**Readings - Luke 4:14-21**

**14Then Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding country. 15He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone. 16When 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,17and 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, 19to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” 20And 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. 21Then he began to say to them, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”**

**1 Corinthians 12:12-20**

**12For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.13For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.14Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. 15If the foot would say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. 16And if the ear would say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. 17If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? 18But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. 19If all were a single member, where would the body be? 20As it is, there are many members, yet one body.**

**Title – The what and the how of God’s work.**

**Last week we looked at the purpose of God to transform our lives, to restore us and bring honour to our lives. If you want to review it, you can read or listen to last week’s message on the church website, in weekly messages. This week continues that theme of transformation.**

**Quite simply, when, Jesus read the Isaiah passage and announced its fulfilment he gave us the “what” of God’s saving, transforming work. The passage on the body as a unity with many parts, gives us the “how” of God’s transformation – or at least a significant portion of it.**

**That’s the heart of the message now let’s spend our time expanding on that.**

**Luke records this occasion in the synagogue where Jesus read from Isaiah 61 as the beginning of Jesus’ Ministry. Jesus returned from the wilderness where he had been tempted by Satan for 40 days, filled with the power of the Holy Spirit. He began teaching with authority and it went down well, he was praised by all (that would last until he announced that the scripture he read was fulfilled in him, after that he narrowly escaped an angry mob.**

**But the power of the Holy Spirit acting in Him was not for show, to make him look good. The Spirit of the Lord was on him for a reason: showed that the kingdom of God was near to them, with them; in their midst. The hoped for day of salvation had arrived, God’s transforming work was in action.**

**Jesus would bring good news to the poor. There were some wealthy people around, but quite literally most people lived in poverty. A failed crop, or fishing trip meant no food on the table and nothing to trade with to buy essentials. Life was tough. Good news to the poor. The vision of the Old Testament was that no one was poor. The aspiration, held in the idea of jubilee, was that land which was given away to pay debts was given back. People sold into slavery were set free. Debts were forgiven. There was to be a cycle of every 7 years and then after seven times 7, the 50th year was the year of jubilee when all rested and lived at peace for a whole year. This is what Jesus was proclaiming had started in him. A time of Jubilee – where poverty in the community was addressed.**

**Next, Jesus would bring release to the prisoners. Being under Roman rule, any who rebelled against that rule could be imprisoned. The people might have known this first hand, but obviously also in a broader sense people, like today, would have lived in prisons of their own making.**

**Next, Jesus would bring recovery of sight to the blind. Blindness resulted in a being unable to work, earning to sustain a family. The blind were often relegated to being beggars – commonly as pawns working as slaves, earning money for a slave- owner. Recovery of sight to the blind speaks of restoration of something which was lost. Jesus, in the healing of the blind man in John 9, broadened it out to those who were spiritually blind. Those who had perfectly functioning eyes but could not see what God was doing.**

**Lastly, the oppressed would be set free. Again, being under Roman rule meant a physical presence of the Roman authorities. Soldiers could conscript you to carry their pack for a mile. Generally, there was a sense of resentment that the people did not control their own land or live under their own authority. Liberty for the oppressed could very well have carried political overtones to it. But also, Jesus set people free from the demonic. People who were afflicted were set free to be at peace.**

**So this was the year of God’s favour and it is the work of God which goes on in you and me and in the world this very day. In deed and word, we are to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.**

**How? How does the work of God go on today? Through the work of the Holy Spirit. At the end of Jesus ministry he promised to send his Spirit to live in his followers and to empower them to do the same kinds and even greater things than he did. God’s power would come on them and they would be his witnesses.**

**By the time Paul wrote to the church in Corinth, some things could be observed about the work of God’s Spirit in the early church. Especially that, God gave people different gifts. Paul saw the church as a body seeing how naturally each part of the body is needed to do its part for the body to operate properly.**

**Just before our reading he wrote:**

**7The Holy Spirit is given to each of us in a special way. That is for the good of all. 8To some people the Spirit gives a message of wisdom. To others the same Spirit gives a message of knowledge. 9To others the same Spirit gives faith. To others that one Spirit gives gifts of healing. 10To others he gives the power to do miracles. To others he gives the ability to prophesy. To others he gives the ability to tell the spirits apart. To others he gives the ability to speak in different kinds of languages they had not known before. And to still others he gives the ability to explain what was said in those languages. 11All the gifts are produced by one and the same Spirit. He gives gifts to each person, just as he decides.**

**So, the way good news comes to the poor, prisoners are set free, the blind are given sight and the oppressed set free, is by the ministry of all of us. What Jesus had in himself exists, in us, but not all of it in one person, one has a word of wisdom, another a gift of miracles, and so on. Paul’s lists give examples they are not exhaustive. Another one is given special faith, another one service or administration. All work together to bring about God’s kingdom work, here, today.**

**For the “what” of the gospel to function well, all parts of the body all need to be appreciated and need to operate. No one plays the whole band, all are needed.**

**Ok, let’s land this. Jesus, was filled with the power of the Holy Spirit and we are taught in Ephesians 5: ‘be filled with the Spirit’. The first question is: are we daily asking for and relying on the filling of the Holy Spirit? Its so easy to revert to operating in our own strength, even when we believe we are serving the Lord. We can simply ask daily, and especially when we feel drained of God’s Spirit at any time: Lord, please fill me with your Spirit.**

**From there what do we need? We all need in some way to receive good news. Good news for the poor. If our Christmas bills have caught up on us and the start of a new year is costly, we might feel poor at the moment. The good news, of Jesus might help us to re-prioritize the use of our money so we provide for our families and are able to provide support to the work of the church. But, in other ways we can be poor. We can be poor in spirit. We can be down and in need of encouragement and a bit of hope. We can be spiritually poor. As we’ve been looking at, Jesus offers to fill us with his Spirit. Full to overflowing from deficit to excess.**

**We can be relationally poor. Jesus said to his disciples – I call you friends. We can have a personal relationship with Jesus who calls us friend. At Olive’s memorial service I met a man who was in the same intake as me in forestry – he’s still there working in the same industry. This has led to a bit of remembering. After leaving home and family, I lived in 12 different places in 6 years. When I was moving from one place to another and knew no one, I relied pretty heavily on Jesus. He was someone I could always talk to, he was one closer than a brother. Each of us can talk to Jesus moment by moment through the day, no flash words necessary. Do we know Jesus as a personal friend?**

**Also, the Lord provided relationships for me in those days. I made it my practice to go to church on the first Sunday I was in a new place and I cannot over-state how important the people who I met were. Whether in the King Country, Poverty Bay or the Bay of Plenty, God gave me a family to belong to.**

**Through the Church we have family of faith which can support us and where the gifts of the body can be experienced. It is not fully possible only once a week. We have home groups and different ways where people meet and get together. Consider whether there is a way in which you can get more involved in the life of the church this year and so experience the support and healing power of God through his people. Home group? Coffee group? Garden? Opp shop? Mainly Music; Youth Trust. M<aybe you can support the Thursday service in some way. There is no need to be relationally poor in the church.**

**We can be time poor. At the start of the year, we can feel overwhelmed by how much there is to do – I know that feeling at the moment. How about setting out our priorities before the Lord and asking him what is in his agenda? In the life of Christ we submit to storing up our treasures in the heavenly kingdom not in the earthly one. Also again in the company of trusted believers you might seek a word of wisdom or knowledge from someone you respect as you share your schedule to them.**

**Recovery of sight to the blind: literally – why not? If God wills it and the people pray, then why not? Eyesight is one of the great miracles of creation. The one who made the universe with all its galaxies made the eye so we could see – amazing. If God made the capacity for sight then, He knows what is wrong, so God can restore sight?**

**Also, we take this metaphorically: Through the gifts of the spirit light can be shed in dark places, eyes can be opened to new possibilities, blind-spots can be identified. Here’s a challenge for home groups. Maybe you meet for study and fellowship. Do you spend time praying for each other? A group we were in, would break the night up and for the last ½ hour the guys would go off into the kitchen and the girls stayed in the lounge by the fire and we prayed for our needs. I’m not sure what the women did, but I know the men prayed for each other. During that time we worked through with one guy a move in his architectural career. We also supported more than one guy as they discerned whether one young lady or another was the right one for them.**

**Release to the prisoner and freedom for the oppressed. We can be imprisoned or oppressed by many things, bad habits, things we fixate on and can be obsessed with. A friend down country gets really stressed about making sure the house is locked when they leave it. So, if there’s a doubt they have to go back and check and check again – this can be time consuming if they have left a house they’ve been staying in for a holiday and are ½ an hour down the road, but they must go back. I’m not mocking our friend. This is very real.**

**We can be trapped by various addictions on the internet. Porn obviously, also gaming, but it might be as simple as must having to check the cricket scores – even if the match is going late into the night. There are also relationship addictions where people cannot bear to live without a BFF or a lover.**

**Freedom, release, what does that mean? For some things, like watching porn, it will mean a clean break, for others it means the ability to choose. Checking the overnight sports results is ok, so long as it is kept within a manageable time frame and you can achieve your responsibilities in real life.**

**Jesus comes to bring release to the prisoner and freedom for the captive. Freedom feels great and it releases us to be at our best. Again, release and freedom are best achieved within a group of people – in the church. When we gather, one has a word of knowledge, another a prophecy, someone has a gift of healing another gives a gift of service. Yes, we have the power to pray for ourselves and we need to be doing this daily, but what power is released when sisters and brothers, combine together in prayer!**

**Addictions can easily become entrenched – like ruts in a 4 wheel drive track they’re difficult to get out of. It is likely that keeping the freedom from an addiction will need constant support over a long period of time. This is something a sister or brother in the Lord can provide.**

**So, the “what” of the gospel – the good news is announced to the poor, the prisoner is set free, the blind see, and the captives are freed.**

**The “how” of it is through the body of Christ when every member uses the gifts they have been given for the purpose of relieving of poverty, setting prisoners free, and giving sight to the blind.**

**Everyone’s gift or gifts are unique to them, and so we are all needed. How are we each one sharing our gifts with others?**

**Prayer of response.**