

Reflection for the third Sunday of Epiphany Luke 4: 14-21

Jesus has been baptised by John in the river Jordan and so begins His earthly ministry. Already He has been teaching in the synagogues in Galilee and today He returns to Nazareth, the place where He spent His childhood. We are given to understand that Nazareth was at this time a small village, probably smaller than the communities in which we live. Just another sleepy Sabbath, the good citizens of Nazareth shuffle into the synagogue yawning and stretching. Jesus is asked to read from the Scriptures and say a few words. It could well be that He has done this in the past. It was customary practice for members of the regular congregation to do this.

Jesus stands up to read and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah is handed to Him. We could assume that Jesus is not given a choice but that the appropriate scroll is handed to Him, the choice, perhaps, of the leader of the synagogue. Jesus reads the passage that begins, "The spirit of the Lord is upon me...." a passage that Jesus may well have read many times before. Certainly, the others would have heard it read often. When Jesus has finished, He sits down. It was the custom that those who taught did so seated, rather different to our custom where we stand up to speak. They are all watching Him, Jesus has already begun to gain a reputation as a teacher. So, they are all waiting to hear what he has to say.

Jesus says, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

In other words, Jesus is saying these words are about me and today they have come true!

The atmosphere is electric. 'Did He just say what I thought I heard Him say?' the old men ask each other. 'Did He really say that?' then all at once they are on their feet shouting, 'Blasphemy!' they are shocked to the core. They cannot accept that this man that they have known for so long can be the fulfilment of the prophecy. Jesus comes without ceremony. The familiar has become the unfamiliar. Their cosy world has been shaken, and it is only just the beginning. Jesus has more to say to them, words that they find hard to accept and they are ready to stone Him, but Jesus slips away.

It has been said that Jesus comes to comfort the disturbed and to disturb the comfortable. We are left with deciding if we want to be comfortable or disturbed. The men of Nazareth are without doubt disturbed, they refuse to accept the truths put in front of them. What then of us, do we seek the comfortable, the effortless way out, or are we ready to be disturbed and shaken out of our complacency and apathy? Are we ready to accept the challenges that we must face in the future?

Heavenly Father, grant us the wisdom to discern the changes

You are bringing into our lives

and the courage to embrace them.

Lord, help us to trust in Your perfect timing

as we face transitions and new seasons.

Guide us through every change

with Your peace that surpasses all understanding.

Father, fill us with faith to overcome the fear of the unknown

and trust in Your plans for our church.