

Where do you find yourself in this story? There are really two characters, Jesus and the crowd. Who are we?

Of course – the crowd. Listening to the Savior read from the scroll. Hear the awesome things Jesus has to say about us. Sit at his feet and watch as he fulfills the prophecy of Isaiah. Jesus is the one! Finally!

“All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth.”

We are the crowd. We love Jesus. He is so pretty, so strong. So wonderful. So loving. So ideal. The Bible tells us so, right? If we don't love Jesus, there is no point to church, no ministry, to a life of baptism and those baptismal promises.

But...do you love Jesus, all the time.  
Everything Jesus says. He says some pretty radical things. But if we are to follow God – we have to take it all together.

The crowd, that loved his words, quickly turned on Jesus when he started saying things that they didn't like. The crowd praises Jesus, and after that, he says “Oh, sorry. I didn't mean you. The day of Jubilee isn't for you.”

The day of Jubilee is pivotal for Jesus. The day when God's justice and mercy is clearly seen and felt. When God heals the land. When years of oppression are reversed. A day of equity, renewal, wholeness. But the crowd are the very ones who used the rules to oppress people away from God.

The Jubilee isn't about the crowd in the temple. The Jubilee, Jesus mission, living a baptized life - is to bring good news to the poor... to 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. Not to the privileged, but to the disadvantaged.

We love Jesus' when the message of salvation is about us, but not about people we don't like.

Jesus – like John the Baptist – challenges the crowd to think differently. He challenges his hometown about who is on bottom of society and who is on top. And they are offended, enraged, and they rebel. They try to hurl him off a cliff. The honeymoon period is over. No more love for Jesus.

Who in their right mind would want to help the poor, the widow, the leper? He must be a lunatic or a liar, because surely Jesus is not Lord.

Do you still want to be the crowd? We want to be the recipients of God's grace and justice, we want to be those in favor. But we are the crowd; we can't all of sudden switch roles. We are the crowd because we can admit and recognize the church is composed of insiders – and Jesus surprises us by announcing that he came for the outsiders.

Recently outsiders is defined by two stories. The Chicago torture of a special-needs teen by 4 others and the death penalty sentence of Dylan Roof in South Carolina.

First, the victims of those horrific acts deserve grace, God's love, and justice. They deserve Jubilee – oppressed by violence, redeemed by God.

But can we also admit jubilee, renewal, healing, wholeness for the outsiders – Roof and the Chicago young adults.

Can we call them children of God – deserving not of a death penalty, but of resurrection? Transformation?

What would it look like if the offenders looked at the victims as God's children? We are called to do the same for the offenders.

Our mission – as Jesus' mission – is to care for the least of these – the victim and the offender.

We do that simply by how we talk about these national events. We don't condone violence – ever- but also we recognize that most people who commit crimes are unstable, sick, and are in desperate need of healing.

Free the captive and oppressed, bring good news. We turn away, or celebrate death – we care for the hurt and hurting...because hurt people, hurt people.

It's easy to pick out people who don't deserve grace, salvation, forgiveness. Just look in the mirror.

As people of baptism – we care for creation and the people God made. We love and forgive, despite our biases. Even if we can't love and forgive...we pray and trust that God does. God can love, forgive, transform beyond our ability . We pray and hope for salvation, redemption for all people.

Maybe that offends you – promises of heaven shouldn't be for *them* right? The crowds didn't like it when Jesus challenged their views either.

**But in the offenses is truth... of God's grace... toward all people.  
That's good news.**

Salvation for Luke isn't about the cross. Salvation comes from Jesus' presence, and his Jubilee reversal of the social order.

Healing and wholeness is about crushing the hierarchy power of the world, so that all of us – rich/poor, saint/sinner, insider/outsider, victim/offender, are brought together to eat at the same table.

Jesus is salvation, not because we confess, believe, or get baptized, but because Jesus is present with us. Everywhere he goes – salvation shows up. Today the prophecy is fulfilled – because he is there. Today is born for you a savior; today you will be with me in paradise; for I coming to your house today – all through the gospel – Jesus doesn't just offer salvation. He is salvation... by giving purpose and status to those that the crowd has pushed outside of the promise.

We've been that crowd. We are that crowd.

But we are also "little Christ's" as Luther says.

We are amazed by Jesus, and challenged, maybe offended. But constantly we are reminded –that we don't live a baptized life for our own benefit. We aren't here to cure ourselves, or to hear how great we are, or how God's promise is reserved for us. We aren't here to be the crowd.

Baptismal life – worship, service - is not for us crowded here; it is for hurting people outside of here. We exist for those who aren't here yet. We reflect that light of Christ in the darkness; we tell the old, old story; we point to God's love and grace. Jesus – God's word- works through us, gathered and sent, fed and nourished, walking wet,

Jubilee salvation is felt and seen and heard in you. We are Christ's presence of salvation to others. We know God has saved us— but others may feel outside that promise. Jesus mission long ago and ours in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, is to make sure everyone knows the kingdom of God is for them, so that together we celebrate with jubilation all are beloved children of God.