

Jesus is lynched in Nazareth

OT Reading – Selected passages from Isaiah 60 & 61 (Third Isaiah)

The Luke passage we'll look at later has the earliest mention of a synagogue from any historical document. There is no mention of synagogues before the first century.. Synagogues had two purposes one as a place of teaching and another as a place of worship. No evidence of synagogue worship before the first century. The rule was that for a town to have a synagogue it must have ten families to meet together. Towns and cities set up the system of the synagogue to learn the Word of God. These places of worship had no full-time pastors so they would call various men to travel and teach from place to place. They would have spoken Aramaic, but would have either read straight from the Hebrew or may have used the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the Septuagint. A small mountain village like Nazareth was only just big enough to have a synagogue and may have had difficulty in attracting those that could read the Hebrew, so may have to cope with memorised Psalms etc. After the reading they would sit down to preach.

There no chapters or verses, no punctuation or vowels in Hebrew text. So a scroll would be just wide columns of Hebrew symbols.

Luke 4 v 16-30 [also Mt 13.53-58: Mk 6v1-6 & poss John 7v3-4]

Intro

Confession; I love Gaffa tape, and have found a 101 uses for it. E.g. run out of plasters, but a bit a piece of toilet tissue on the wound then tape over it with a strip of Gaffa. Even my 30 year old Moroccan bible cover is held together with it. My much loved Good News bible was even older and not just the pages but whole sections started to fall out. 2 years ago I bought a nearly identical Bible but it wasn't the same because it didn't have all the special verses underline or highlighted like the old one. So I went through the whole bible copying across all the markings. Why because it helps me quickly find verses I'm after, and during any quiet time I can flick through a few pages, and find some words that will inspire me or challenge me. How do you use your bible? I can see a high percentage of intellectuals into who takes a thorough, chronological and systematic approach to bible study. I am wondering how many of you instead randomly take bible passages, often out of context, perhaps even manipulate them and then apply them to your own life. OK, come clean –who underlines verses in their bible, then picks them off randomly during quiet times.. Does anyone have a promise box (cars with random promises on), or use computer generated text for the day. Who has uses daily bible notes, but dips into the book rather than following it in its regular order. Who manipulate passages from the bible making them personal by putting our yown name into what Jesus did.

God so loved 'Kevin Elliott that he gave his only son.. From John 14 – If Kevin Elliott believes in me, he will do what I do, yes he will do even greater things etc. To a greater or lesser extent we all probably manipulate Gods Word, to help tune into what God is telling us on any given day, or to get a message across to some-one else. But is that Okay. As we look at Jesus' preaching in his own town we'll look at how he used scriptures, and look at the implications of that on our own lives.

Context & Synagogues

Jesus is about 30 (Luke3v23). This was the age when Levites began their temple service. Jesus has been baptised and tempted for 40 days in the desert and travelled back to the Galilee district where he did his first miracle at Cana. From there he went down to Capernaum, and probably then did miracles there although they are not recorded. After a few days he went to Jerusalem for the Passover and went out again to the Jordan where his new disciples were baptising more than John. The Pharisses heard about this, and with John already in danger from Herod, Jesus returned to Cana, did a miracle for a nobleman whose son was sick in Capernaum, then he went back to his home village of Nazareth. He had been teaching in the local synagogues, but this is probably his first time up front in his own village synagogue. Jesus may have been to this synagogue when he was growing up, if he was allowed which he may not have been because of his disputed parentage. In his public work, first and foremost Jesus was a preacher. He was always preaching, he was preaching even when he was not working miracles, and after the synagogues were closed to him he preached to tremendous crowds in the open air, as many of his followers would do as well in the ages that followed.

Luke 4V16-19 – Jesus and the scroll, & the words chosen

Jesus arrives at Nazareth early on the Sabbath. *They were only 4 or 5 miles from Cana*, and some of his village would have no doubt been at the now famous wedding. They would also have heard rumours of some incredible things that he was claimed to have done in Capernaum. Jesus had a close association with John the Baptist, who after challenging

Herod, had celebrity status amongst rural folk. But could all the talk about Jesus really be true? This was that freckly Yeshua lad, now a rabbi and he's coming home. Home to Nazareth, he will teach us the scripture and heal all our sick people. No longer will others mock us and say 'nothing great ever came out of Nazareth'. They were intrigued and excited. This was an exciting day for Nazareth and a big crowd squeezed into the small synagogue of the mountain village, amidst the pillars and smoky oil lamps. The children and women were separate, up on the balcony looking down on procedures, or behind a reed screen at the back listening.. At the front is a row of dignified men sat in front of a heavy curtain. Jesus stands to read. The heavy parchment scroll is placed on the angled podium before Jesus, who deftly handles the parchment and opens it to a section of Isaiah that he is very familiar with. There was usually a reading from the law, then a reading from the Prophets. Some think that you could choose which prophet you read from, others think that it was chosen for you. But either way, he himself chooses where to read from. There was usually a schedule of readings not unlike many Anglican Churches have today. But Jesus chose his own text.

The message in the words

"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has chosen me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty for the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, set free the oppressed, and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." There are no chapter, verses, punctuation or even vowels in the Hebrew. Jesus reads the passage we now have in Isaiah 61, but not word for word and reads across from a bit in Isaiah 58 about freeing the oppressed. He didn't turn to chapter 61 and start reading the first couple of verses, as we would do today. In fact if you make a careful comparison between the OT words and what Jesus says, he does not quote any passage directly. He weaves together some words that we now find in the first two verse of 61, but not all of it. He announces the general 'release to captives' does not include the more specific 'freedom to those in prison' but adds in a bit from Isaiah 58v6 on removing the chains of oppression. He cuts a sentence short and omits the part about Gods vengeance. He was manipulating and using the OT scriptures to drive home what God was telling him about his own message. The bit about prisoners, and the bit about Gods vengeance didn't fit. He is playing with and moulding the scriptures. He already knew what he was going to say, before he opened the scroll. He delivers the message with eloquence and the assembled can feel the power in the words. There were plenty of other words from Isaiah that he could have claimed for himself (as we saw earlier), but there was a clear message crafted for the point he wanted to make.

This was a mission statement for Jesus was going to do, as well as a declaration that he was the Messiah as foretold by Isaiah. He also made a claim that he would bring in the year of Jubilee, the year of celebration.

Jews were supposed to rest on the 7th day, not farm in the 7th year (let land be fallow), then after seven of those ie. In the 50th year, there would be a year of Jubilee,

all slaves would be set free,

all men whose poverty had forced them to sell their lands would receive them back again,

those who had lost family members into slavery or imprisonment would be reunited with their loved ones.

Imagine being trapped in heavy debt today, then having all your store cards and credit cards shredded and the debt taken away, and your repossessed house given back to you.

Jesus was announcing that he had come to bring good news to the poor, the kind of news that had 'em dancing in the streets every fifty years! He came to bring broken families together, to bind up the broken-hearted, to heal the hurting!

He came to free the slaves, to open the doors of darkness, to untie men's hands, to unfold their wings!

To proclaim the acceptable year, the year of God's grace, the year of JUBILEE!--BUT NOT JUST ONE YEAR EVERY FIFTY--but Jesus came to bring a worldwide Jubilee, that every year, every DAY, would speak good news to the poor, liberty to the captives, healing to the broken-hearted, it would speak forgiveness for the guilty, freedom for those who feel controlled and release for those who feel trapped, deliverance, laughter, relief, joy, JUBILEE!

God called Israel to be the means for saving the whole of creation, by being a means to bringing the rest of the world to God, and by bringing men to God, men would save the rest of creation, but Israel wanted to keep God locked up in their own temple, not to take him to others.

V20-22 – Sits, declares, going well.

He sits down to preach. All eyes on him. Then the incredible claim, this scripture has come true today, as you have been listening. He'd just as well as said, and that's me guys I'm the Messiah. The word Messiah could be interpreted then as I'm the one with the prophetic message, rather than I am the Son of God. How do the congregation act. Angry at the claim. Not at all, they love it, they marvel at it. Some were almost cheering. Gods messenger is amongst us, in

Nazareth. We will be the envy of Capernaum and Sephorris. God will show his favour on this village, we will have no more poverty, no more sickness. Now we're special!

I think the proud Nationalistic Nazarene peasants were cheering these words because they heard this.

Good news to us poor peasants, God will make us wealthy.

Sight to the blind – he will do many miracles amongst us – we will all be healed of our afflictions.

Liberty to the captives and the Year of Jubilee – our money debts will be cancelled and those who could not pay their debts will be let out of prison.

This scripture is fulfilled today. That means that this will come about because Jesus is back in Nazareth to stay and this messiah type Rabbi will raise us up, No wonder they were so happy with what they thought Jesus was saying.

But he wasn't saying any of those things:-

This again was well received and they wondered at how a boy from Nazareth could deliver so well. But some were starting to think – no this is Joseph's son. If Jesus has left then, he would have gone down well, but then he went on to reveal their hearts. Jesus had not wanted this positive reaction from them, because he knew it meant that they had not been able to understand his message – they were not poor enough in spirit to get it.

V23-28 – Criticizes the Nazarenes & praises Gentiles.

You don't believe in me, because I'm a local lad, you heard that I did great things in Capernaum, but you won't believe what you heard, unless I perform miracles here for you. Well I'm not going to, I'm a prophet and a prophet not recognised in his own town, that's why I do miracles to the Israelites in Capernaum. I don't have to do anything here, I'm not an entertainer, this isn't a show for your amusement.

Jesus in his reversal of the OT prophecy pattern (warnings then blessings, bad news then good news) starts to dish out the warnings, (God's vengeance!). Look back Nazarenes – in the past when us Jews after drifted far from God's heart and purposes, he turns his back on them and blesses non-Jews (or Gentiles) instead. If you persist in your pride and hard hearts then you won't receive God's Blessings – the spiritually poor from Capernaum will, and even the Gentiles but not you.

Elijah could have helped plenty of widows in Israel but he chose a foreigner from Sidon, and Elisha well there were no end of lepers in Israel, but he blessed another Gentile, and healed Naaman the Syrian. Sidon is town of gentiles, North of Israel, and Syria is another country. Those that got the miracles were both gentiles.

Jesus knows their hearts are hard, calloused, and faced with their selfishness, lack of humility and servant heart, Jesus challenged their pride. Faced with familiar stories from old where God blesses foreigners instead of Jews because of their proud and hard hearts, ignoring God's will for them. Jesus takes them to a gateway/junction. They can act in one of two ways, heed the warning and ask what must we do to be saved, or they could do what they did do and exhibit what was really in their hearts. Walk through the gate with Jesus, or slam it in his face.

What Jesus was really saying with his reading

We mustn't forget that Jesus has recently come back from working with John, preaching repentance, i.e. that people should turn away from their sins, wrongdoings, and be forgiven by God. Take each bit and expand. This message was not about the Jews getting favour from God, because they deserved it as Jews

Good News to the poor - Good news to those that knew they were poor in Spirit, those who knew they were sinners.

Sight to the blind – spiritually blind – help those who don't - to realise they need God.

Liberty to captive/oppressed – Release from Sin and Guilt through God's forgiveness.

Year of Jubilee – Jesus would bring in all the above, but not once every 50 years, but every day of every year.

Good news to the poor – The poor in the Gospels are simply those people who are in great need of God's mercy and help *and know that they are*. The poor, in that sense, included the Lord's disciples, none of whom, so far as we know, was financially destitute. When Jesus met them Matthew was a well-off tax collector, Peter probably run his own fishing business, and there were at least one wealthy Governor's wife bank-rolling his itinerant ministry. He came to bring good news to those who were poor, by which he meant to those who knew and realized that they were poor. "I did not come to bring the righteous to repentance just sinners". We are all sinners, but we need to realise it before God can save us. The

problem with Nazareth was that there were not enough people poor enough to receive the gospel (ie. Those that were poor in spirit).

Sight to the blind – There were, of course, literally blind people to whom the Lord would miraculously restore their sight, but there was as well a spiritual blindness that the Lord encountered and he opened the eyes of many more people who could see perfectly well in the physical sense but who had been blind to the salvation of God. They may have had 20/20 eyesight, but they had never seen themselves as sinners, never seen God as a gracious savior, and never seen the new life that God grants to those who trust in him. The recovery of sight throughout the Bible, but especially in the Gospels, is a metaphor for receiving the truth of God and being saved. “I was *blind* but now I see,”

Liberty to the captives / free the oppressed – In the same way, ***captivity and oppression in the Gospels are primarily to be understood as spiritual states or conditions not as physical ones.*** The word translated as liberty was the normal word used for forgiveness. Release from captivity or from oppression is again a metaphor for release from the guilt and power of sin. Your captivity to sin is your real captivity – there are plenty of free Christians in prison.

The time (Jubilee) of the Lords favour has come - Jesus is with us now. Every day you can be set free, forgiven. Every day you can be blessed by his Holy Spirit.

V29-30 – Emotional anger & escape.

Talk about Emotional Intelligence, and the build up of rage. A little bit worked up that this was the local illegitimate lad now a man talking so well, then they realise he won't prove himself by doing miracles, and implies Capernaum is more worthy (those people even use Roman money and not pure bartering!) and they get more wound up. Then he gets them proper riled by the suggestion of God blessing gentiles over Israelites. This was too much, and they boiled over. They were so angry at Jesus that they were going to kill him. The people of God often become angry when they hear that God loves other people outside of their predetermined boundaries. From the perspective of the hometown people, God's love should be confined to the Jews. Nowadays, we play similar theological games when we believe that God's love should be confined to Christians, when we believe that God should love Christians more than people of other religions like the Muslims or Hindus.

The congregation turned into a lynch mob, so I am being careful what I say to day. Mountain village, cliff. Throw them over a few feet drop, then stone them from above.

Calmly walks through them

Owning scriptures for ourselves.

The whole of our Christian experience to date gives us a basis to understand what God wants for our lives. Also God is talking to us all the time and we draw quietly into his presence and listen we get more direction. Then in this context we can take our favourite sayings, promises and passages from the bible and use them to get real traction, and real conviction behind what God wants for us. Plenty will warn us about dipping into the bible, you open the pages and randomly point to a text “Judas went out and hung himself”, so you quickly flick back a bit and pick another passage “What you are about to do, do it quickly”. But you can instantly reject that because it is outside of the context of what you know is a loving Gods will for you. Jesus, as we saw today, took passages and moulded them to fit what he knew was Gods will for his life, and used them in a powerful way. You can do the same. You can even use the same passage.... Expand.

Earlier we shared some of our fave passages with each other. One of mine is also from Isaiah ‘How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news,’ Isaiah 52v7 (& Romans 10v15)

Lets listen to God and use our underlined bibles and ‘lucky dip’ passages to inspire us and move us, and having got some spiritual chiropody to then go out with our beautiful feet with the good news of Jesus. **Amen**

- How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, "Your God reigns!"

Can we take scriptures and own them like Jesus did.

God talks a lot but we do not listen to him a lot. Scriptures are a good way of channelling what God is saying

Can we be the light to others, can we bring good news to the poor.

We can use our best passages to remind us that we are poor if we don't realise we need Jesus, we once were blind but now we can see, are captives to our bad ways and habits without Jesus to set us free.

Mashup of Isaiah 60 v1b, 2-4, 16, 19, & 20

The glory of the Lord is shining on you. Other nations will be covered by darkness, but on you the light of the Lord will shine. Your days of grief will come to an end. No longer will the sun be your light by day, or the moon be your light by night. The brightness of *my* presence will be with you. Nations will be drawn to your light and kings to the dawning of *a* new day. I will make you great and beautiful, a *haven* of joy for ever and ever. I the Lord will be your eternal light, the light of my glory will shine on you. You will know that I have saved you, that the Mighty God has set you free. I am the Lord, I will do this swiftly.

This passage of scripture has come true today as you heard it read.

Reader 1

You will know that I have saved you, that the Mighty God has set you free. No longer will the sun be your light, I the Lord will be your eternal light, the light of my glory will shine on you. Nations will be drawn to your light and kings to the dawning of *a* new day. I am the Lord, I will do this swiftly.

Today this passage of scripture has come true as you heard it read.

Reader 2

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has chosen me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom to the prisoners and recovery of sight to the blind, to release the oppressed, and to proclaim the year of Jubilee.

Today this passage of scripture has come true today as you heard it read.