

**Luke 4:14-21**  
**SMAS 10.30am**  
**(27-1-13)**

You might have thought that if anyone could be excused going to church it would be Jesus. He could have argued the religious system had it all wrong, or that He prayed to God privately, or that He knew the important things about faith and didn't need further teaching. He didn't say any of this though. Instead, He made attendance at synagogue a priority. v16 "His custom."

He chose to read from Isaiah 61 which was very familiar to the Jews. It was a passage that really stirred their hearts and passions because Isaiah promises them a deliverer who will bring hope, healing, and, most of all, freedom.

It describes the deliverance of Israel from exile in Babylon and ultimately the fulfillment of the coming of the Messiah. Imagine the shock then, when Jesus announces "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing". He's boldly stating that He is the Messiah. He has, in effect, just set out His job description or manifesto. The essence of the good news of the gospel of the kingdom of God. Let's look at what He actually said: (slide of Luke 4:18-19 & Isaiah 61:2b)

God has anointed Him with His Spirit in order for Him to put all of these things right and be the answer to all that torments us. And, whether you think of these sorrows and sadnesses as physical or spiritual, it's true, Christ is the answer.

It's very significant that He stops at **"to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour"** leaving off the next sentence

**"and the day of vengeance of our God."**

The purpose of Jesus' First Coming was

**"to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour."**

Written by Isaiah as prophecy this present age of grace and salvation that Jesus ushered in then by Jesus is already part of history. This current time of God's favour, is a time to get right with God and so avoid the eventual day of vengeance at the time of His second coming.

But Jesus goes beyond Isaiah's writing about the deliverance of Israel. Jesus is talking about a spiritual restoration. Through him, God brings salvation for everyone. Part of His salvation comes through preaching the good news that God is with us and cares about us. There's forgiveness, hope, renewal. He is the Messiah and that's what He brings: forgiveness, hope and renewal: the very hallmarks of a Christian.

How many of us here know we are Christians and have those things? Let's look at another thing: how many here are Ministers called to proclaim the Gospel?

Jesus' hearers may have been shocked at His proclamation of being the Messiah but there's possibly a mighty shock here for us too. Jesus passed this same ministry on to the disciples, which includes us.

This passage should, ultimately, be our manifesto too. If you've ever assumed it's mostly down to the clergy to do God's work in the world then you need to look carefully at what Jesus said.

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me," He declared, applying this Old Testament prophecy to Himself with the words: "Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing". The promise fulfilled was that the Messiah had come and would do the promises foretold in the ancient text. But Isaiah went on (61:6) to make more promises about what would happen after the Messiah's initial work: "And you will be called priests of the Lord, you will be named ministers of our God."

Tasks of "ministry" would no longer be done just by priests or rabbis, but by all of God's people. Just as the Spirit of the Lord had come upon Christ, enabling Him to accomplish God's work, so the Spirit enables Christ's followers to accomplish God's work, too. If you're a believer in Christ, God empowers you too by His Spirit. Which is just as well because later the Bible tells us that Jesus passed this same ministry on to the disciples and the entire church – i.e. us.

You might ask what exactly this involves? Releasing prisoners, giving the blind sight etc. How? Let's look at what He meant by 'releasing prisoners' and 'giving sight to the blind'.

It is more than releasing a prisoner from jail. It's a powerful promise of release from something far worse: slavery to sin. Scripture teaches that we need something we can't provide for ourselves – freedom. Deliverance begins with a decision to let Jesus lead us out of the prison we're in.

Giving sight to the blind. The word "blind" means "darkened by smoke." There's a deeper meaning - Jesus came to restore our spiritual sight.

St Paul persecuted the church until he met Jesus on the road to Damascus. Afterwards Paul was blind for three days. God directed someone to lay hands on him and "something like scales fell from Saul's eyes. He could see again."

Releasing the oppressed: meaning "to set at liberty those who are bruised." We're all "battered and bruised" from time to time. Satan attacks us in many ways how can we withstand these storms that batter us? Jesus is our stronghold and if we ask He will shelter us from the storms.

Jesus came to be our deliverer, healer and King of our hearts. He passed His ministry of deliverance, healing, and redeeming on to the Church. We are His hands and feet.

Whenever I hear this passage I can't help but think of all of those people who, because they don't know Jesus, will be sentenced to death at the second coming, the day of vengeance. I then think of those prisoners in jail who've come to know Jesus and are actually 'freer' than most of society outside.

Jesus is the way, the truth and the life. He sets us free; it is up to us to give that opportunity to all we know. **Amen.**