

Lord Jesus, may we through your Holy Spirit recognise you at work in the world around us.

*'Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.'*

Wow – brilliant preaching technique from Jesus: Grab people's attention at the start: say something to shock, even better something that is totally authentic but completely unexpected and transformative too!

- Imagine the stunned silence of people taking in what this meant – their very own carpenter from Nazareth was declaring **he** had the spirit of the Lord upon him and would bring God's healing love to the poor, the captives, the blind and the oppressed, and declare the year of the Lord's favour
- This passage sets out Jesus's mission, his manifesto, how he wants to change the world into a more equal, compassionate, humble place bringing freedom – the freedom that following the living God and trusting in his love for them will bring-
- Imagine this as a political manifesto in our own time : pretty radical: no mention of economic progress or arming to fight wars, but rather of standing up for the poor, for inclusion and walking with the vulnerable bringing them new life..... Jesus asking people then and now to let God's values affect the way they live their lives.
- Good news to the poor – God loves everyone unconditionally and will help the vulnerable and needy
- Release to the captives –justice for those imprisoned or accused unfairly, yes, but for everyone a release from the things that hold us captive in our lives: pride, ambition, power, possessions, work – life balance not being in balance
- Recovery of sight to the blind – maybe physical healing (Jesus did bring sight to many blind people) but probably for most of us this means being able to step back and see the bigger picture, bringing compassion into a decision, seeing things through God's eyes
- Let the oppressed go free- encourage everyone including ourselves to be the person God has created us to be: to have the confidence and the trust in God that if we feel a bit different and don't fit in or if we are weighed down with worries, responsibilities or grief, God still loves us and is there for us whatever difficulties we face and will guide us to people who will support us
- To proclaim the year of the Lord's favour – this means a Jubilee year which the Jews celebrated every 50 years and was also a type of freedom: debts were cancelled, the land was allowed to rest and wasn't cultivated, slaves were freed and things started afresh – I'm not sure how many farmers leave a fallow year now, there is such intensive farming and chemical use, which is leaching all the natural fertility of the land? We too need to remember to take time out to rest in God and let him refresh us.
- Ok so that's what Jesus can do for **us**...
- Now read the words of the Isaiah quotation as if it is
- **YOU** that has the Spirit of the Lord upon you,
- because He has anointed **YOU**
- to bring good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, let the oppressed go free and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.

How does that feel? All a bit crazy and out of reach?

**Jesus didn't think so.** Listen to Jesus' words in this verse from the gospel of John:

*Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father.(Jn 14:12)*

Jesus not only wants us to know that by trusting in him he will bring each of us freedom , he also is urging us to go out and continue his work bringing people to believe in the living God , Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and he is equipping us to do this and bring freedom in all kinds of ways that being a follower of Christ means.

Because if you are a follower of Jesus, a baptised Christian, through Jesus's promise of God sending us His Holy Spirit, we DO have the Spirit of the Lord upon us, we HAVE been anointed by God, we ARE able to bring good news to the poor and open the eyes of the blind – by sharing the good news of God's saving grace for the world through the life, death and resurrection of his Son Jesus Christ and living God's love in the world and sharing the Christian hope of everlasting life where we will be made whole and be at peace in God's eternal kingdom.

We are children of God and heirs with Christ. After all, as it said in our Corinthians reading we are the body of Christ – he is the head and we are the body, unique different parts that reach their full potential only when we are part of the whole, rather than separated and apart and struggling on our own and that's inspiring and exciting isn't it?

We all have the potential to let the Holy Spirit come alive through us, let God's love and guidance work through us and also to see Christ at work in each other in the things that we do and say.

We are in the season of Christmas and Epiphany – which means manifestation – seeing Christ in human form – perhaps it comes in the realisation that the person who spends half an hour chatting to their lonely neighbour, or volunteering for a charity or spending time praying for people in need throughout the world **does** have the spirit of the Lord upon them : in those actions they ARE Christ in the world, being led by the Holy Spirit to do God's will.

This is what this season in the church's calendar is all about : God incarnate – it runs from Christmas Day : when God came down to earth and became man..., until next Sunday which is the feast of Candlemas – 40 days after Jesus's birth, the purification of Mary and when Jesus is presented in the temple to God. Simeon, a priest (again through the Holy Spirit) recognises that this baby is God's Messiah for all people.

This is why we still have the stable in church to remind us of God coming into the world – Jesus, Emmanuel which means God here among us. And why we have the altar in the central position and we all make a full circle around it when we receive communion or a blessing later - a visual symbol that Christ is truly in the midst of us.

So take some time while the season of Epiphany is still enveloping us, to look around and see where Christ is at work and give thanks to God for the hope and the joy that that brings, and be open to being inspired to be part of the active body of Christ – maybe you want to learn more about the bible but the Home Groups are at times you can't make, maybe you would like to know more about leading prayers or reading in church, maybe you could come to Messy Church lunch and be a support to a young family with their hands full –don't be afraid to have a chat with Andrew, Sharon, Emma or me if you feel drawn to something!

Let us each now simply ask God to guide us, through his Holy Spirit to where and what he wants us do for Him, because He has anointed each baptised person into his church which is the body of Christ and by doing this He gives us the power, the courage and the peace of the Holy Spirit to do things we could not have dreamed possible on our own.

Come Holy Spirit.

Amen

Katrina Nice 27.1.19