



The **Methodist** Church  
**Nottingham North East Circuit -**  
**Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> January 2025**

This short act of worship, based on the service which would have been held at Church today, has been prepared for you by Rev John Wiseman, to use at home. If you are well enough, why not spend a few moments with God, knowing that other people are sharing this act of worship with you.

**Let's sing together STF 175**

Light of the world  
 You stepped down into darkness  
 Opened my eyes, Let me see  
 Beauty that made this heart adore  
     you  
 Hope of a life spent with you

Here I am to worship  
 Here I am to bow down  
 Here I am to say that you're my  
     God  
 You're altogether lovely  
     Altogether worthy  
 Altogether wonderful to me

King of all days  
 So highly exalted  
 Glorious in heaven above  
 Humbly you came to the earth you  
     created  
 All for love's sake became poor

Here I am to worship  
 Here I am to bow down  
 Here I am to say that you're my  
     God  
 You're altogether lovely  
     Altogether worthy  
 Altogether wonderful to me

I'll never know how much it cost  
 To see my sin upon that cross

Here I am to worship  
 Here I am to bow down  
 Here I am to say that you're my  
     God  
 You're altogether lovely  
     Altogether worthy  
 Altogether wonderful to me

Tim Hughes @2000 ThankYou music

**Opening prayer**

Father we thank you for the hope with which you have filled our lives. We give you thanks that in the coming of Christ you have given us assurance of your sovereign control over all things. Thank you that we can gather on this when we remember not only the coming of Christ into our world but also the revelation of what his mission would be

Thanks you for the hope with which Christ fills our lives. In our times of doubt and despair, the message of his coming, his birth, life, death and resurrection assures us and renews our hope. Thank you that because of Christ's

coming and the promise of his coming again, we can live each day in the full knowledge that you are with us.

And ultimately you hold all things, including ourselves in your mercy, love and care. Lord come and come again. Come into your world. Come into our lives that we might have hope. In Jesus name. Amen

### **This morning's reading Luke 4:14-30**

<sup>4</sup>Then Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding country. <sup>15</sup>He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone.

<sup>16</sup>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, <sup>17</sup>and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him.

He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:  
<sup>18</sup>“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, <sup>19</sup>to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.”

<sup>20</sup>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.

<sup>21</sup>Then he began to say to them, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” that came from his lips. “Isn't this Joseph's son?” they asked.

<sup>23</sup> Jesus said to them, “Surely you will quote this proverb to me: ‘Physician, heal yourself!’ And you will tell me, ‘Do here in your hometown what we have heard that you did in Capernaum.’”

<sup>24</sup> “Truly I tell you,” he continued, “no prophet is accepted in his hometown. <sup>25</sup> I assure you that there were many widows in Israel in Elijah's time, when the sky was shut for three and a half years and there was a severe famine throughout the land. <sup>26</sup> Yet Elijah was not sent to any of them, but to a widow in Zarephath in the region of Sidon. <sup>27</sup> And there were many in Israel with leprosy<sup>[g]</sup> in the time of Elisha the prophet, yet not one of them was cleansed—only Naaman the Syrian.”

<sup>28</sup> All the people in the synagogue were furious when they heard this.

<sup>29</sup> They got up, drove him out of the town, and took him to the brow of the hill on which the town was built, in order to throw him off the cliff.

<sup>30</sup> But he walked right through the crowd and went on his way.

## Let's sing again

### STF 254 Seek ye first the kingdom of God

Seek Ye First the Kingdom of  
God and His righteousness  
And all these things shall be added  
unto you Allelu Alleluia

Man shall not live by bread  
alone but by every word  
That proceeds from the mouth of  
God Allelu Alleluia

Ask and it shall be given unto  
you seek and ye shall find  
Knock and the door shall be  
opened unto you Allelu Alleluia

Karen Lafferty@CCCM Music 1972

### Today's message.

The reading that we have just heard takes place, in the backwater town of Nazareth, Jesus hometown. It's a Sabbath day. Jesus enters the synagogue he has likely attended since boyhood, and stands up (as is the custom) to read from the Prophets. He asks for the scroll of the prophet Isaiah, unrolls it, finds the passage he wants, and reads aloud words that will be familiar to all of us.

“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,<sup>19</sup> to  
proclaim the year of the Lord's  
favour.”

By the time he's finished reading (the Gospel of Luke tells us), every eye in the synagogue is fixed on him.

Luke offers us this reading scene as the inaugural act of Jesus' ministry. An act in which he proclaims his identity, his purpose, and his vocation. An act in which to use political terms, he publishes his manifesto, his pledges, his promises, his projected path. This is his conference speech summed up in a few short lines but being far more powerful than many long-winded ramblings we are used to hearing today.

What I love about the scene is that Jesus chooses to reveal the meaning of his life and work through the beloved and well-worn words of scripture. Words his audience has heard a thousand times. Words no doubt rich with communal memory and meaning, but also words in danger of losing their power through over-familiarity.

As the incarnate word of God it would not be outside of Jesus' scope to have concocted a brand new mission statement, one that catches the ear in an exciting new way. But Jesus' mission is in itself rooted in the faith story of the Jesus people. Jesus is to be the

way that the Jews see that their God is a faithful God, one who keeps his promises.

But he doesn't improvise his own off the cuff mission statement; he opens the book of one of the greatest prophets and breathes life into a sacred text. Jesus takes something from the past, brings it right into the present whilst at the same time looking forward to the future.

It is as if Jesus is saying look, these words are not lifeless ink printed on a scroll of parchment. Instead they are living words, full of life, full of hope, full of promise.

It is as if Jesus is saying that The Word of God is neither dull nor dead. It is alive. In and through him.

And we hear that all eyes in the synagogue are fixed on him, transfixed by him, glued to him and hanging on his every word

The spirit of the Lord is on me he says....and perhaps at this moment we need to put this passage in to context. Our reading today comes after two pivotal moments in Jesus' life. First there is his baptism in the river Jordan by John the Baptist, when he read these words

And when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened, <sup>22</sup> and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a

voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved;<sup>[g]</sup> with you I am well pleased."<sup>[h]</sup>

Words that affirm his vocation perhaps not so much for Jesus himself but certainly for the crowd of witnesses gather on the river banks. Then affirmed and empowered by the Holy Spirit Jesus has immediately been tested, tested by 40 days and nights in the wilderness, tested by the climatic conditions, tested by the act of fasting and tested by the devil offering Jesus easy ways to win followers and attract a crowd. Tempted to turn away from the path God is calling him to follow.

And now having survived those tests, having sent the devil packing...for a while at least, Jesus now stands in full sight of family, friends and those who would know him well and full of divine inspiration not only makes the words from Isaiah come alive with new meaning but claims that in and through him, those words have and will be fulfilled.

After 30 years of preparation, after a moment of affirmation, after 40 days and nights of being tested, Jesus is now ready. Today. This is not a prophetic passage Jesus is making that will be fulfilled many years in the future but an expression of the role Jesus claims for himself and the change he is currently bringing about. Then and there. Here and now.

And of course with big commissions not only come big missions but also big confrontations, big challenges, big obstacles to overcome

And the first of those is to win over the hometown crowd who are now described as being astonished at what he says, not so much astonished that this local lad, Joseph's son, the lowly carpenter, is such an articulate speaker but astonished more at what he is claiming about himself and...and this is important...who the recipients of God's grace will be

For to their horror Jesus reveals it is not just Israel who is going to benefit but given his reference to stories involving Elisha and Elijah, thus identifying himself alongside them. And he reminds the people how Elisha offers God's blessings to Naman the Syrian, commander of the enemy army in 2 Kings 5 and how Elijah does the same to the widow of Zarephath a town in Sidon in 1 Kings 17. Jesus seems to be suggesting that Israel's God would in fact be blessing Gentiles as well as Jews.

Is it any wonder that the reaction of the crowd goes from astonishment at what he has said to outrage at what it actually will learn...that Israel alone will not be the recipient of God's grace but that their neighbours, the Gentiles, possibly

even their enemies will also be blessed...something that Luke in his second volume...the acts of the apostles shows to great effect as the early church spread and grows not so much in the Jewish heartland but in the Gentile territories.

And so the mood changes to such an extent that they drag Jesus out of the synagogue and attempt to kill him by throwing him off a nearby hill. Not quite the reaction I would want from any message I delivered. But at least it got their attention.

Not for the last time in his ministry, the message Jesus delivers is one that proves unpalatable to some and not only do they reject what they have heard but in refusing to listen to the message attempt to kill the messenger. A fate that has already befallen many of the prophets and which also lies ahead for many early Christian missionaries.

For Luke the movement of the gospel is not a matter of chance but it something that Jesus seems to foresee right at the start of his public ministry

So that was then, what about now? I wonder how difficult it is for us to hear old words given new life, a new twist, a new interpretation.

How difficult it is for us to see a

hometown boy or girl, man or woman, someone that we know being called by God into a role or position that we might very well think....what them?

And how difficult is it for us to realise that God's blessing is not just for us, for those we like and indeed those like us, but that it is for everyone, for all and who knows perhaps those others might be more open to hearing those words' reflecting on those words and putting those words into action....

And how difficult is it to think that perhaps we might be the ones who have been anointed, it might be you and me that the spirit of the lord is working on, in and through to "bring good news to the poor, proclaim release to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, and let the oppressed go free,

Words that proclaim the Lord's favour to and for all, words turned into actions that allow God's kingdom to be built here in this place"

## **Prayers of Intercessions**

We pray for the issues that have dominated our news headlines during this past week

We pray for the families of Elsie Dot Stancombe, 7, Alice da Silva Aguiar, 9, and Bebe King, 6 following the sentencing of their killer this week

We pray for the new administration in the USA and a gentler ,fairer presidency that that which has been promised.

We pray for those affected by the wild fires in California

We pray for those affected by the winds from storm Eowyn

For the family of faith at the church to which you belong

For those known to you who are in need of God's love

We join together to say the words of the Lord's prayer...Our Father.....

**Let's end by singing a hymn  
whose sentiment perhaps  
describes how following on from  
Jesus' announcement in his  
hometown synagogue, we would  
like the world to be.**

### **A blessing**

Having been blessed, now it's time  
for you to be a blessing to others.  
Amen

### **STF 255**

The kingdom of God is  
justice and joy;  
for Jesus restores  
what sin would destroy.  
God's power and glory  
in Jesus we know  
and here and hereafter  
the kingdom shall grow.

The kingdom of God  
is mercy and grace;  
the captives are freed,  
the sinners find place,  
the outcast are welcomed  
God's banquet to share;  
and hope is awakened  
in place of despair.

The kingdom of God  
is challenge and choice:  
believe the good news,  
repent and rejoice!  
His love for us sinners  
brought Christ to his cross:  
our crisis of judgement  
for gain or for loss.

God's kingdom is come,  
the gift and the goal;  
in Jesus begun,  
in heaven made whole.  
The heirs of the kingdom  
shall answer his call  
and all things cry 'Glory!'  
to God all in all.