

Messiah.

The good news is for all who acknowledge their spiritual poverty and turn to Jesus in repentance and faith. This faith, if it is a real and living faith will reveal itself in how we treat those inside our parish family and those in the community who are less fortunate than ourselves.

Part of the liberty of the Gospel is coming to the Father with repentance and the recognition that he supplies what we really need to release us from our views of life that chain us to our past, cause us to miss out on our future and to mistreat others.

In the days of Isaiah, the captives were clearly the people of Israel held against their will by the Babylonians. God's grace would ultimately set them free. Jesus is not talking about those in goal for criminal offences; he is talking about those bound by their circumstance, by addictions, prostitution, those refugees detained for long periods of time unnecessarily, those bound by a sinful nature and the many others we can think of.

It can be a challenge for the church to present the message of repentance, release and salvation for to do so we need to talk about sin, all sin, not just the select few. Yes that subject that seems to be overlooked in many places. We in the church must avoid pointing the finger at some sins, murder, homosexuality, and then overlooking others i.e, divorce, adultery, greed, cruelty, lust, lying, cheating, abuse of power etc. The bible says that all sin is sin so we must be consistent and credible in identifying sin in ourselves first and foremost.

Thus in Jesus, the spiritually poor from all walks of life are filled with love, forgiveness, and grace'

In Jesus, the economically poor hear a word of encouragement and hope for a better life and help that will show a way forward for them.

In Jesus, people in modern day slavery are being set free, our eyes are being opened and in Jesus, God's people are mobilized to action--to continue the work that Jesus began!

Jesus in his declaration that the scripture was being fulfilled in their presence was saying that salvation has come, and today is the day to be saved.

May today be your day of salvation when you too are released, and you find your freedom in Christ? May today you & I be set free to continue the work of Jesus, the work of spreading the good news and the work of making disciples so that people are released from their bonds of captivity and are baptised in the name of the Father, The Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen

In this encounter Jesus is communicating a sense of redemption to sinners and those in dire need, those who were lost. The people heard his message of repentance, forgiveness, release and fulfillment of promise, but they also saw his compassion and care.

As the people today look at Jesus representatives and bringers of the same Gospel message do they see the same compassion being shown?

This leads to another major application of the message today and which centers on the nature of salvation, or in other words release from our indebtedness to God. The year of jubilee, of God's favour, which foresees a total release from all enemies and debt, wonderfully describes the essence of salvation

The people who heard Ezra wept when they realized the implications of what he was saying. The burden of their sinfulness and the sinfulness of their ancestors was more than they could bear. But neither Ezra nor the Levites who assisted him in the instruction of the people intended that they be overcome by their guilt. They insisted: "Today is holy...do not weep...rejoicing in the Lord must be your strength!" In other words, "Learn from your mistakes. But learn too that God is merciful."

Jesus in his reading was showing his compassion for the lost, the marginalized, the sick, those captive of their circumstances, and he calls on his followers, you and me, to do the same

But what about us does the adjective; poor apply to you and me? Have we ever experienced the need to be released because we were tied up and couldn't escape from something? Have we ever been blind, maybe not physically, but simply unable to see what we should do and the path we should follow? I would say we have all been there at some time in our life; some may still be in that situation.

Take heart people for this is what Jesus is saying in his reading from Isaiah and in his explanation that followed. Jesus is saying that he has come to release people like you and me from our prisons, our emotional prison, our financial prisons, and to open our eyes so that we can see our way forward and so that we can see the Glory of God that he brings clearly. He has come to heal our hurting hearts and souls if we will only let him, and that freedom starts now.

"Today this word is fulfilled in your presence."

The reaction of those gathered in the synagogue, showed that they had a problem with the scripture and so they shut themselves off to his message, for they felt confronted by it, and instead of looking more deeply at it or allowing it to take hold in their lives they dismissed Jesus message and claims as the

Jesus saw himself coming with good news for the world's troubled people and that the year of the God's favor refers to fact that the time of salvation for all had come, and that it was he Jesus that was a means of that salvation.

The people in the synagogue that day were a bit shocked, here was the hometown boy challenging them with a passage from Isaiah. Who does he think he is, is he not is a carpenter's son and not a Priest. They missed the point, as they did on many other occasions that Jesus was laying claim to his connections with God, and so they got a bit cut up by Jesus message, for they failed to see the relevance of the message for them.

Especially when he explains his reading with "today this scripture has been filled in your hearing."

I wonder how we would react if a preacher got up and made the same claims and challenged the establishment about the lack of apparent passion for their ministry to the poor, both the spiritually poor and the physically poor. Would we get upset at the claim of being spirit filled - God empowered for the task, and ask the preacher to leave, or just ignore him or her.

Just as the passage from Nehemiah has Ezra reading scripture from the book of the law – Deuteronomy –which brought about a response from the people, and the Isaiah passage that Jesus read brought about a response shows that the message was meant for the people. These readings also show us that the message of God's word is meant for us. How do we hear it? Do we take it to heart, or do we just listen to what is said at a surface level? Do we think its challenging message is intended for someone else and fail to see it's relevance for us?

As we look at scripture we often ask how can a message that was intended for people who lived thousands of years ago have any meaning for us today. Some of the stories in the Bible certainly make exciting action movies, but are we expected to live like that, to think as they did and to cherish the same aspirations? Is the Bible relevant to our lives and situation today, or is the newspaper more so?

As we explore scripture we need to ask such questions as this as well as how best can we reveal our concern and compassion for those in need. For just saying, "God loves you and has a plan for your life," seems inadequate to someone in need, where an act of compassion will say much and open a heart to change.

The Gospel message is not about bringing change to society but to the hearts of people, for when hearts are changed, compassion emerges and society is changed, and people are set free.

## Sermon – Port Macquarie – 24<sup>th</sup> January 2010:

Luke 4:14-21:

Mike Perrott:

### What binds you?

Good morning fellow prisoners. What is it that binds you and your life today, is it frustration, financial circumstances, anger, un-forgiveness, lust? What is it, other than yourself, that prevents you from seeing the freedom that is in Christ Jesus and from hearing his word, whether for the first time or the umpteenth time, is it doubt or broken heartedness, or maybe sickness, or it may be the habit of religious practice. What ever it is Jesus words today are for you just as they were for the folk gathered in the synagogue at Nazareth.

These folk had gathered much like us today to worship and praise God, to fellowship together, to hear the scripture read and to have that reading expounded for them in a way that did not bore them to tears. Maybe they were gathered there for a baptism just like we are today.

When Jesus stood up and took the offered scroll, he read from Isaiah 61 & 58 he was bringing words of freedom to those who would listen to him. When he had finished he explained his reading, gave his sermon, by saying “today this has been filled in your presence.” In other words what Isaiah has spoken of has now come to pass, and I am he who brings that freedom. You have been looking for the Messiah, well I am here, not as a warrior with weapons, but as a warrior for God with the message of salvation and that day of salvation is now, today:

Let us look at the scene painted for us in Luke’s Gospel. Jesus returning to Nazareth after 40days alone with God in the desert was walking in the power of the spirit of God, he was so filled with the Spirit he is on fire for the Lord God and for his mission.

On his return he does what he had done each week during his formation in Nazareth, he attends church – goes to the synagogue – where he is handed to scroll of Isaiah and after turning to the chosen passage he reads it to the gathered congregation. Note Jesus words ***“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 favor.”***

Jesus in choosing Isaiah 61 & 58 was saying, “I am going to be a servant. I am going to take care of and heal the poor, the blind, the lame and the maimed, both physical & spiritual.” In saying this he was pointing out that the leaders of the Synagogue has failed to do both, they had neglected the poor and made worship a chore.