

Luke 4:14-21 – 27 January 2019

In this part of Paul's letter to the Corinthians, we can see that claims regarding different spiritual gifts had begun to lead to divisions and disunity in the Corinthian church.

Paul could see that there were different gifts within different people – but it was the common gift of being at one in Christ that would be the compelling energy of that place – that church – it would be the collective spiritual energy that would whisper to those around 'come and see'.

We are all part of the greater whole – whatever that whole might be and here at St Peter's we are part of the whole of this parish church – and we hope to embody Christ's love and hospitality in the working out of that in our community.

We come together as different personalities, different ideas of spirituality – different ideas of everything to do with what church means

But we can celebrate and embrace the differences and work in unity to offer an invitation to those yet to experience what it means to live in Christ – to live as part of that bigger story of hope and love –

Our sense of identity lies not in the role we play, nor the status we have, nor the reward our role brings, but in the sense of who we are in Christ. How Christ sees us as individuals and as the united body of the church is far more important than how we see ourselves.

Our collective energy will build collective confidence to do that – to manoeuvre through the clambers of the world and everyday busy lives – to listen to the quiet voice of hope and unity and to share it with our individual communities we abide in – and our collective parish community in which St Peter's abides.

And there is a community focus about this first sermon that Jesus preaches that Luke writes about in his gospel.

And this is the good news of our reading – that justice and goodness is lighting the dark world of injustice and oppression. But the bad news is not far away, I'm afraid....

Jesus – now in his hometown synagogue at Nazareth – now a famous figure – reading the text for the day from the prophet Isaiah – is the archetypal local boy made good.

But the words Jesus reads are those of the great prophet, Isaiah. And Isaiah moves quickly from the singular of character to the plural good news of shared public life and justice: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me and has anointed me." But this Spirit is calling the singular anointed one to attend to the plural reality: to preach good news **to** the poor, release to **prisoners**, sight for **the blind**, and relief for **those who are downtrodden**. The final part is reminiscent of the year of Jubilee in Leviticus 25: "and to proclaim the year of Lord's favour."

And for us, at the centre of all of it is Jesus – he says 'today this text has been fulfilled in your hearing' He is announcing – proclaiming – today!

And if Jesus is alive in us today through the Holy Spirit as our faith tells us – then today this text is still being fulfilled in our hearing...

Let's take time this week to ponder on the Gospel reading – to pray into it and ask how we can deepen our part in the spiritual life of St Peter's and how we can see what it means to intentionally do all that we do with the spirit of the Lord behind it – and continue to do so for the coming weeks as we lay all that we have been doing fallow to allow God to wash over it – let's listen for God's

word to announce to us just how he wants us to continue to serve him here where we are – today...

And on this day when British Society marks Holocaust Memorial Day, let us especially pray for unity and love to prevail. On this day, we pray for those who died when madness ruled the world and evil prevailed on earth. It reminds us of dark time times when even survival was not possible for many. We also to acknowledge the repeated occurrences of genocide, such as Cambodia, Rwanda and Bosnia, and to renew the commitment of the British people to combat racism, anti-Semitism, and xenophobia. But this day also reminds us of the piercing light of God, shining through His Son Jesus, which will never be extinguished. It reminds us of a resilience of faith which is beyond our understanding.

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me - 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." - "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

Each morning and each evening
let the peace of the Father, be ours.
Each day and each night
let the peace of the Son be ours.
Each dawn and each dusk
let the peace of the Spirit be ours.
Let the blessing of the three in one be ours;
both now and for ever. Amen.

As we wake from sleep
and gather ourselves together to face the day,
so we gather ourselves together before you, Lord,
ready for worship and service.

Rev Jacqueline Drake-Smith