceptance as a member of the Church. We are anointed, each and every one of us to bring the Good News to the poor. We are anointed, we are chosen, we are

commissioned by Christ himself to go forth and teach all the nations of the world what it means to be a follower of the God of mercy and love.

There is so much need. Until the port is operational, most relief efforts are having to go through Haiti's airport with its one working runway. For food and medical supplies alone, it is estimated that one hundred planes carrying 75 tons of supplies each will need to land every day. That is one plane landing and unloading every fifteen minutes. Help is flooding in from all over the world, but we need to do our part as well.

You may think that what you have to offer isn't much, but to a people who have lost everything, anything that we can do is a blessing. You can talk to pastor Bromleigh or one of the Sunday School teachers about the exact supplies needed for the health kits. You can go online to the United Methodist Committee on Relief website, [UMCOR.org](http://UMCOR.org) and make a donation, or you can drop an offering in the plate or to the office with a note that it is for Haiti. Imagine if everyone in this congregation gave five dollars...imagine if everyone gave ten dollars or twenty! Individually it may not seem like much but we are not individuals, we are Christ's Body, the church, and together, we can do miracles!

Yesterday, a man was pulled alive from the rubble of a hotel. He had been trapped underground for eleven days. But people could hear him tapping, and they convinced a reporter, who convinced some rescue workers to start digging. They

worked for days, and when they finally got him out, and he was dehydrated, but otherwise alive and unharmed. According to CNN, the team of Greek, American and French rescue workers were overcome with emotion when their work was rewarded. As the rescued man was taken away by the medics, one of the workers looked up at the sky and said, "This is God."

God is there! Rejoicing with every victory in the relief efforts and mourning with every family who lost a loved one. God is there! And we should be as well.

Everyone right now, take a second and look at the front page of your bulletin. There are words that you may have forgotten or overlooked, but they are the Vision and Mission statement of our congregation.

**Our Vision is:**

**To be a hub of Christ Directed activity  
radiating out to the world  
from the heart of St. Charles.**

Say that with me! ((Repeat))

**Loving God • Serving Others • Growing Together**  
**“We do this mission to reach our vision”**

Say that last sentence with me. ((Repeat))

I've thrown a lot of images and examples at you today. I've told you my story, and how I set foot on the path of being a teacher for the youth, and I wonder,

did it resonate with you? Do you ever feel like you should be doing more? Well, now is your chance.

I talked about the disciples at Pentecost and how they were filled with the enthusiasm brought on by the Holy Spirit and rushed out to teach and proclaim their faith to the world. May you be filled with such fire.

I've talked about the great commission of Jesus to the disciples and I've talked about the images and the news reports that we have all heard this past two weeks and I hope that you see what we all need to do.

Teach the world through our words and our example what it means to be a Christian. To reach out our hands in compassion and to **BE** the church!

If we can do that...if we can do that, then as Jesus said, Today this scripture will have been fulfilled in your hearing.

Amen.