



Daily Reflections

LOVE SETS US FREE!

By Sr. Jayne Helmlinger, CSJ

Today's First Reading and an Excerpt from the Gospel

Beloved, we love God because he first loved us. If anyone says, "I love God," but hates his brother, he is a liar; for whoever does not love a brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. This is the commandment we have from him: Whoever loves God must also love his brother. Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is begotten by God, and everyone who loves the Father loves also the one begotten by him. In this way we know that we love the children of God when we love God and obey his commandments. For the love of God is this, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome, for whoever is begotten by God conquers the world. And the victory that conquers the world is our faith.

1 JOHN 4:19–5:4

He came to Nazareth, where he had grown up, and went according to his custom into the synagogue on the sabbath day. He stood up to read and was handed a scroll of the prophet Isaiah. He unrolled the scroll and found the

passage where it was written:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord.

LUKE 4:14-22

Reflection

Once again, the theme of loving one another is prominent in the first reading from 1 John. I chuckle to myself because over and over again in scripture, we hear “love one another.” I imagine the repetitive nature of this message is because it is a monumental task to consistently love our brothers and sisters. It can get tiresome, yet John reminds us that God’s commandments are not burdensome; in fact, they ought to set us free!

If I have on my rose-tinted glasses, I can experience this; yet I stumble. There are times when calling forth love toward another can seem almost impossible. It could just be that I’m having a rough day or I’m in the “dark night of the soul” in my own faith journey. Regardless, each of us is called to love our brothers and sisters. Calling upon the Holy Spirit to help and guide me is what sees me through these rough patches where love seems inaccessible. It’s the strength and perseverance of God which feeds and nourishes me, allowing that sense of being “too burdened to love” to fade from my consciousness and prompting me to love.

In the Gospel reading from Luke, I find it helpful to picture myself among those present in Nazareth when Jesus stood up and read the words from the Prophet Isaiah. In that moment, in his hometown, Jesus proclaimed for all to hear who he was -- the Son of God. In this part of the gospel, the response of those present was to be “amazed.”

Are you and I amazed at the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives? Can we capture the “preciousness of this moment” where Jesus fulfills the prophecy from Isaiah on this day of January 2025? I want to feel that same amazement and take in the power of this prophecy fulfilled in Jesus. The Spirit of the Lord was upon Jesus and the Spirit of the Lord is within each of us. Be amazed!



For Pondering

- How are you amazed by Jesus in your life? There is spiritual energy that flows from this amazement; how will you gently unleash it upon the world today?
- What captures your imagination about this scene where Jesus reveals he is the prophecy fulfilled from Isaiah? How does it influence your own faith response today?

For Prayer

May we seek to tap into the courage of Jesus that he demonstrated in this passage from Luke. Courage that flows from God enables us to move beyond ourselves and trust in the one who sends us forth into the world. May we

demonstrate this courage today as we go about our lives and seek out opportunities to experience the presence of God in others.

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