

In the olden days, land was the prime wealth. One who had the most land was the wealthiest. It is also true today, even though the wealth takes many different forms nowadays. Land was the basis of one's livelihood, and the Bible allowed each person's livelihood to be transferred to another only temporarily: it is to be returned to the original owner every 50 years. The Bible says that the land belongs to God, and we are strangers and sojourners in that land. Its principle is laid out in the Jubilee in Leviticus 25:

¹³ "In this year of jubilee each of you shall return to his property.

²³ The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine; for you are strangers and sojourners with me. ²⁴ And in all the country you possess, you shall grant a redemption of the land. ²⁵ "If your brother becomes poor, and sells part of his property, then his next of kin shall come and redeem what his brother has sold.

²⁸ But if he has not sufficient means to get it back for himself, then what he sold shall remain in the hand of him who bought it until

the year of jubilee; in the jubilee it shall be released, and he shall return to his property.

³⁹ "And if your brother becomes poor beside you, and sells himself to you, you shall not make him serve as a slave: ⁴⁰ he shall be with you as a hired servant and as a sojourner. He shall serve with you until the year of the jubilee; ⁴¹ then he shall go out from you, he and his children with him, and go back to his own family, and return to the possession of his fathers.

Every 50th year, the law mandated that the slaves who sold themselves for economic hardship to be freed; and the land, for the same reasons, to be returned to the original owners, for the rightful price.

In our reading of Luke, Jesus talks about the year of the Lord's favor. He is referring to the Jubilee outlined in Leviticus, in his reading from prophet Isaiah 61. Jesus makes it clear that he is doing this, because he has been anointed by the Holy Spirit, and proclaimed that this prophecy by Isaiah has been fulfilled that day in the hearing of his audience.

What could have Jesus meant by referring to the poor, as in the good news to the poor? The year of the Lord's favor makes no sense to me, if the good news is not for the poor who cannot afford the groceries, who cannot send their kids to school, who cannot afford the decent healthcare, who cannot stay in an adequate housing, those who cannot get out of working odd and long hours at dead end jobs, who cannot shake off their addiction, and those who cannot voice out their plights, and those who have been systemically disenfranchised, because they are of a different race, gender, beliefs, and sexual orientation.

If the good news of Jesus Christ excludes those mentioned above, then, I must question: what good is the good news, and who are those people for whom the good news has been custom-tailored? What does Jesus have in mind to do about the poor, the captives, the blind, and the oppressed that have been excluded?

What could have Jesus meant by proclaiming the release to the captives? Did he mean only those indentured servants who sold themselves due to the economic hardship as detailed in the Jubilee? Or, did Jesus mean the slaves like those in the ancient Egypt, too? Did Jesus also speak for the African slaves in the earlier times in America? Or, did Jesus mean those incarcerated in the prison, as well? Then, could Jesus have meant any one besides the economic slaves, whose life is tied to the exploitive occupation without any hope of becoming self-determinative and independent?

Or, did Jesus just mean only the "spiritual" bondage to the evil spirits and the devil, and did not really care for those who were in prison, in physical and/or economic slavery, who were oppressed in the society, at work, and in the marriage?

The year of the Lord's favor makes no sense to me, if Jesus meant only one thing, indentured

servanthood, as the Jubilee in Leviticus 25 refers to. The year of the Jubilee makes no sense to me, unless it includes the victims of all kinds of the human oppression and bondage that the human society invented—psychological, physical, emotional, political, social, and sexual.

Because of the economic consequences of the Jubilee, it has hardly ever been practiced, even in the law-observing Israel. Jubilee has remained a nice concept in the scriptures. As far as land is concerned, Jubilee would never be practiced. No one is going to return the land they have taken or bought from others, just because the Bible said so. As for the personal liberty, however, it is practicable. And we note that Jesus does not mention the restoration of the property, but refers only to the personal liberty. But that liberty has plenty of economic and political consequences.

What is notable is that the fact that Jesus proclaimed it the year

of the Lord's favor, by claiming that he was empowered by the Holy Spirit. You see, when most people think about being anointed by the Holy Spirit, they do not believe that it has the economic or political consequences. They tend to separate what is spiritual from what is economic and political. People believe that they can become spiritual, while practicing the behaviors that oppress and victimize others.

For Jesus, being spiritual inseparably has to do with what is economic and political. The Holy Spirit empowers his disciples to seek justice and righteousness in their immediate economic and political contexts.

The Bible witnesses today that being anointed by God's Spirit propelled Jesus to declare the year of the Lord's favor that nullifies all human activity that enslaves, oppresses, and impoverishes. The year of the Lord's favor even recovers the sight to the blind, against the factors that make a person

ignorant, prejudiced, and unenlightened.

This declaration forces us to ponder what make a person spiritual. Luke shows the readers how a person behaves, who has been anointed by the Holy Spirit. A person who is anointed by the Spirit does a specific thing: by following the spirit of the Jubilee, he or she commits to the liberation of people from the condition of any human oppression. That is the visible evidence that a person has become spiritual.

Maybe, we could become more spiritual than others by praying longer and more often. Maybe, we could become more spiritual than others by not drinking or smoking, by not engaging in gambling or pre-marital sex, or by believing that the earth is less than 12,000 years old. Maybe, we can become more spiritual than others by believing that marriage should be between only male and female.

But one thing we know for sure, what the person did, who was anointed by the Holy Spirit: he was driven out into the wilderness, tested by the devil for 40 days and 40 nights, was baptized as any other sinners were, and proclaimed the year of the Lord's favor, to preach the good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives, recovery of the sight to the blind, and to set at liberty those who are oppressed. These are the patent signs of being anointed by the Holy Spirit.

This is the behavior of the one who has been anointed by the Holy Spirit: he or she follows the spirit of the Jubilee, and practices it in his or her daily lives. That is what the Spirit of the Lord called the anointed one to do, and that is the sign that he or she is indeed spiritual.

If you do this, then, there is no doubt that you have been anointed by the Holy Spirit.