**The Breath of God: Indignant**

**8-9-20**

In 1984 a most unexpected film took the country by storm, eventually winning seven Academy Awards, including Best Picture and Best Actor. (Incredibly, both of the lead actors in the film were nominated for Best Actor.)

* The Movie was an 18th Century classical music biographical drama based loosely on the relationship between two composers: Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and Anotonio Salieri.
  + Now you get the idea as to just why it was an unexpected hit.
  + But the Movie, *Amadeus*, was a hit and is still considered one of the 100 best movies ever made.
* In the film, we are introduced to an old man, Antonio Salieri who from childhood had desired to be a composer of music, and promised God that if He made him a great composer, he would dedicate his whole life to Him.
  + And in the end, Salieri did become one of the greatest composers of the 18th century that you have never heard of.
    - Though perhaps you have heard of some of his students: Franz Schubert, Ludwig Von Beethoven, or Franz Liszt.
  + But for all of his accomplishments, Salieri’s work was overshadowed by a young, impetuous and vulgar upstart named Wolfgang Mozart.
    - For Salieri, as for most composers, it took many weeks or even months of arduous effort to compose a single piece of orchestral music.
    - But Mozart had been a true child prodigy, for whom great works of music would come quickly, as if they were already complete in his head from the moment he started writing.
      * In the movie, he is quoted as saying: *Here. It's all right here in my noodle. The rest is just scribbling. Scribbling and bibbling, bibbling and scribbling.*
    - But that “scribbling”, by Salieri’s own estimation was *like music I had never heard…it seemed to me that I was hearing the very voice of God.*
* But while Salieri could appreciate the music, he was indignant with God that he would produce it through the likes of Mozart.
  + In the film he complains to God that in Mozart, *You choose for your instrument a boastful, lustful, smutty infantile boy...and give me for reward only the ability to recognize the incarnation.*
  + *All I wanted was to sing to God.* Salieri says, *He gave me that longing... and then made me mute. Why? Tell me that. If He didn't want me to praise him with music, why implant the desire?*
  + But instead, *God was singing through this [vulgar] little man to all the world, unstoppable, making my defeat more bitter with every passing bar.*
  + It felt so unfair, so Salieri makes another vow to God of a different sort:
    - *Because you are unjust, unfair, unkind, I will block you. I swear it. I will hinder and harm your creature [Mozart] as far as I am able. I will ruin your incarnation.*
* Now whether this depiction does justice to the historical Salieri, I don’t know – but the movie version depicts a man filled with self-righteous indignation over what he saw as a slight from God.
  + He desired so deeply and worked so hard to be recognized as the greatest composer in all of Vienna…
  + Only to be displaced by a young man so gifted by God that the music simply flowed from his pen as naturally as water flows downstream.
    - And the worst part was that Mozart didn’t even appreciate the immensity of the gift he was given.
      * In fact, he squandered it in undisciplined and lackadaisical living.
      * In the end, Salieri is depicted as seeing himself as “the patron saint of the mediocre” when compared to Mozart.
  + The movie is a graphic depiction of the difference between simple jealousy and indignation.
    - For jealousy is simple coveting something someone else has.
    - Indignation is being offended that they even have it.

And such is the only explanation for what we find in Nazareth on the day of Jesus’ return to his hometown following his anointing with the Holy Spirit.

* As we saw last week, Luke records what Jesus said that day that he stood to speak in his home synagogue (Lk 4:14):

*14 And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee…*

*16 And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read. 17 And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written,*

*18 “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,*

*because he has anointed me*

*to proclaim good news to the poor.*

*He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives*

*and recovering of sight to the blind,*

*to set at liberty those who are oppressed,*

*19 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.”*

*20 And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. 21 And he began to say to them, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” 22 And all spoke well of him and marveled at the gracious words…*

* + This was one of Israel’s favorite Messianic passages…
    - For it declares that the Messiah would bring with his coming *the year of the Lord’s favor*, which we know from the Old Testament to be the year of Jubilee.
    - In its original form, Jubilee was a command to Israel to reset the nation’s economy to the way God had originally established it every 50 years.
      * Debts would be forgiven
      * Slaves would be set free
      * Lands would be restored.
    - But unlike the original instructions concerning the year of Jubilee in Leviticus, the Jews of Jesus’ day understood the Messianic promise of Jubilee to be the return of Israel’s sovereignty and land.
      * The occupying Roman army would be defeated.
      * And Israel would stand independent and free before God once again.
  + So when Jesus said, *Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing*, he was indicating that He was initiating this year of Jubilee right there, right then.
    - No wonder Luke says that *the people marveled at what he said*.
* But while Luke focuses on what Jesus said, Mark’s gospel focuses in on how the townsfolk, who knew Jesus so well, were processing all of this.
  + He agrees with Luke that they were all “astonished”, but as with most of us, their astonishment quickly moves to asking questions.

*2…and many who heard him were astonished, saying, “Where did this man get these things? What is the wisdom given to him? How are such mighty works done by his hands? 3 Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us?” And they took offense at him.*

* + Now the first three of these questions are really good and reveal to us that the pre-anointed man, Jesus, was not someone from whom they expected this.
    - Remember, Jesus had grown up in this small village of somewhere around 400 to 500 people.
      * He hadn’t left that long ago, and being only 30 years old, its not as though people wouldn’t remember him.
      * In fact, it’s clear that they did remember him: he was their carpenter!
    - So it only makes sense that after Jesus’ “wows” them, they begin asking questions as to what made him so different from how they remembered him.
      * “Where did he get the things that he was teaching (it was not like what the Pharisees were teaching)?
      * “Who gave him this wisdom?”
        + Note how they recognized that it was not HIS wisdom, but that it had to have been given to him.
      * And, “How is he pulling off these miracles?”
        + Quite clearly indicating that Jesus had not done anything like that during his years growing up and working in Nazareth.
  + These are three legitimate questions – questions that Luke answered in general in his preamble to this story in Lk 4:14 when he wrote:

*14 And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee…*

* + - And questions that Jesus answered specifically when he read the first lines of the passage he quoted from Isaiah 61, when he read:

*18 “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because [the LORD] has anointed me…*

* I know I’ve mentioned this before, but it is so important to our understanding of Jesus and his incarnation as a human being that I need to say it again.
  + Jesus, God’s son, came to earth not just in the “form” of a man, but as a full-fledged human being.
    - The prophet Isaiah, when describing the coming Messiah in Isaiah 53:2 said that…

*2…he had no form or majesty that we should look at him,*

*and no beauty that we should desire him.*

* + - In other words, he didn’t stand out, he didn’t have the bearing of a man others would naturally follow.
    - And the testimony of these Nazarenes seems to bear this out – they weren’t expecting this from Mary’s first-born.
      * Our text says that they were “astonished” at what Jesus had become.
    - That’s not to say that he wasn’t an exceptionally GOOD man.
      * He was – having never chosen sin over his Father in heaven.
      * He was a man who had learned the Scriptures well, and was the only man who had ever kept the law perfectly.
        + His cousin, John the Baptist, knew this and even suggested that Jesus was better qualified to baptize HIM.
        + But to everyone else, Jesus had been a good boy, a loyal son and an reliable carpenter – nothing more.
    - So what had changed him? Super-charged him? Made him wise beyond his years and powerful beyond the laws of nature?
      * Well, had they looked back to Isaiah they would have discovered that the prophet foretold that as well, in Isaiah. 11:2

*2 And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him,*

*the Spirit of wisdom and understanding,*

*the Spirit of counsel and might,*

*the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.*

*3 And his delight shall be in the fear of the Lord.*

* + - Amazingly, Isaiah specifically answered each of the Nazarenes’ questions in this passage?
      * “Where did he get these things he is teaching?”
        + Isaiah says, from *the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord*.
      * “Where did he get this wisdom?”
        + The prophet says, from *the Spirit of wisdom and understanding.*
      * “Where did he get the power to perform these mighty works they had heard he had done?”
        + From *the Spirit of counsel and might.*
  + The thing that made Jesus the carpenter into Jesus the Christ was the anointing and continual presence of the Holy Spirt.
    - It was in this knowledge, in this wisdom and in this power that Jesus functioned all the days of his ministry on this earth.
      * The Spirit gave him knowledge and insight – sometimes even insight into the very hearts of men.
      * He leaned on the Spirit for wisdom in the Scriptures and in life, knowing what to say, when to say it, where to go, when to leave.
      * And he acted in the Spirit’s power, performing signs and wonders that initiated this Messianic season of Jubilee and demonstrated that the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand.
  + And if you are a follower of Jesus, you have been anointed with this very same Spirit for this very same purpose – to spread the Messianic Season of Jubliee everywhere you go.
    - To release those trapped in bondage to sin and all its consequences.
    - To restore that which Satan has taken and people have squandered to their original God-given design and purpose.
    - And to reconcile those alienated and separated from each other and from God; bringing healing and wholeness.
  + What an incredible privilege; what a massive responsibility; what an impossible task…for us.
    - But just as with Jesus, we are not expected to do it by any knowledge or wisdom or power of our own.
    - Rather, this God-sized mission can only be engaged and carried out in the power of the Spirit God, Himself, who, in Christ, has anointed you to spread Jubilee in your wake wherever you may go to everyone who will receive it.
* But not everyone will receive it – as we see with the townsfolk of Nazareth.
  + Who quickly move from being pleasantly astonished, to appropriately perplexed, but then fall to being self-righteously indignant, as we see with their final two questions in vs. 3.
    - They had asked:

*“Where did this man get these things? What is the wisdom given to him? How are such mighty works done by his hands?*

* + - But now they turn to:

*3 Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us?” And they took offense at him.*

* + Now why would they take offense at him? Why would they become indignant?
    - After all, this was someone they knew. Why not rejoice that God would “choose on of us” to carry out His great plan.
    - Well, Jesus seemed to think that it was exactly because the “knew” him that caused them to reject him. (vs. 4)

*4 And Jesus said to them, “A prophet is not without honor, except in his hometown and among his relatives and in his own household.”*

* + - * Familiarity, it seems, breeds contempt.
      * God once told the prophet Ezekiel…

*5 You are not being sent to a people of obscure speech and strange language, but to the people of Israel— 6 not to many peoples of obscure speech and strange language, whose words you cannot understand. Surely if I had sent you to them, they would have listened to you. 7 But the people of Israel are not willing to listen to you because they are not willing to listen to me, for all the Israelites are hardened and obstinate.*

* + - * And God indicates that over-familiarity is what makes them hardened and obstinate.
        + Had Ezekiel’s hearers been foreigners, they would have listened.
    - Jesus makes the same point bluntly to these Nazarenes in Luke 4 when he says to them:

*25 I assure you that there were many widows in Israel in Elijah’s time, when the sky was shut for three and a half years and there was a severe famine throughout the land. 26 Yet Elijah was not sent to any of them, but to a widow in Zarephath in the region of Sidon. 27 And there were many in Israel with leprosy in the time of Elisha the prophet, yet not one of them was cleansed—only Naaman the Syrian.”*

* + - * His point being that those Gentiles – a Syrian and a Sidonian were open to what God was doing when Israel, in all of their over-familiarity with God, resisted what He was trying to do among them.
      * And now, as God was doing a new thing long ago prophesied among his people, their response was the same.
        + It didn’t fit their narrative of how God worked or what they expected – it was outside their box of experience and expectation.
        + And thus, they, like their ancestors before them, were also resisting.
        + And Jesus was pointing out that if they continued to resist, God would do the same thing he did in those previous times as well.

He would go to the Gentiles and share his good gifts with them.

Which, by the way, we see him do in the book of Acts.

* + - * + Well, this, Luke tells us, is too much for the good townsfolk of Nazareth to take and they rise up to hustle Jesus to the edge of cliff in order to get rid of him.
    - In just a matter of minutes, they went from pleasant astonishment to murderous indignation all because God was working outside their narrow little box.
      * They rejected the Messiah they had waited for for more than 400 years in essence, because they knew him too well.

So, where am I going with this, aside from our call to walk in the Spirit?

* I just want to ask the question: can God work outside the box in your life or in mine?
  + Oh, I’m not talking about His working outside the box of the Scriptures – for He has told us that He won’t do that.
    - But what if He chooses to take us outside the box of what we have always understood certain Scriptures to mean?
    - Or do we become all self-righteously indignant when He presses us to consider that maybe there is more to this walk with Him than we already know?
  + Remember, some of the things that we take as being the end all of understanding were not always thought so.
    - If you go back to the Reformation, you will find that even the Reformers, who were pushing back on traditional Roman Catholic understandings of the Scriptures, could not always find common ground on how to understand things.
      * So Luther and Zwingli fought tooth and nail over just what the elements of communion were all about:
        + Were the elements merely symbols of the body and blood of Christ…
        + Or were they someone converted into the actual body and blood of Christ upon ingestion…
        + Which was still different from the Catholic view that the elements were transformed into the actual body and blood of Christ at the blessing of the priest in the Mass.
      * Or what about Infant Baptism vs. Believers’ Baptism?
        + Infant baptism was so ingrained in the church and society that it was the means by which Monarchs knew how many people lived in their realms.
        + And the reformer, Zwingli, was so committed to it that he literally went to war with the Anabaptists in order to force them to accept the old box way of thinking.

Zwingli even died for that cause in battle.

* + - These are some of the elemental issues of the Christian faith in which our tradition has grown out of the most radical of the changes – symbolic representation and believers’ baptism.
      * Yet, when it comes to lesser issues of faith and practice, do we take on the same intransigence and indignation of reformers like Luther and Zwingli?
      * Do we tell God, like the Nazarenes before us, that he can only go this far and no further?
* The days in which we live are forcing the church to examine things that we have always taken for granted, especially in this country.
  + Basic things like:
    - What does it mean to worship?
    - What is necessary for fellowship and unity?
    - What are the limits of our civil obedience or what does it mean to accommodate the “weaker brother”?
    - How do our political rights intersect with our Christian responsibility?
    - What is the nature of the church?
  + And these questions are only the most recent that we face, as there have been many theological and biblical questions thrown at us in the years before concerning a host of questions for which we thought the answers were already settled.
    - How will the church interact with the issue of homosexuality and, even more important, the people who described themselves as homosexual or trans-sexual?
    - Or how does the church interact with people of other religious faiths as our culture continues to become more diverse and we come across more Muslims, Hindus, Pagans and so on.
    - How are we to understand the Scriptures concerning women in church leadership, the church’s role in promoting social and or racial justice, the extent of church’s engagement in politics and so on.
* Is it any wonder that many in the church feel like just hunkering down, closing our windows, affirming only that which we already accept, and waiting for Jesus to come?
  + Change is hard and can sometimes be wrongheaded or simply an accommodation to what is easy and popular.
    - And yet, if we become SO intransigent that God can never do a new thing, then will we become susceptible to missing out on God’s new thing because it required us to think and struggle and listen and pray beyond what we already think we know?
  + After all, our very salvation was dependent upon God doing a new thing:
    - The very thing the townsfolk of Nazareth were so violently opposed to – even though their favorite prophet spoke of it in Isaiah 43:16-19.

*16 This is what the Lord says—*

*he who made a way through the sea,*

*a path through the mighty waters,*

*17 who drew out the chariots and horses,*

*the army and reinforcements together,*

*and they lay there, never to rise again,*

*extinguished, snuffed out like a wick:*

*18 “Forget the former things;*

*do not dwell on the past.*

*19 See, I am doing a new thing!*

*Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?*

*I am making a way in the wilderness*

*and streams in the wasteland.*

* + - Do you see what God is saying here?
      * First he points out the amazing things he has done in the past, specifically referencing Israel’s exodus from Egypt and the crossing of the Red Sea.
      * Then he says, “Forget about it! You haven’t seen anything yet!”
      * “You see, I’m doing a new thing!”
    - And that new thing was extending His salvation of Israel to the entire world!
      * He would send a redeemer who, rather than condemn all things and all people – as they deserve – would come with healing in his wings.
      * He would rescue and he would save – and he would proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor to the whole earth, not just Israel.
        + Jubilee for everyone and everything that would believe.
        + Redemption of “whosoever” will believe.
* And it all started with the incarnate Son of God being anointed with the Holy Spirit of God and initiating Jubilee.
  + But the people of Nazareth had a choice to make.
    - For they were VERY familiar with the promise, but they found themselves to be VERY familiar with the person as well.
      * And the person didn’t fit their conception of the promise and they were offended and indignant.
      * God had worked outside their box, and now most of them would reject Jesus as the Messiah and miss out on the new thing that God was doing.

And I say to all of us: beware, we are not immune to self-righteous indignation.

* Before we allow our familiarity and comfort with our box be the end all understanding of the infinite God and His workings in this world…
  + Let’s listen to each other, respect our differences, broaden our perspectives, study the Scriptures carefully, pray without ceasing, and give God room to grow us and change us and correct us and perfect us.
    - For there is always more of Him than we have known before and he will constantly be blowing apart our box.
    - Let’s hope we will not be offended and indignant when he choses to do so.