

# Jesus a man of love, compassion & freedom 26-Jan-25

## Based on Luke 4:16-21

As we live our lives we come to many cross-roads where our actions and decisions mean we must go one way or the other, where our next move will be a game changer for either ourselves or someone we love. We might call that a pivotal moment in our lives and we can pinpoint it. One such decision would be to say 'yes' when the person before you is on bended knee with a ring extended out to you asking if you want to spend the rest of your lives together.

Thankfully Jesus had many of those moments that changed society forever for the better. Luke shares with us one of these moments today. Jesus outlays his mission and his role as Lord and Saviour. Unfortunately though, the impact and depth of what Jesus was saying wasn't understood by those hearing it. Jesus, the man the Nazarene's knew well, a carpenter's son, and here he is going into the synagogue doing what's done by the Rabbi, reading from the scroll of Isaiah. Not just any old passage of scripture but one that speaks of the Anointed One, bringing up topics concerning freedom, healing and the embodiment of God's favour. It's only 6 verses but in these 6 verses our vision of Jesus is one of love, compassion and freedom.

Jesus is stepping into his role as the Messiah, a role deeply rooted in love. Jesus' declaration that He has come to bring good news to the poor signifies a radical approach to those who are normally ignored and considered too unimportant to be taken seriously or even listened to.

To give a cultural look of that era, the poor weren't just those lacking material wealth, they included the socially ostracized, the downtrodden, and those living in desperate circumstances. Jesus' message of good news acknowledges their suffering is real, not imagined or made-up stories to get more sympathy, Jesus is offering them hope. The kind of love which Jesus is offering is unconditional and inclusive – not discriminatory. Jesus' love extends to those who society ignores and pretends don't exist. In a world where inequality often prevails, the actions of Jesus remind us that God's love isn't restricted to a boundary.

Jesus isn't ashamed of expressing His compassion as he calls to heal the brokenhearted, and to proclaim freedom for the captives. We ought not to be surprised that Jesus does this because throughout the gospels active compassion is part of his character. For example: He heals the sick, restores sight to the blind, and frees those who have been possessed by demons. Each act is an expression of His deep empathy for our suffering.

Jesus' heart of compassion which we all have, is expressed in the call to heal the brokenhearted and proclaim freedom for those who feel they are caught in places where they don't want to be, and often don't know how to get out of without the help from others. Throughout the gospels, Jesus demonstrates compassion not just through words but through tangible actions. His compassion is witnessed and experienced as He heals the sick,

restores sight to the blind, and those living with mental illness described as being possessed by demons. Each act is an expression of His deep empathy for human suffering. By saying He has come to serve those in dire need. Jesus models a life of selflessness, frequently at his own cost, urging us to reflect on how we engage with others in our communities. Compassion isn't a passive feeling; it requires us to be active, inviting us to respond to the pain of others with tangible support and caring understanding.

Freedom is an important part of what Jesus is proclaiming for the year of the 'Lord's favour', a reference to a Jubilee year which occurs each 50 years, or each 7<sup>th</sup> Sabbath year, where debts were forgiven, and slaves were set free. This helps to give us a scriptural understanding of freedom, which isn't just a political or physical state, but a spiritual release from sin and oppression. Jesus emphasizes that true freedom comes from a transformative relationship with God. Jesus liberates us from the heavy burden of guilt, shame, and fear, inviting us to embrace our identity as beloved children of God. The freedom He speaks of is holistic, offering restoration and wholeness that transcends our lived experiences.

As Christ's followers, we are continually challenged to embody the principles of Christ's love, compassion and freedom in our lives. If we call ourselves a community who love in a Christlike way, we have no choice but to extend compassion to others, especially the marginalized whose experiences and voices are silenced by the opinions and power of others. Our communities are often rife with division and conflict, yet the call of the gospel demands reconciliation, understanding, and unconditional love. Living out Jesus' mission involves being willing to confront injustice, speak out against inequity, and advocate for those who cannot advocate for themselves.

What we continue to learn and be reminded of in Luke today encourages us to look for a way to free ourselves not only in our personal existence but also in broader terms. True freedom, in its fullest sense, involves recognizing the interconnectedness of humanity and refusing to turn a blind eye to the systemic issues that bind many whose life experiences are one of being labeled for their 'difference' which feeds into their feeling of anxiousness and despair. We are called to work towards a society where love propels action—creating environments that promote dignity and respect for all.

I am very grateful to be able to have the privilege of reading Luke's encouraging words presenting Jesus as the embodiment of love, compassion, and freedom. He is a figure who not only articulates the Good News but lives it out in deep and transformative ways. As His followers, we – you and I -- are invited into the heart of this mission, to be catalysts of love, agents of compassion, and supporters of freedom in a world that so very desperately needs the healing touch of grace. Embracing this call is not just a personal pursuit but a communal journey, reflecting the very essence of Jesus in every aspect of our lives.

Amen