



freedom for my people

EASTER SUNDAY, APRIL 5, 2026
LUKE 4:18-21

REFLECTION

In Nazareth, poverty was rampant. One in four knew not where their next meal was coming from. Occupying soldiers patrolled its streets. It was beholden to a Temple of sycophant priests enriching themselves by kowtowing to the emperor. But this prophecy spoke good news. Glad tidings to the poor, freedom to the oppressed, eyesight to the blind. The year of the Lord's "accepting." In Isaiah, the word "accepting" comes from a Hebrew root *rasa*, which implies that you are reconciled to the Lord, your debts are remitted and the Lord takes great delight in you.

In Luke, the word "accepting" comes from the Greek root *dektos*, which means "to take by the hand", implying you are granted access, you are welcomed in, you are received into the family. The King of the Whole Universe welcomes you into his family! Forgives all your debts! And takes great delight in you! What a day that would be! But Jesus took it further. As he quoted the words of this ancient, long-dormant prophecy, the prophecy began to snap together, grow life and arise like the dry bones in Ezekiel's valley. As they listened, the eternal entered the here-and-now. The ethereal became tangible. Their eyes had seen the glory of the coming of the Lord whether they knew it or not. A door to heaven opened. Despite their oppression. Despite their poverty. Despite their captivity.

STORY

Miguel lived in captivity for five months in North Lakes Detention Center, ever since that awful day when masked federal enforcers grabbed and cuffed him at Home Depot while all his neighbors stared at him like he were a stray dog being subdued. People he'd known in the twenty seven tax-paying years he lived here. People whose kids he helped coach on the soccer team. Feeling lonely, helpless and guilty, Miguel worried daily about how Paola would keep their family of four children afloat with only her nursing home job. Not to mention the additional commissary bills from his prison. A fifteen minute phone call cost five dollars! But a guard told Miguel today he'd be released. He was given his cellphone and wallet in a plastic bag and he put back on the jeans, teeshirt and tennis shoes he was arrested in last August. He was sent outside with no other clothing, to whipping snow and howling wind, no shelter, and no transportation. Would he live to see Paola and his children again?

"Miguel! Miguel!" He looked up, and there in front of him was a woman, and behind her a van. This Grand Rapids Response to ICE volunteer and her husband had braved the weather and driven over an hour on hazardous roads to be present for his release. Miguel, this is the Body of Christ which is given for you. She quickly handed him a coat and a backpack with toiletries and snacks. The door to the van opened. As he stepped into the warmth, Miguel could not think about the distant future. All he knew was right here and now he was warm, loved, and freed from captivity. Right here and now someone cared enough to come and get him. Right here and now he belonged. Hope had become reality! And he was headed home.