

Sermon Luke 4v14-21 COTC 2019

14 Then Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding country. 15 He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone.

16 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, 17 and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written: 18 *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, 19 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.*

20 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. 21 Then he began to say to them, 'Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.'

You might know that sense of feeling trapped, whether by circumstances or your past, or your health or your struggle. Winter can do that to us too, as the walls seem to close in. But I hope this morning you got that sense that change is coming, winter is almost over and hope begins to rise.

I have books I love to read at certain times of the year, and one of those is the majestic Wind in the Willows. I can take or leave Toad of Toad hall, but the joyful descriptions of the seasons and life on the riverbank are magnificent. And one of my favourite moments is Mole... *Spring was moving in the air above and in the earth below and around him, penetrating even his dark and lowly little house with its spirit of divine discontent and longing.*

I hope that spirit of spirit of divine discontent and longing is rising in you too

But for many people that sense of being trapped is very hard to break.

Nazareth was a windswept backwater of a town on a rocky hillside far from the ancient grandeur of Jerusalem, or even the gentle lakeshores of Galilee. It had a reputation for being a bit crap. Nathaniel heard that Jesus came from Nazareth "*Can anything Good come from Nazareth?*" It is a place that is trapped by economics, history, geography and empire. They believe that nobody from Nazareth comes to anything.

But it is from here that Jesus comes. And here that he makes a definitive statement about what his ministry is about. And it is a beauty

Feel the drama of this passage.

A local boy disappears into the wilderness, and then returns from the desert and begins teaching in the local area and is widely acclaimed. "*Isn't this Jesus from Nazareth - where did he get this wisdom from?*"

And one sabbath day he returns to Nazareth. Read v16-21. It is brilliant. And if you take nothing else away from tonight hear that promise that in Christ you do not need to be trapped by circumstances or failure or history.

But let me draw out some of the details. The passage he chose is from Isaiah 61. That Phrase in v19 "*to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour*" is really significant.

The old Testament is full of guidance for a just society - about how you lend money and the dangers of exploiting people that way. Lovely details like if you take a cloak as a guarantee for a loan - return it at night so the person won't freeze. And the greatest safeguard was the year of Jubilee. Every 50 years all the debts were to be forgiven, land returned to its owners,

indentured servants set free, mortgages cancelled. So There cannot be a legacy of indebtedness. Now there is some debate about whether it ever happened. Certainly as Israel got richer it was conveniently forgotten. But there it is in Leviticus 25. And that is what Jesus is referring to.

Jesus Proclaims that the year of Jubilee is here now.

Imagine this - Your bank manager calls. And you think, this is never a good thing. But he says, *Listen - Your mortgage, your overdraft, your credit cards, your student loans. They have been paid completely. You don't owe us anything.*

And then you look outside and see people dancing in the street - because it is not just yours - it was everyone.

This is Jubilee You are free. You don't owe anything to anyone. What am I going to do now?

Debt is a helpful way of understanding what the Bible means when it talks about sin. The literal translation of the Lords prayer is "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors"

The gospel sets people free - It pays their debts - There is a glorious liberty of the children of God. How does that work? Well, that is another sermon - but you know that the price is paid in blood on a Roman Cross.

Note how Jesus ministry is defined by the scriptures.

Like him what we are about here is part of Gods great plan for the redemption of the world. Freedom is not freedom if we simply use it for ourselves. That is the mistake of the modern world. Freedom becomes self indulgence, addiction, pride.

For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.

We need to hold on to this. We take it for granted, familiarity breeds contempt. Each morning remind yourself - you are free. *Today this is fulfilled.* The kingdom is here. We are in the midst of this story.

And we build communities to live out this grace

That is what churches are - communities of forgiveness.

Or as Paul puts it in Romans "*no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another*". You owe nothing to anyone, except love.

We proclaim Jubilee - the year of the Lords favour. This is the good news for our world - In Christ you are set free, your debts and your sins are wiped out. You don't need to be defined by the past, or by your mistakes or the mistakes of others. And that is not a future event, it is now - this is the year of the Lords favour.

The Spirit of the Lord is upon us, because he has anointed us to bring good news to the poor. He has sent us 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.