

Author and motivational speaker, Meghan Lockwood, has this to say:

“The first game my father ever played in professional baseball, the coach walked him to the mound, slapped him on the back, and said: ‘They have two men on base – don’t let them score – and I won’t put you back on the bus to the minors tonight’

“My dad was all of 18 years old – and this was possibly the least motivating speech EVER.”

Lockwood goes on to say, “I’ve personally never experienced that level of pressure, but all my life, I’ve always been fascinated by how people pump themselves up for their next big challenge. Sitting next to my bed so I see it first thing in the morning is a quote from Aristotle, ‘We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not a one-time act, but a continual habit.’

“I believe that,” Lockwood said. “Really. In my little universe, that’s how I think about creating great content that stands the test of time. It’s something you get up every day and just. . . do. But that kind of commitment isn’t always easy.”

In last week’s Gospel, Jesus gave his inaugural address – his state of the union – his ultimate motivational speech -- meant as much for himself as for all of us.

It came at the beginning of Jesus’ public ministry in Luke’s Gospel – as he told us he does what he does because the “Spirit of the Lord” is upon him.

Jesus has been anointed to “bring glad tidings to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives, recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord.”

The rest of St. Luke’s Gospel – which we will be reading from on Sundays throughout this year – will be about putting these words into action. Jesus’ ministry is all about how far the mercy of God extends, and how wide the compassion of God is shown.

And people throughout Luke’s Gospel who hear what Jesus says, and see what Jesus does – either listen to Jesus – and act on his words – or they do not listen to Jesus, and thus fail to act on his words.

Today’s Gospel being such an example. . .

Oh, those people in Nazareth – they start off on the right track –

“All were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth.” –

But then they get sidetracked: “Isn’t this the son of Joseph?” And the next thing you know, they were “filled with fury” “drove him out of the town” and were ready to hurl him over the hill. . .

Why such a turn around??

Perhaps because they had all grown up with Jesus – they thought he might begin to reveal their secrets, their vulnerabilities – the things they needed to be set free from --- how they needed to change ---- after all, no one knows our weakest points better than someone who has known us for a while ---- that’s why members of our family know exactly what buttons to push to get us going.

Is it because Jesus was talking about things they weren’t interested in. . . he was proclaiming help to the poor and sight to the blind – and all they wanted was to get the greedy Romans off their back – and certainly out of their pockets – taking their hard earned money in taxes to support the vast reaches of the empire –

when most of them would not wander more than a few miles from their homes in their lifetimes. .

Or was it simply the fact they were afraid Jesus would want to involve *them* in this great undertaking of bringing about the kingdom of God? After all, they more than likely had better things to do. . .

For whatever reason, they shut down – they were no longer listening to Jesus so how would they ever follow that good advice Mary gave a couple of weeks ago to anyone who wants to follow after her son: “Do whatever he tells you!”

For whatever reason – those in Nazareth did not listen to Jesus – how about us?

Are we afraid if we get too close to Jesus – dare to follow after him – he might begin to reveal our secrets, our vulnerabilities – the things we need to be set free from – our need to change?

Do we fail to listen to Jesus, to do whatever he asks us to do -- because he is talking about things we aren't interested in???

Are we rather reluctant to follow after Jesus – because we are afraid it might cost us something – like our time, our talent, and our treasure – as if we have better things to do with these gifts God has entrusted to us. . .

Most of us are not called to “professionally” preach the Gospel – by making that our career or our life’s calling. But all of us, however, because of our Baptism – are committed to living the Gospel – which means we let the Gospel shape our everyday choices and responses ---

The Spirit of the Lord is upon us --- and we are anointed to bring glad tidings to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives, recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord.

That’s Jesus motivational speech – let’s listen to it – and do what he asks us to do.