

Sermons at the Anglican Church of Luxembourg

Preached by Rev. Geoff Read on Sunday 27th January 2019

Sermon title: The red thread of fulfillment

Text: Luke 4:14-21

When I visit people in their homes, I like to look at the sorts of books they have on their shelves: novels, hobbies, reference books

I think book shelves tell you a lot about the person who has chosen the books on them: their interests, taste, places they have visited, concerns and passions

That person, if you like, is the running thread of continuity between each of those books and why they come to be there

As you open your Bible to the contents page, and look down the 66 books of the Bible listed there, imagine them as books on a shelf, (the word Bible means “library”) books “collected” by Jewish and Christian believers over hundreds of years; what do they tell you about those people – their interests, tastes, concerns and passions?

Imagine those 66 books again, this time as books on God’s bookshelf

Christians believe that God has somehow “inspired” each one – inspiring each writer, not like an automaton, but as a person of faith: to pray and to write as a person of their time, but with a unique gifting by God: to be inspired by Him to write in a way that communicates His words, His purposes, to record His acts in such a way that what they write becomes recognized as reliable and authoritative so much so that it can be called: The Word of God

That would be mean, if you like, that to look at these 66 books of the Bible would give us an insight into God’s interests, tastes, concerns and passions

He is the red thread of continuity between each of those books and why they come to be there

Not only that: but when the books of the Bible are read in a humble and expectant way, open to the same HS to bring the same inspiring to the reading as the writing, they become a “meeting place”, a place of encounter between us and God – the thread runs on into our lives today

One writer has put it like this: The running thread is all to do with God's rule over the whole of life, His Kingdom..... as revealed in Jesus (Lk 16:16)

And so, it is not surprising that it is the Kingdom of God that is described in our gospel reading today: it's not in the text, but will be much on Jesus' lips as the gospel unfolds

Here Jesus joins in synagogue worship in his home town of Nazareth, reads from the prophet Isaiah and then adds his own commentary on the passage

READ Lk 4:18-21

The word "fulfilled" is crucial – it is a *grk* word about an appointed time arriving

You may have some "countdowns" running in your life at present: ticking off the days until a particular date or event comes around

The Isaiah passage is also a countdown, but there was no time-scale attached to the original words of Isaiah.

Here was a prophecy spoken in Exile about a time to come, when current suffering of the people would be reversed.

Was it about the prophet himself; Israel itself?

We see fulfillment coming in our OT passage – freed from captivity and exile the returned people celebrate the rebuilt Temple and the restoration of worship in their national life

But is it just for hope in C5 Exile?

Over the years this figure in Isaiah's words developed into One called the Lord's Anointed, a Messianic figure. Some believed Him to be coming in history; others at the end of time and history to bring the great gifts of Liberation, Light and Life.

The NT Church took the saying and made the connection to Jesus – he becomes thought of as the anointed one, the figure prophesied about here and elsewhere in OT.

For He himself says: READ 4:21

In me there will be Liberation: freedom for prisoners and release for the oppressed

In me there will be Light: recovery of sight for the blind
In me there will be Life: proclaiming the Lord's favour, His love and longing for relationship

Indeed, not just "will be" but "is"

Christians believe Jesus is the one Jews were waiting for, foretold in prophecies such as Isaiah.

His life and ministry and teaching not only tell us about, if you like, God's interests, concerns and passions, the things He has been revealing throughout history and recorded in OT

Christians believe Jesus is God the Son: and His life and ministry, His death and resurrection are how God the Father achieves, "fulfills" His concerns and passions:

So, this fulfillment operates on two levels simultaneously.

For example: the physically blind are healed, but also light comes to those who sit in darkensses of many and various sorts; those imprisoned by sickness and oppression will be set free, but Jesus will also challenge and destroy the source of that oppression.

Jesus' life, death and resurrection are the highpoint of God's purposes to bring His creation back into relationship with Him

That is the running thread: revealed in Jesus and achieved through Jesus with particular intensity in the big woven picture

And this thread will run forwards into the unfolding life of the Church and the record we have of that in the Bible, the book of Acts

Acts is written by the same author as this gospel we call Luke: he wrote them as two halves of a whole

At the beginning of the first half he describes his purposes like this: READ Lk 1:3,4

At the start of the second, after Jesus' resurrection and return to heaven and then the coming of the HS at Pentecost, Luke says this: READ Acts 1:1

".. all that Jesus began to do and teach ..."

And the clear implication is that what I am writing now, Luke says, is a record of what Jesus continued to do and teach

So just as the red thread of the kingdom is found in Isaiah, and then fulfilled in the coming of Jesus, so that passionate kingdom fulfillment continued to unfold in the life of the early church and continues to do so into our life today

READ 4:21

This was the point where those assembled in the synagogue with Jesus at Nazareth had to decide: is that true or not?

Is the moment we've been waiting, the one we've been waiting for here, now? Is the scripture fulfilled? They had to decide

As we hear that same scripture read here and now the Word of God spills off the page and into our midst

And there it sits, there Jesus sits, waiting for a response – this time from you and me, like a thread waiting to be woven into our lives too