



Sunday 13th September 2020
Welcome to our Sunday Service
Prepared by Mervyn
New Levels? Luke Ch4:14-30

Give me oil in my lamp, keep me burning
Give me oil in my lamp, I pray
Give me oil in my lamp, keep me burning
Keep me burning till the break of day

Chorus

Sing hosanna, sing hosanna
Sing hosanna to the King of Kings
Sing hosanna, sing hosanna
Sing hosanna, to the King

Give me love in my heart, keep me serving
Give me love in my heart, I pray
Give me love in my heart, keep me serving
Keep me serving till the break of day

Give me peace in my heart, keep me resting
Give me peace in my heart, I pray
Give me peace in my heart, keep me resting
Keep me resting till the break of day

Give me joy in my heart, keep me praising
Give me joy in my heart, I pray
Give me joy in my heart, keep me praising
Keep me praising till the break of day

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name.
Your kingdom come, Your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our sins as we forgive those who
have sinned against us.

Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory,
for ever and ever, amen.



Happy Birthday Bob!
God bless you.
**We hope you had a
lovely day on Friday.**

**We are delighted to welcome
Jonathan to our church.**



Jonathan joined the church during
lockdown and led us in the Lord's
Prayer in this weeks online service

Foodbank - If you wish to donate
food to the food bank, donations can
be left with Mervyn & Kathryn
at 111 Oakwood Drive.

I've recently started reading through Luke's Gospel again, and today I'd like to share a few things that have got me thinking.

Luke is a gifted writer and his Gospel is the result of careful investigation with eye witnesses; he explains this, and his motivation for writing the Gospel in the first few verses of Chapter 1.

It seemed good to me to write an orderly account for you most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught. Luke ch1v3-4

Nobody knows for sure who Theophilus was - there are some people who think it could have been a Roman Officer, or Paul's Lawyer, or perhaps a Jewish Priest, but we do know the name means 'friend of God' and 'beloved of God'. With that in mind we can receive it as a personal letter addressed to each of us as individuals! Let that name settle on you - Beloved of God!

Let's read a little from *chapter 2 v 29-35*, and then from *Chapter 4 v14-30*, and we will unpack a little more the words in blue.

Simeon's words over baby Jesus

“Sovereign Lord, as You have promised, You now dismiss Your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen Your salvation, which You have prepared in the sight of all people, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to Your people Israel.”

The Child's father and mother were amazed at what was spoken about Him. Then Simeon blessed them and said to His mother Mary:

“Behold, this Child is appointed to cause the rise and fall of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed - and a sword will pierce your soul as well.”

This is a wonderful, intimate part of the Christmas narrative that is often overlooked at Christmas. Jesus parents present him at the temple in Jerusalem, and Simeon prophesies what the future holds for this tiny baby. This prophesy includes us as we are gentiles, and it says that Jesus will be a light for us. It also says that he is the glory of Israel - It is wonderful that increasing numbers of Jewish people are recognising Jesus as their glorious king!



The next part in blue says that Jesus will reveal the thoughts in peoples hearts; it is amazing as you journey with Jesus that he does reveal to us our deep heart motives and attitudes - this can be a shocking process and we will see in the next passage how people's attitudes are exposed when Jesus confronts them with uncomfortable truth.

Luke Ch 4:14-30

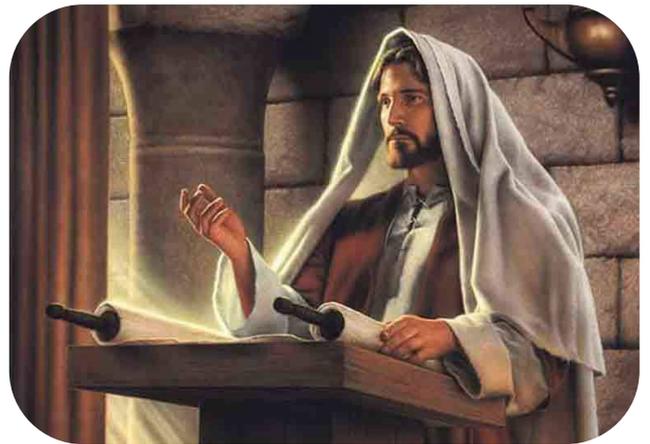
Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside **15** He taught in their synagogues, and everyone praised him. **16** Then Jesus came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. **As was His custom**, He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath. And when He stood up to read, **17** the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. Unrolling it, He found the place where it was written:

18 “The Spirit of the Lord is on Me, because He has anointed Me to preach **good news** to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to release the oppressed, **19** to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.”

20 Then He rolled up the scroll, returned it to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fixed on Him, **21** and He began by saying, “**Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.**”

22 All spoke well of Him and marvelled at the gracious words that came from His lips. “Isn’t this the son of Joseph?” they asked.

23 Jesus said to them, “Surely you will quote this proverb to Me: ‘Physician, heal yourself! Do here in Your hometown what we have heard that You did in Capernaum.’”



24 Then He added, “Truly I tell you, no prophet is accepted in his hometown. **25** But I tell you truthfully that there were many widows in Israel in the time of Elijah, when the sky was shut for three and a half years and great famine swept over all the land. **26** Yet Elijah was not sent to any of them, but to the widow of Zarephath in Sidon. **27** And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet. Yet not one of them was cleansed - only Naaman the Syrian.”

28 All the people in the synagogue were furious when they heard this. **29** They got up, drove Him out of the town, and led Him to the brow of the hill on which the town was built, in order to throw Him over the cliff. **30** But he walked right through the crowd and went on His way.

Let’s look again at the blue words...

The first thing to notice is that Jesus had a custom of going to a synagogue on the Sabbath. This is particularly poignant at the moment as many of us are really missing the weekly rhythm of being in a corporate worship environment. There is something really important about regularly meeting with other believers and this is endorsed by Jesus custom.

Next we see Jesus reading from the scroll words that describe his mission, his manifesto words that were written approximately 700 years earlier by Isaiah. And the part I want us to focus on is good news.

What is the good news of God's Kingdom?

The phrase good news appears many times in the Gospels, and the word gospel itself means good news! But what is the essence of this good news? Here are 4 answers, there are more!!

1, God has not abandoned us! This is wonderful news, no matter how hopeless your situation may look, God knows and is willing to enter into that situation with you!

2, God has come to love us back to our true selves - Only God knows how glorious we were before the fall and he is committed to restoring us. A bit like someone lovingly restoring a great work of art that has been vandalised without damaging the original, or an archaeologist carefully brushing away layers of soil to find great treasure. I've been aware of God restoring stuff in my life, and what is really special is that he does it with a twinkle in his eye!

Catching a glimpse of the twinkle in Gods eyes is priceless, intoxicating - I can't find the words to describe it!

3, God is inviting us to be part of his big, eternal story - He is working on a vast canvas and he is including us, this life is just a teeny part! 'Earthly joys and earthly tears are confined to earthly years, but a greater good the word of God reveals.'

4, God has absorbed all our death and offers us his life - The glorious death and resurrection of Jesus changes everything, forever!

How do we access this Good news for ourselves?

Jesus says in **Mark 1:15** '**Repent and believe the Good news.**' Repent—tell God the truth about the things that you know are wrong in your life and invite him to begin his restorative work in your life. Believe - that Jesus loves you and that he died and rose again so that you can be set free from the power of sin and be in relationship with God!



Here's a little story to illustrate the Gospel

This is a picture of a bottle that I have noticed many times over the last couple of years as I have cycled up the hill between UVHS and our home. It has been lying in the muddy verge where it had been dumped. This week I was walking home from town and had picked up some litter on the way, as I was walking up the hill. The litter I was carrying reminded me of the bottle, so I crossed the road to find it. I was just about to bin it with the other rubbish when I suddenly had the idea to save it and make it into a lamp!



This little story reminds me of the good news of Jesus. This bottle had been used and dumped; there was nothing it could do about it's situation, but now it has been rescued, cleaned, bought into a home, has a new purpose, is filled with oil and gives out light!

Perhaps you feel like that bottle, just dumped and left by the road while the world rushes by. You may feel that you are worthless, but Jesus is able to rescue you and give you a brand new life and purpose!



Back to the Bible reading - The part of this passage that really got my attention was the part around verse 22. Why didn't Jesus just stop talking there? It says that they spoke well of him and marvelled at his words. If I was speaking that would be when I'd stop and call it coffee time!! Jesus seems to plough on and be deliberately confrontational.

Why?

This got me really thinking, and I think we can see two answers in the text.

1, The definition of Jesus as Joseph's son

2, Jesus refers to two example where God blessed non-Jewish people.

Jesus could have settled for the label of Joseph's son, blessed a few people and lived a quiet life, but he would have missed his mission. He wasn't just Joseph's son sent to bless one people group, He is the Son of God, sent to be a blessing to all people!

Here we see Jesus stepping out of a comfort zone into his true mission and on to a new level, and here too, is the challenge for us. Are we settling for a little bit of truth and living under the definition of partially true labels, or are we rising into our true identity as children of God.

The Bible says that creation is groaning waiting for the sons of God to be revealed!

We see from the text that stepping into our true identity as God's children, and following a calling may not make you popular. In this scene the people went from praising Jesus to wanting to kill him in a very short time.

Earlier we read Simeon's words over the baby Jesus, *'that he would reveal the thoughts of peoples hearts'* and here we see Jesus revealing the thoughts and attitudes of the people when God's agenda doesn't match theirs! We see anger, violence, hatred, and murder. It says that they wanted to throw him off the top of a hill, but the passage has a really cool ending, saying that Jesus was able to walk through the crowd and go on his way! Nobody had any power to take his life until he was ready to lay it down!



I find this particularly challenging for myself, here are some questions for us...

Whose definition are we living under?

Whose approval are we seeking?

Are you being called to take a path that may make you unpopular?

Are there new levels of truth that you need to rise up into?

As we start a new term and some people move from GCSE's to A levels.

Is God calling you to a new level?

These questions are pressing buttons in my life, and if any of those questions are resonating in your spirit, please do get in touch, we'd love to pray with you.

Some words from a song...

The truth that burns within you like a bed of fiery coals, contains the power to liberate a 1000 captive souls, but if the truth will ever set you free depends on you. You want to, now will you?

As we start this new term let's be sensitive to what God may want to teach us, and where he may be leading us.

Amen.



May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, The love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, now and evermore. Amen.