



Sunday Reflection

Ordinary Time

in the Charges of St Margarets, Renfrew
& St Johns, Johnstone



For Sunday 23 January 2022

Epiphany 3

Draw near and open your heart to the one who promises hope and healing. As we sing together, pray together and make our resolutions for the future, we discover the true identity of the Christ – the lynchpin of our life and faith.

Reflection for this week's Gospel teaching

"Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

Luke 4:21

An Illustration to set the scene

There was a bit of a kerfuffle in the Manchester press when a local singer, who had achieved international fame, announced the dates for his upcoming tour – and they didn't include his home town.

Prompting headlines such as "Panic on the streets", rumours flew this way and that; maybe he'd add a date, maybe he wouldn't, but there was a definite air of disappointment.

There's a kind of pride, a bit of reflected glory, that shines on the place that nurtured someone successful, so it's a bit of a special thing when a famous band return to their roots.

You only have to look at Liverpool with its Beatles Story museum and Magical Mystery Tours to see this in action, long after the Fab Four went their individual ways.

People and places can take their successful alumni and endow them with almost religious significance – and if not that, then certainly a major boost to tourism.

Looking at the teaching of the Gospel

There's something of that feeling in the story we read today.

Jesus and his message are gaining fame in the towns of Galilee as he tours the synagogues and communities around his region.

Everyone is impressed.

There is something special about this man, the things that he says and the way that he says them, and it's not long before the region is buzzing with word about him.

So when he arrives at his home town you sense a bit of anticipation.

He does here what he has done everywhere.

He joins the synagogue meeting and chooses to read for the people a wonderful passage from Isaiah.

Those words are the stuff of which dreams are made, a prophetic message of healing and freedom, which had formed the backbone of the collective hopes of the people of Israel for a very long time.

And up to that point, that's all they had done.

The scene plays out in slow motion, as Jesus reads the passage, rolls up the scroll, hands it back to the attendant and goes back to his seat, with all eyes fixed upon him.

So when he says, "*Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing,*" it must have been like a thunderbolt.

This is the Messiah!

It's a call to revolution, to spiritual awakening and action. Hopes and dreams are over – things are finally moving on.

But that doesn't seem to be what his listeners hear.

It's worth reading on, even though the official lectionary stops short here.

Even before Jesus has finished, his listeners get caught up in chattering about how marvellous he is, and isn't it amazing that he is one of them? – Joseph's son, no less.

And before you know it, Jesus has refused to do any miracles for them, has delivered a robust telling off (if not outright insult) and nearly got himself lynched.

From hero to zero in about three minutes.

How can we reflect on the application to our lives?

Surely the lesson for us here is clear, if a little hard to hear.

A couple of millennia on, Christianity is no longer a localised Jewish sect but a major world religion.

You could say we have capitalised on our successful Son.

Liverpool and its Beatles Experience has nothing on the Church.

Christianity has a complex understanding of who Jesus is, reflected in a colourful religious calendar.

It has fabulous buildings in which to worship, a sophisticated language and liturgy, building on centuries of rich tradition, and a comfortable place in society.

But is it possible that we could go back for a moment and stand in a hot and dusty synagogue and listen to the words of this familiar, yet unfamiliar man, when there was everything yet to play for; everything to learn?

Perhaps we could fix our eyes on that figure, and switch off for a moment the sense that we know who he is and what to expect from him – and give Jesus a chance to finish what he began to say.

We could hear again, really hear, those amazing words: ***captives are released; sight is restored to blind people; oppressed people go free.***

“Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”
Exactly what could that look like here and now?

“Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”
Luke 4:21

Please share your response to this reflection to Rector@SECStJohnStMargaret.org.uk – did anything speak to you? Did you feel challenged, angered, consoled by something in the words? How did God’ spirit move you as you read it? Have you shared the words with someone else? Is this a worthwhile thing to make available to folk whilst we cannot meet for corporate worship to share in word and sacrament? What are your thoughts?

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