A relevant missiology for today must begin by interrogating the history of biblical faith especially looking for what it has to say to us and to our history. In this the practice of Jesus will have to become the obligatory point of reference for our reflection and practice. This will make our missiology biblical and its presence and potentialities felt here and now, drawing its nourishment from the theory and practice of Jesus himself. The witness and message of his words and actions will underline our evangelization today.

It is in this perspective that we must understand the full scope of the mission of Jesus as described in Luke 4.16-20. As Hugo Echegaray has emphasized, this pericope in Luke's Gospel can be seen as providing us with a kind of summary of the entire mission of Jesus (1). Missiologically it is a rich pericope though missiologists in general have not made the full use of it yet.

Luke 4.14-30 could be said to be a programmatic prologue of the Lucan Gospel. But this programmatic message of Jesus at Nazareth synagogue is not an arbitrary construction of Luke as is seen from the fact that both Mark and Matthew allude to it. Mark opens the ministry of Jesus with the proclamation of the arrival of the Kingdom which is related to Luke 4.16-20. Later he explicitly mentions the synagogue incident in 6.1-6 though in this pericope Mark underlines the rejection of Jesus by his own people. Similarly Matthew too confirms the incident with the assertion: "He went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom" (4.23). Though Matthew does not quote Isaiah 61.1-2 it is implicitly admitted in 11.5 when Jesus replies to the question of John the Baptist's disciples. Thus in spite of redactional differences there is an agreement among the synoptics at the source. As opposed to the parallel Matthean and Markan texts, Luke places the event right at the beginning of Jesus' ministry showing at the same time that Jesus' policies and ministry will have a radical and not altogether pleasing effect on his hearers. In this pericope Luke is able to foreshadow the major principles of Jesus' theology, observes Ford (2). It is Luke's carefully staged introduction to the whole ministry of Jesus. According to Perrin here we have a first statement of themes sounded constantly throughout the Gospel and this scene is designed to introduce the reader to the whole ministry of Jesus and to help him understand it (3). What is particular to Luke is the specific connection of the Kingdom with the prophetic proclamation of the Jubilee Year: "the acceptable year of the Lord". In Luke this becomes Jesus' own mission.

Jesus' reading at the Synagogue

The text that Jesus reads is taken from Isaiah 61.1-2. However Jesus' reading of Isaiah 61.1-2 is different from the original Hebrew text. Jesus eliminates one clause from the original text, "the day of vengeance to the Gentiles", and inserts another clause from Isaiah 58.6, "to set at liberty the oppressed". This curious fusion of texts makes it very important for our purpose. The choice of the text as well as the solemnity with which he proclaims the fulfilment of it shows the importance and orientation the text has for the rest of Jesus' ministry.
As it is true throughout the biblical tradition, the anointing of the Spirit for Jesus is ordained for a mission, the mission for which he has been delegated specially, "to proclaim the Good News" (Lk. 4.43) and this now realizes at the Nazareth Synagogue: "Today this scripture has been fulfilled" (4.21). The word "today" is a categorical and synthetic expression with authority of the fulfilment of the divine design announced through the prophets. This "today" is a redactional favourite of Luke who uses it more than ten times. It indicates the exceptionality of the event accomplished, placing it at the helm of all other events and constitutes it the unique occasion which was awaited for ages. It is an expression of maturation, fulfilment and realization, comments Sisti (4).

Isaiah 61 was one of the passages selected for reading at the commencement of the Jubilee Year. Biblical scholars like Thomas Hanks and Sisti have shown how Isaiah 61.1-2 reflects the teaching of Leviticus 25 concerning the Year of Jubilee (5). Jubilee was Good News to the poor, slaves, debtors and the oppressed persons, for it was a time when everyone was to return to his own landed property. It was a time when debts were to be cancelled, when land was to be returned to its original owner, when slaves and prisoners were to be freed (Lev. 25.9-17). Jubilee was a time when there was a redistribution of wealth and everyone was put on equal footing. "Thus a Jubilee Year was indeed an acceptable year to all the types of oppressed persons", observes Ford (6). In its intention Jubilee was a periodic legal revolution, desired by God, established by law and proclaimed by the prophets. It was a time of levelling human inequalities caused by human selfishness, ambition and power-seeking. Property and family were the two leading concepts of the Jubilee law. For one reason or another an Israelite could sell his property or even himself to another. However this "unnatural" situation was not to go on endlessly but is to be rectified by the establishment of the original equality and liberty. This was the prime concern of the Year of Jubilee. The law was primarily a precaution against the development of large financiers controlling the system leading many to a state of economic slavery. Thus the law explicitly fought against large estate holders on the one side and on the other the institution of slavery. The Jubilee legislation was a comprehensive formula for economic reform incorporating various elements from earlier traditions, such as interest free loans (cf. Ex. 22.25) and stipulations regarding slaves (Deut. 16.11; 23.15-26). Slave release was connected with the release of the land to ensure that the freed slave had an economic base to support himself and his family. The purpose was to preserve human life and the means of life for everybody. It was Israel's surest guarantee of a just social order, though often neglected. The theological motive is Yahweh is the Lord of all, to whom all Israelites should listen.

The codification of the Jubilee legislation was done by the exilic theologians of Israel assuring the impoverished people in the exile a place of equality in the community upon their eventual return and proclaimed that the poor Israelites of any age would always have the hope of restoration to freedom and equal status in their community. "The primary purpose of the legislation was to preserve equality among Israelites by preserving economic balance in that most precious commodity land", comments Gnuse (7). Roland de Vaux has shown how in the early days of the settlement all the Israelites enjoyed more or less the same standard of living (8). Land was the main source of wealth and it had been shared out between the families each of whom guarded its property jealously (1 King. 21.1-3). However, as we have pointed out, due to one or other reason this situation changed in the course of time leading to marked differences between the rich and the poor by the eighth century. The early social ideal that every man should live under his vine and under his fig-tree (1 King. 5.5) is shattered and the prophets fight for the cause of the poor (Is. 5.8; Mic. 22; Am. 5.11; etc.). Thus the Jubilee legislation was inspired by a past and at the same time it was a projection into the future. Yahweh had provided for equality on their liberation from slavery in Egypt. This core experience in turn led the Israelites through the exilic legislation to restore the original equality by preventing land speculation by a few. Thus it was a comprehensive institution to transform society. Leviticus 25 was more