

Anointed

Sunday 01 August 2021

Call to Worship

Psalm 78

Listen, dear friends, to God's truth,
bend your ears to what I tell you.
Stories we heard from our fathers,
counsel we learned at our mother's knee.

**We're not keeping this to ourselves,
we're passing it along to the next generation—
God's fame and fortune,
the marvelous things he has done.**

He planted a witness in Jacob,
set his Word firmly in Israel,
Then commanded our parents
to teach it to their children

**So the next generation would know,
and all the generations to come—
Know the truth and tell the stories
so their children can trust in God.**

O worship the king

O worship the King all glorious above,
and gratefully sing his power and his love:
our shield and defender, the Ancient of Days,
pavilioned in splendour and girded with praise.

O tell of his might and sing of his grace,
whose robe is the light, whose canopy space;
his chariots of wrath the deep thunder-clouds form,
and dark is his path on the wings of the storm.

The earth, with its store of wonders untold,
Almighty, your power has founded of old;
established it fast, by a changeless decree,
and round it has cast, like a mantle, the sea.

O measureless Might, ineffable Love,
whom angels delight to hymn thee above!
Your humble creation, with glory ablaze,

in true adoration shall sing to your praise!

Reading 1 Kings 17:8-16

The Widow of Zarephath

⁸ Then the word of the LORD came to him, saying, ⁹ “Go now to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and live there; for I have commanded a widow there to feed you.” ¹⁰ So he set out and went to Zarephath. When he came to the gate of the town, a widow was there gathering sticks; he called to her and said, “Bring me a little water in a vessel, so that I may drink.” ¹¹ As she was going to bring it, he called to her and said, “Bring me a morsel of bread in your hand.” ¹² But she said, “As the LORD your God lives, I have nothing baked, only a handful of meal in a jar, and a little oil in a jug; I am now gathering a couple of sticks, so that I may go home and prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it, and die.” ¹³ Elijah said to her, “Do not be afraid; go and do as you have said; but first make me a little cake of it and bring it to me, and afterwards make something for yourself and your son. ¹⁴ For thus says the LORD the God of Israel: The jar of meal will not be emptied and the jug of oil will not fail until the day that the LORD sends rain on the earth.” ¹⁵ She went and did as Elijah said, so that she as well as he and her household ate for many days. ¹⁶ The jar of meal was not emptied, neither did the jug of oil fail, according to the word of the LORD that he spoke by Elijah.

Prayer of Adoration and Confession

Dear God

I saw a rainbow the other day
It stretched across the sky
A great burst of colour against the dour clouds above
I thought of how the bow can be huge
Pushing against the very boundaries of heaven
And it can be tiny, hiding in droplets on a leaf
I thought of how it is a sign that despite the clouds
The sun is shining
And no matter the outlook
Hope is on the way
I realised that just as the rainbow is fleeting
My faith quickly fades when the Sun is dimmed
By all that is going on around me
Forgive me for my transient trust in you
Help me to hold to you with greater confidence
And to find my assurance in your love

Dear God

Each of us struggles with our faith in one way or another. Hear us as we bring our personal confessions to you.

Thank you for the gift of your forgiveness. For the reminder that you don't merely forgive, you wipe the slate clean and retain no memory of what has been.

Amen

Reflection

Notices

The Peace

Celebrate

Celebrate, Jesus celebrate

Celebrate, Jesus celebrate

Celebrate, Jesus celebrate

Celebrate, Jesus celebrate

He is risen, He is risen

And He lives forevermore

He is risen, He is risen

Come on and celebrate

The resurrection of our Lord

Turn your eyes upon Jesus

Turn your eyes upon Jesus

Look full in his wonderful face

And the things of earth

Will grow strangely dim

In the light of his glory and grace

Reading Luke 4:16-21

¹⁶ When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, ¹⁷ and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

¹⁸ "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,
¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour."
²⁰ And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The
eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. ²¹ Then he began to say to them,
"Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

Message Anointed

This is a short reflection on Jesus reading from Isaiah 61 hoping to draw in some thoughts from our reading in 1 Kings. Over the coming month we are going to be thinking about this story of Jesus in the Nazareth Synagogue and how it might speak into who and how we are today. In particular I want to dive into the how of the Isaiah reading. What can that look like toward the end of 2021 in Oamaru and beyond?

Let's go through the introduction. Our setting is in Nazareth, where Jesus spent much of his formative years. It is where he would have made friends, where he learnt the skills of a carpenter. He was recognised by the people there and he recognised them. Then, on the sabbath day, he went to the synagogue, as was his custom. He was a regular member of the synagogue congregation. Just like you are a regular member of this (online) congregation. He wasn't a visitor, he was one of them. As one of them it was perfectly normal for him to stand to read, and following the reading to speak on it. It is worth noting that he was literate, not necessarily a given in those times, but seemingly reasonably common among the Jews.

We don't know whether he asked for the scroll of Isaiah, or whether it was handed to him randomly. Whatever the case, he unrolled it to what we now call chapter 61 and read the first 2 verses.

It is the very first part of that reading I want to focus on today.

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me

The Spirit of the Lord

This is a phrase that is used of Samson, David, Samuel, Philip, Paul among others. In some cases we are told that the Spirit of the Lord overwhelmed and controlled in a situation. Philip was snatched away by the Spirit of the Lord and deposited in a distant city. The Spirit of the Lord was mightily upon David. We are told the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul. In every instance the use of the phrase suggests something profound, and generally powerful, is in process. You could argue that is kind of obvious, yet I think it is worth noting that these words are not used lightly. The Spirit of the Lord probably refers to the Holy

Spirit, although it needn't have the same impact. This is God acting directly upon a person. The Spirit of the Lord at work in Elijah when he spoke to Ahab and predicted the coming drought and famine. It was the Spirit that urged him first to the Wadi Cherith where he was fed by ravens, and then on to visit the widow of Zarephath who fed him with an endless supply of flour and oil.

Is upon me

The Spirit of the Lord is upon Jesus. God is not acting randomly, simply spinning out on whoever turns up. Rather, God is placing his Spirit on a particular person. We see in the book of Acts that the Spirit came on everyone gathered in the house, not on the entire crowd gathered around about. The specificity is important. God could have chosen to simply go to town on everyone in the region.

In the same way you could ask the question, 'Why did Elijah have to turn up in Zarephath for the widow and her son to have enough to eat?' It does seem as though there is a level of interaction here that matters to the process. God is not imposing his Spirit on someone who is not open to what is to come next. The widow had composed herself to eating what little she had left and then dying. She needed the prophet to be there. And Elijah needed to know that God was not done with him, or the widow quite yet. That of course is where it gets really interesting. But first...

Because

There is a reason for the Spirit of the Lord being upon someone. Just as it is not a random event, neither is the purpose of the event random. When we see that someone has the Spirit of the Lord on them we need to be asking, 'Why?' What is it that God has in store for this person or these people? Whatever it is, it will be for God's glory, not the glory of the person in question. In the story of Samson, we see that God stirs up Samson to go on a rampage in order to deal with the Philistines¹. There is purpose in the Spirit being upon him. We see the purpose in the Spirit being upon David as he brought glory to God. We see the purpose in the Spirit lifting from Saul as he consulted mediums and disobeyed God. And we see the purpose in the Spirit upon Elijah as two people on the very edge of society are given life and hope through a miracle of multiplication.

He has anointed me

And here is the why for Jesus. This is why the Spirit of the Lord is upon him. He has been anointed. We will spend more time in what that anointing looks like over the next few weeks. Note that the Spirit of the Lord is not the anointing.

¹ Judges 14:4

They are two different things. The anointing requires the Spirit of the Lord. Without the Spirit the anointing will not be successful in fulfilling the task before it. We could think of the anointing as choosing a person for a task. We often refer to it as a call. Once a person receives the call of God on their life the Spirit of the Lord then comes and empowers them to achieve the task.

In the same way we see the anointing process at work for Elijah. Although it is probably best illustrated in the passing of the baton from Elijah to Elisha, we can clearly see that Elijah was anointed to speak into the lives of the people of Israel and their leaders. It was that anointing to be a spokesperson for God that required the empowering of the Spirit of the Lord.

This has been just a short introduction to give us a basis for what we will look at over the next few weeks. It's not terribly juicy or exciting, yet it is important we lay a foundation for what we read next. Bringing good news to the poor, proclaiming release to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind and letting the oppressed go free is done within a particular context. If we forget that context and rush in with nothing but good ideas we will be doomed to failure. Ultimately the question comes down to, 'Are we anointed?' If we are then the Spirit of the Lord will come upon us as the need arises. If not, then we are on our own. I don't know about you, but I don't want to go down that path.

We Pray

God who blesses us with your call, and then with your anointing. Help us to first receive and then understand your call on our lives. Where we have lost sight of that call or struggle to understand how we might work it out, refresh our vision. Renew our hearts and our thinking so we can receive your Spirit and act in the anointing we have been given. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

Let the weak say, "I am strong."

Reuben Morgan

Let the weak say, "I am strong"

Let the poor say, "I am rich"

Let the blind say, "I can see"

It's what the Lord has done in me

Hosanna, hosanna

To the Lamb that was slain

Hosanna, hosanna

Jesus died and rose again

Into the river I will wade

There my sins are washed away
From the heavens' mercy streams
Of the Saviour's love for me

I will rise from waters deep
Into the saving arms of God
I will sing salvation songs
Jesus Christ has set me free

Offering

Almighty Giver of All Good Gifts: Grow in us the wisdom to know that all we have to give is in our hands only because you have given to us first. Remind us that you have called us in Christ to be gentle, patient, and loving – and at one with your children everywhere. May the gifts we have been given and the gifts we share reflect the debt of our gratitude for your many blessings. We pray this in the holy name of Jesus, our Lord and Saviour. Amen.

Prayer for Ourselves and Others

For the lost and the hurting, those who have never known the warm embrace of your love.

Make your ways known upon earth, O God,
your saving power among all peoples.

For the people of your church as we struggle to live to your glory, falling as often as we manage to step forward.

Renew your Church in holiness,
and help us to serve you with joy.

For those who whether by election or force have responsibility for the people of this world, that they may have the capacity for compassion and care for those under their authority.

Guide the leaders of this and every nation,
that justice may prevail throughout the world.

For the poor, ground down by a world that is intent on giving its most to the fewest. Scraping by, or not even managing that.

Let not the needy, O God, be forgotten,
nor the hope of the poor be taken away.

In a world rife with fighting and war, blood shed for little or no ultimate gain.

Make us instruments of your peace,
and let your glory be over all the earth.

For ourselves, those we love, our hopes and dreams, fears and concerns
In your mercy Lord, hear our prayer.

All this in the wonderful name of our Lord Jesus who taught us how to pray...

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father in Heaven, holy be your name.

Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and forever.

Amen

Great is thy faithfulness

Thomas Obediah Chisholm, William Marion Runyan

Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father,

There is no shadow of turning with Thee;

Thou changest not, Thy compassions, they fail not

As Thou hast been Thou forever wilt be.

Great is Thy faithfulness! Great is Thy faithfulness!

Morning by morning new mercies I see;

All I have needed Thy hand hath provided—

Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!

Summer and winter, and springtime and harvest,

Sun, moon and stars in their courses above,

Join with all nature in manifold witness

To Thy great faithfulness, mercy and love.

Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,

Thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide;

Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow,

Blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside!

Benediction and Grace

As we go on from here, may we discover, recover, refresh and renew the call you have placed on our lives and may we experience the Spirit of the Lord at work in all we say and do.

May the Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,

the Love of God,
and the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit
be with us all, now and forevermore. Amen.