

Fear and forgiveness. Common areas of Christian thought and action.

God has come to save all (everyone), even those people we fear or despise. Those people we try to avoid or “stay away” from; the one’s who are not like us. The stranger. Why? Because God’s love is extended to all.

God is not fearful. He is not barricaded out; He is in everyone. Yet, we fear other people ... people outside of our group ... outside of our tribe ...

Jesus appeared on earth; he was perceived to be on the outside. Today, we heard, when he spoke, he was driven out of the temple. We are often afraid of the unknown. **Is living in fear Christian?**

- we do lock our doors,
- we do build walls,
- we do take care for security, and

Why we live in fear and the need for all these security measures, is, in itself worthy of lament,

What about the times we don’t need to worry as much about fear? Are there any? I wonder, “Don’t we – because of our fear of other people, don’t we fall woefully short of God’s hopes for God’s children?”

Consider this: Luke 4:18 “to let the oppressed go free,” could also be translated more literally to read “and send the broken in forgiveness.” **Forgiveness.**

The Greek word *aphesis* – which can mean “to release from bondage” – that occurs both near the opening and close of the verse: can also mean “forgiveness or pardon from sin (as if it had never happened).”

Rather than translate them both as “release,” a different translation suggests the linking of another significant word, *apostello* – “to send” (from which we get “apostle”), which also occurs twice. Thus: Jesus reports that he has been sent (*apestalken*) to proclaim **and then** says that he is sending (*apostelai*) the broken/shattered in forgiveness.

This suggestion is quite interesting, particularly if you link the final phrase so that it reads “send the broken in forgiveness (*ev aphasei*) to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

LP – forgive us; as we have forgiven others



Given that we live in a broken world where

- a) we will continue to lock our doors and talk about security and
- b) some will exaggerate and exploit our fear to turn us against other children of God and
- c) we know that neither of these is God's hope for us, can we think about a different way to think about ourselves and our neighbors?

The very point of locks and walls and security systems is predicated on an “us” and “them” mentality. (not a “WE” – One body of Christ)

To be completely honest, there is some element of that in our life together.

There are “those” who, given an opportunity, may do “us” harm.

Lamentable, for sure, and evidence of our brokenness, absolutely, yet nevertheless an accurate picture of our sinful world.

Too often, those fears are exploited, and we see anyone who is not part of our immediate “tribe” as a threat. Fear can become crippling, pitting a frightened, “us” against a towering and powerful, expansive sense of “THEM.”

Perhaps the lens of this passage, gives us alternative ways to think. What would it be like, to imagine that all of us are “the broken?”

Honestly, does that take much reflection?

- All of us have hurts.
- All of us have disappointments and regrets.
- All of us fail to live up to God's dreams for us.

This isn't meant to wrench a dreadful confession from anyone, but rather to allow us to stop pretending and acknowledge the hurt and pain every human experience. That's true of everyone we place in these categories of “us” and “them.”

Perhaps perceiving this deep affinity and solidarity might help us overcome the mental walls we build.

It doesn't stop there. The passage continues and we are invited to be joined not only in brokenness but also in being sent.



That is, Jesus was born, died, and resurrected to commission, heal and send us out and about in the world. Yes, we are all broken. And, yes, we are all forgiven and healed in order also to be commissioned and sent to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. Favor for all the broken-hearted, us and them and everyone in between until there is no us-and-them divide but only "we," we the children of God — broken, loved, healed, commissioned, and sent. We are, all of us, the beloved broken whom God calls to be also beloved apostles.

