

Third Sunday of Ordinary Time  
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*Rolling up the scroll, he handed it back to the attendant  
and sat down and the eyes of all in the synagogue looked intently at him.  
He said to them, 'Today, this scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing.'*

These Sunday readings are dramatic. The drama is compelling as it is filled with God's faithful, unconditional covenant love and God's desire for loving, repentant and generous hearts to continue to proclaim the message—the good news—to the poor. First, Nehemiah and Ezra, the scribe, gathering the people and proclaiming the word of God to them from daybreak to midday, reminds them of God's steadfast love. As the people recognize God's tender fidelity to them, they begin weeping and crying. But Ezra tell them, "Today is holy to the Lord our God." Get up and celebrate. "Do not weep and do not be saddened, for rejoicing in the Lord must be your strength." What an emotional, heartfelt and human moment – could it be that God might be calling us to a similar moment in our lives and in our communities today?

Paul's message to the Corinthians reminds us to recognize that we are one body, baptized into one Spirit and that the gifts we have are given for the strengthening of all the community. Each is needed and each is necessary for the Spirit's work of handing on the good news – a powerful reminder for us to reflect on how we are sharing our gifts for the sake of building the reign of God wherever we might find ourselves in our daily lives.

Finally, Jesus, in the synagogue at Nazareth, rolling up the scroll and announcing that Isaiah's message was being fulfilled in their very midst that day. Can you imagine the shock and surprise that filled the synagogue that day? What drama emerged as waves of reaction to Jesus' statement filled the room where they were gathered. Could this be Jesus, the boy next door – Jesus, the son of Joseph, the carpenter – Jesus who has lived among us and whose family we know so well? How could anyone so ordinary and so close to us proclaim himself as the anointed one? As Jesus, filled with the Spirit, embraces his public ministry at Nazareth, we have a first glimpse of the gift of Incarnation and the opportunity to embrace our gift of faith in Jesus as God's anointed.

As we reflect on these readings, may our hearts be touched by God's tender loving Word, our communities be strengthened with the variety of gifts that are shared and may we recognize God's holy presence in our midst this day through Jesus' Spirit. Truly, let us gather and celebrate the good news – the faithful love of a tender God.