**Morning Praise @ Home 26th January 2025**

**Opening prayer**

Blessed are you, God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, you have blessed us with every spiritual blessing; enable us by your power to be true to our calling and live holy and blameless lives before you all our days, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever. **Amen**

**Confession** Let us admit to God the sin which always confronts us.

**Lord God, we have sinned against you; we have done evil in your sight. We are sorry and**

**repent.** **Have mercy on us according to your love. Wash away our wrongdoing and cleanse us**

**from our sin.** **Renew a right spirit within us** **and restore us to the joy of your salvation,** **through**

**Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen** cf Psalm 51

**Absolution** May the Father of all mercies cleanse us from our sins, and restore us in his image

to the praise and glory of his name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

### Bible Reading Luke 4: 14 – 21

### Reflection from John Jesus on his home turf and us on ours

I left my home on the Wirral in 1975 and returned 47 years later to be Vicar of Burton. Of course, I had visited many times over the years but when I returned to live here I came to see that the Wirral had changed - I had changed.

Things were different. Things are different.

So try and imagine what it felt like for Jesus to return to his home village of Nazareth and to declare among people he had known for years that he was God’s anointed One……What must he have felt as he stood to read from Isaiah in the Synagogue.

Was he anxious? Imagine him telling them: “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”

I wonder if he worried about what the people would think of him making such a claim. I wonder if his heart was beating fast and if he had butterflies in his stomach. I wonder what expressions he saw on all the faces that day.

Was it acceptance and understanding? Anger, rejection? Confusion, disbelief, indifference, boredom?

I wonder what he saw in their eyes and how it felt to be looked at by them. I wonder if he had any idea of where all this would take him.

“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.”

This isn’t simply about Jesus getting up to read the assigned passage for the day. This isn’t like one of us looking at the rota and saying, “Oh, it’s my turn to read the Old Testament lesson.” According to Luke, Jesus “found the place” where these particular verses were on the scroll. He intentionally chose them. Jesus is up to something.

The Spirit of the Lord is upon him, the same Spirit that descended upon him at his baptism, that filled and led him in the wilderness, and with which he returned to Galilee. Something is stirring within him.

What Jesus reads and says that day are his first recorded public words. And he speaks to them in the town in which he grew up, in the synagogue where he worshipped as a child, among the people who know him and his family.

Jesus is naming what God is concerned about in this world. He’s describing the work and direction of his life. He’s taking a stand, a very public stand.

And somehow as we read these words describing Jesus’ own mission we see - as his friends and followers - our own calling.

If he was scared on that day in Nazareth - on his home turf - we start to wonder what it means for us to play a part - however small - in continuing his mission on our own home turf.

* How far will I go for this gospel I claim to love and follow?
* What am I willing to do and what am I not?

Because here’s what I see and read in the life of Jesus.

Sometimes, the gospel asks us to make a choice, to take a stand that will inconvenience us, be contrary to our self-interest, or put us in conflict and even opposition with others, ourselves, our family, our daily life.

Let me give you a few examples:

* “For God so loved the world” (Jn. 3:16) is great, but “love you enemies” (Lk. 6:27) not so much.
* I am happy for good news to be brought to the poor, but I resist selling all my possessions and giving the money to the poor (Mt. 19:21).
* We claim family as the most important thing in our lives and then Jesus goes and says that whoever “does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and even life itself, cannot be [his] disciple” (Lk.14:26).
* I’ve saved and worked hard to have a comfortable life and one day retire and Jesus says, “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth” (Mt. 6:19).
* And I suspect most of us would rather fight back than turn the other cheek and we’d rather be secure than risk welcoming a stranger.

So yes, if Jesus was scared at what these words meant for him we likewise can feel a genuine concern about taking a stand, about embodying and living the gospel. We know there is a claim and a call on our lives that we sometimes do not want to hear or heed. We know how easy and tempting it is to let the gospel go in one ear and out the other. We know that if Jesus’ words are fulfilled in our hearing today then we will have to change.

Maybe that’s why we use the church as an escape from rather than an engagement with the world. Maybe that’s why we are so content with just having a friend in Jesus. Maybe that’s why we usually see Jesus as being on our side, and the side of our church, our party, our country. And maybe that’s why Jesus gets crucified.

You see as he sets out to live these words among those who knew him of old it must have dawned on him that the future would be different. Jesus is trouble for the status quo and an interruption to business as usual.

He did not come to bring peace but a sword (Mt. 10:34). He says the last will be first and the first will be last.

His world is one in which the hungry are filled with good things and the rich are sent away empty.

### That’s the promise within today’s gospel. Jesus promises a new life and a new ordering of that life. And we are the keepers or breakers of that promise. There is no neutral stand when it comes to Jesus. We all take a stand. The only question is where we stand.

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**Affirmation of faith**

Do you believe and trust in God the Father, source of all being and life, the one for whom we exist?

**We believe and trust in him.**

Do you believe and trust in God the Son, who took our human nature, died for us and rose again?

**We believe and trust in him.**

Do you believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit, who gives life to the people of God and makes Christ known in the world?

**We believe and trust in him. This is the faith of the Church.**

**This is our faith. We believe and trust in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen**

**Prayers of intercession**

Heavenly Father, we come before you today with heavy hearts, acknowledging the immense challenges facing our world - conflict, poverty, injustice, and climate crisis. Our world seems to lurch from one conflict to another. So we pray for the peacemakers, the negotiators, those with seemingly endless patience who bring the warring factions to the negotiating table.

Encourage world leaders to work for peace and understanding, especially in places torn by violence, and areas struggling with the effects of natural disasters.

We pray for peace and hope to abound. Many are affected by natural disasters: floods, droughts and forest fires. Many are struggling with conflict, poverty and the global food crisis. Lord, we pray for your provision, peace and protection.

God of healing and hope, we pray for our neighbourhoods and our nation.

Where people are divided and bitterness turns into resentment, show us how to work for reconciliation. Inspire our leaders at every level of community life to work together for the care of the most vulnerable.

Make us generous citizens and careful stewards of the land you entrust to us together.

We pray for the world you love, the world Christ died to redeem, so deeply divided by religious and political animosities, by ancient bitterness and current conflict.

We pray also for our emergency services put to the test in the recent gales and also for the teams of power-line technicians working long shifts to restore power to homes and businesses.

Lord Jesus, when confronted by the sick and needy you responded with both compassion and practical help, and so we bring before you those in our own society who are in need of your healing touch.

Merciful Father, **accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen**

**The Lord’s Prayer** As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

***Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name, Thy kingdom come,******Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen***

**Closing prayer**

God give you grace to become the people He has called you to be, that you may live and work to his praise and glory, and the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with us and remain with us always. **Amen**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. **In the name of Christ. Amen**