

Bible Sunday - Luke 4.16-24 (Baptism of Victor Yeadon) 27.10.19

Today's gospel is a really important because it is the first moment in Jesus' public ministry. Jesus has just come out of the desert after 40 days of trial and temptation and now, for the first time, he is about to go public: to launch his ministry.

As this story starts, Jesus returned to his hometown in the power of the Spirit. Jesus has come to the synagogue, as was in Jewish tradition, to give a reading from the scriptures and speak about them; preach a sermon. Reading Scripture aloud in a synagogue service was a common practice, and a person did not necessarily need to hold a special office to offer leadership in worship.

So the people settle down to hear what passage Jesus has chosen and what he wants to say about it. And Jesus picks a really well-known passage from Isaiah: "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."

When Jesus finished, He rolls up the scroll, and hands it back to the attendant.

The synagogue falls silent. Everyone now waits to hear what he has to say about this well-known passage from Isaiah.

To be honest, expectations probably weren't that high: this was just an ordinary Sabbath day service, the same as always, and probably in the same way that you may not expect a Sunday sermon to utterly transform your world, the people in the synagogue weren't expecting anything particularly transformative.

Just take a moment and put yourselves in the shoes of the people listening to Jesus. Remember, he was in his hometown of Nazareth. Many of these people had watched him grow up, watched him play and most likely corrected him at times. They knew Jesus very well and their expectations were not high.

What astonishment must have been when Jesus in that moment made that very strong personal testimony. For the first time, Jesus speaks openly of himself as a Messiah. He leaves no doubt.

Jesus is saying, 'I am the one who this prophecy refers to. If you want to receive the good news, be free, see and receive God's favour then you have to come to me.' Jesus treated the Old Testament as authoritative, coming from God, and he proclaimed that they revealed who he is, the Messiah.

What a bizarre thing to say! How plainly ridiculous!

The people were so angry with Jesus. All the people in the synagogue were furious when they heard this. They got up, drove Jesus out of the town, and took him to the brow of the hill on which the town was built, in order to throw him off the cliff. But he walked right through the crowd and went on his way.

But his words were still in their ears: "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

That was two thousand years ago, and so it is today when we are celebrating the Bible Sunday.

Because the Bible is more than just words on a page or the words from the past. The Bible has all the power of God behind it to change our lives. Even if that the truth is not always easy for us to

hear. "The word of God is living and active...it is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart."

This is why, this day today challenges us to think about what the words of this book mean, and what are they saying to us today? Like that a really well-known passage from Isaiah.

God's desire is not that we should academically study the Bible so that we know it from cover to cover, but rather that as we read the Bible, we come to know him personally. The main point of the Bible is that it shows us how to begin and develop a relationship with Jesus Christ.

Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son.

The Bible isn't just that God spoke through it in the past, but rather that he continues to speak through it today. And he speaks to us of his love. The purpose of reading the Bible is to bring us into relationship with God and enable us to hear his voice.

It's true, that when we say, as we did just a few moments ago "This is the word of the Lord" we may have quite different understandings of what that means...but we surely agree that God can speak to us through the pages of this book of books.

That word of God, God's word of love, is found above all in Jesus himself, who lived and taught and died a life of love, so that the love of God could become reality for everyone.

For us Christians, this adventure begins at the moment of baptism.

Bringing new life into the world is one of the greatest miracles. It brings with it many responsibilities. Over the years, you will have to care for this wonderful new life and help your baby to grow and become a loving and happy person, able to find joy and to bring joy to the world. The love you have for your baby is part of the love that God has for you. Just as you want your baby to find love, happiness and peace, so does God. In the Sacrament of Holy Baptism, God shows this love. Through this Sacrament, your child will become, in a very special way, God's own child and part of the family of the Church.

Through Baptism in water, God adopts us as his own children. In the baptism we can hear God's voice: "I have called you by name, you are mine."

So today God is saying to Victor: "I have called you by name, you are mine."

Victor, you are unique. You're a special design. You were made special, because that is the way God created you. You are important to God, Victor because He is the one who made you unique.

God knows all about you. God knows what you need. And God loves you, Victor in a way that is only for you. His love is for you and it is special. And in a moment, you will be deeply touched by that amazing God's love.