

23-29 January 2022

Luke 4:14-21

No going back

Read the passage from Luke. It is written below.

Then Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding country. He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone.

When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.’

And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them, ‘Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing

Bible notes

The scene we witness today has sometimes been called Jesus’ ‘mission statement’ or ‘manifesto’. Using lines from Isaiah that place the poor and the oppressed front and centre, Jesus declares to the people of his home village, ‘Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing’ (v.21). It is a truly bravura moment. Imagine reading such a bold piece of Scripture in your home church, among people who have known you since you were a child, and saying, ‘Well, folks, today, the promise contained in these words has come to its fulfilment.’ It would almost certainly cause some strong reactions, from disbelief, surprise, through to shock and, perhaps, mockery.

Two things leap out of this ‘starting point’ for Jesus’ adult ministry. Firstly, Jesus’ imaginative vision. This is more than bravery or even a bit ofchutzpah. This is the prophetic boldness to discern in that moment in his home synagogue that God’s reign is to be declared. For the fact is that, for many in the Roman client state of Galilee of Jesus’ time, it would have been challenging to picture God’s abundance coming to set his oppressed people free. The second thing is related: Jesus’ declaration of purpose was a call to his hearers to join a new community. Just as Isaiah, of old, had been speaking to people in need of new

hope and promise, so was Jesus. The work of God's kingdom was not simply about the Messiah, it is an invitation to all to stand together and get involved.

Reflection

Spend a few moments thinking about what stands out for you from the Bible reading. This idea may help.

Bodies are complex and intricate things. They come in so many shapes and sizes, and there is great beauty in their variety. It is worth saying that not every part of our bodies is treated with equal dignity or respect. Notoriously, many people think their feet are ugly or disgusting. Or consider our skin. It is a crucial part of our body that, unless we have been singled out for not being white, we're unlikely to much think about. If you were to be a part of the body of Christ, which part would you long to be? Why?

Questions for reflection

You may wish to use these questions and the picture to help you think about or discuss issues of sharing.



Questions

- What do you consider to be your purpose in life?
- When have you experienced a call to service?
- How easy is it to find ways to serve/work together within your church community?

Prayer

Adapt to your local context.

A prayer of approach

Today, Lord God, we come before you as is our custom;
as was the custom of Jesus growing up in Nazareth.
We seek your Word to us now, just like those who waited
while he spoke in the synagogue after his ministry had begun.
May we hear your call and stand with him and with one another,
to serve freely in the work you have given us.
Amen.

A prayer to end the Bible study

God, you call us to be the body of Christ in this place.
Side by side, hand in hand, help us to stand together,
to stand with our neighbours,
to break free from all that holds us back
from making the world as you want it to be.
In Jesus' name.
Amen.