

Big idea: Jesus comes proclaiming good news, which is the time of restoration...

FCF:

Application:

1. Good news

Everywhere you looked last week, there were images of brokenness. On a large scale, we saw headlines about ‘democracy broken’ as people stormed the Capitol in Washington. On a local level, we had a lamb ad released which played on the idea of a ‘broken Australia’, and the result of border closures. Even at a sporting level, the saviour of Australian cricket, Tim Paine, was shown to be broken as he fell apart under pressure and the crowds resorted to alleged racist insults. At the end of such a week, a gentleman I talked to described the world as not just broken, but ‘shattered’.

Into this kind of world, we desperately desire good news. And we want good news that is not just about good feelings and warm fuzzies and smiles – we desire good news that restores what is broken – at every level.

What I love about Jesus is that he comes to proclaim that good news is here: now is the time of restoration (REPEAT).

PRAY...

2. A normal habit (vs.16)

READ verse 16...

Jesus came home. Nazareth was the town he had been brought up in. Coming home, Jesus had a habit – he attended the public gathering of God’s people. This was at the local synagogue – the gathering place for God’s people, in their own town.

Just think on that – Jesus made it a habit to be at the public gathering of God’s people.

This time, ‘he stood up to read’. Jesus showed publicly that he wanted to both read God’s word, and then explain it.

He already had a reputation as a gifted ‘teacher’ – **look back at verses 14-15... READ.**

In fact, Luke has built gradually to this moment from the baptism of Jesus, in Luke 3:21-22. There, Jesus was publicly identified as ‘the Son of God’. Immediately afterwards, this was proven not just by the voice of God but by historically verifiable genealogy. The temptation of Jesus (Luke 4:1-13) showed this identity tested, and found true (and we will look at that next week). And now, as Jesus moves around his home region, he is proving it by his practice and proclamation.

As he stands to take the reading, and teach, in his local gathering of God’s people, all this is bubbling away in the minds of those watching, and those reading: the reputation of this man precedes him.

3. The pieces and the reading (vs.17-19)

As Jesus stands... **look at verse 17... READ.**

They didn't have sermon postcards or Facebook to advertise sermon series back then. But when 'the scroll of the prophet Isaiah' was handed to Jesus, I suspect that you could hear all the brain cogs starting to whirl... And it is worth pausing and thinking of the pieces that might be gathering to be put together in people's heads. In fact, to sit with these people and think their thoughts is helpful for starting to understand what Jesus is claiming here.

(i) The people seated in front of Jesus would have known their history. As Jews, as members of the nation of Israel, they knew that their identity had its roots in the magnificent commitment of God to this world, through one family – the family of Abraham. **Remember Genesis 12:1-3?**

God had committed, publicly, in history, to roll back sin in this world and to restore it to blessing – to his approval. Sin is the attitude and action that says, 'I am God and God is not'. Sin is part of every human being, our default setting now in our nature. Sin brings God's judgement, separation from him, and this is death. God committed through Abraham's family to deal with this, for the world.

This is, in essence, the grand project of restoration that God committed to, at this moment, through this family.

(ii) The people seated in front of Jesus would have known their place in this restoration. As the promise of God passed, through solid commitment, through Abraham to his son, Isaac, and then to his son, Jacob, and then through Jacob to a nation of twelve tribes, God gathered his people to give them the central job in his promise of restoration. **Remember Exodus 19:1-8?**

Abraham's family was given the job of 'priests': they were to represent God to the world that he had made. And through this, God would bring all his people back to him.

And so, the life of Abraham's was to be a living and breathing example of God's commitment to roll back sin and bring blessing. Their whole culture – from child-rearing through to cuisine and clothing and even to their calendar – was to display the nature of God so that the world would know God.

In essence, this had always been the job of humans – now it was entrusted to Abraham's family. In fact, this nation was to live in such a way that the world would not only see the nature of God, but also what the restoration would like – the restoration of God's people dwelling with God, under his rule and blessing, by his word (REPEAT).

Central to all this was the reality of sin, and how to deal with it. Sin brings the judgement of God, and so the sacrificial system was given by God so that this judgement fell on animals. Sin broke the very existence and lives of humans, and so the idea of a Jubilee Year – a restoration time – was placed in the calendar. That Jubilee Year, every 50 years, was a time when people were freed

from slavery, property that had been forfeited was returned, and the whole community was restored. Together, these painted a picture of what God had committed to do.

But, they painted a picture: they didn't deal with the root cause of all the brokenness, or all the damage, or all the death. In fact, Abraham's struggled to do even these things in such a way that pointed to him! Sin remained a constant issue, and God's commitment pointed forward to a time when he would deal with it once and for all.

(iii) The people seated in front of Jesus would have known that they had failed in their job as God's people. As Jesus called for the scroll of Isaiah, they would have known what Isaiah was all about.

Isaiah was a prophet – a person commissioned by God to speak for God, to God's people. He was sent by God to confront God's people about their sin. God continually calls them to turn away from their sin, to turn back to him, or they will be judged, wiped out, removed.

In fact, their continual stubborn refusal to listen to God means that he will judge them – they will be removed from the land that was a picture of dwelling with him. In this judgement, he will save a remnant – this remnant will be a picture of his desire to restore his people.

But, even this small, saved, restored mob fails... again and again...

And so God makes clear that one day, finally, through one person, he will deal with the root cause: he will deal with sin itself. Everything that all these pictures had been pointing towards would happen, and the restoration project would be finished. This one man – called the Servant – would represent God truthfully, would relate to God rightly, would be perfectly human so that he will be judged in place of humans. He would live, die and rise again, showing that God himself has dealt with sin, once-for-all.

This Servant will be the endpoint of God's commitment to restore his world, his people, by rolling back sin.

So, when Jesus stands up to read from the scroll of the prophet Isaiah, all these pieces are floating around in the synagogue attendees heads and hearts. Moreover, they themselves sit there under great oppression and hardship, in the land that had been their's but which was now invaded and run by an occupying power.

As Jesus reads this passage, you can imagine all their hopes rising.

Look again at the passage he is reading...

Taken from Isaiah 61:1-2, it is an announcement passage. God has chosen the person speaking to come to announce that a certain time has come: NOW is the time of good news.

The good news that is to be announced is the news of restoration – those are all pictures of restoration: the poor will have hope, the

captives will have freedom, the blind will see, the oppressed will be made whole again. It is a statement that the Jubilee Year – all the pictures from the history of the life of Abraham's family – had finally come to their climax – God was now going to deal with the root cause of it all, like he promised: sin would be beaten!

Those images from that passage Jesus read, concrete as they are, are all images of people damaged and broken and dependent because of sin – the poor are impoverished because they have been broken by the greed of this world; the captives are those damaged by the violence of war; the blind are those feeling the sharpness of a world that is warped; the oppressed are those deprived by the invaders. And there are deeper images here, because all these images touch on what sin has done – it impoverishes people, it captures and enslaves people, it blinds people.

4. Now... (vs.20-21)

As the reader, Jesus is also the teacher – **look at verses 20-21... READ.**

The reading from Isaiah would have captured everyone's attention. After all, in a situation where you are desperate for some good news, some restoration, wouldn't this be the case?

As everyone watches Jesus, he speaks very clearly – **look at verse 21... READ.**

What a statement!

But, please be careful as you hear Jesus, and hear him correctly. The quotation he read was focused on ‘announcement’ – did you see how many speaking verbs were there as the job of the messenger was described? ‘To preach’, ‘to proclaim’, ‘to proclaim’ – and this has just been fulfilled in the hearing of the whole synagogue!

Jesus is announcing that the time of God’s restoration is here, now. Jesus is announcing that he is the one who has come to announce this time (in the next three weeks, we will also see that he is the one who accomplishes this good news, too!). Jesus is announcing that restoration will be happening now.

And this restoration uses concrete images, but it is dealing with the cause of the brokenness. It takes the image of the Jubilee Year, the restoration year, and says, ‘The picture that painted will now happen in real time and space’.

And this restoration has an endpoint. Did you notice that Jesus left off the last part of **Isaiah 61:2? READ...** If now is the time of restoration, it will end on the day when all things will end.

5. Really? (vs.22)

It is a big call, isn’t it?

And you can imagine the excitement on one hand – **look there at verse 22a... READ.**

Imagine hearing such gracious words – words that express something that you have heard about, wanted, desired, misunderstood – and here the time is announced!

But, yet, on the other hand, such an announcement doesn't fit your preconceived ideas – **look there at verse 22b... READ.**

I mean, this is Joseph's boy – this town knows him, they have seen him, they have had him over for sleepovers. How can such a boy turn into such a man, and announce that he is the chosen messenger of God to fulfil the announcement of restoration?

And so, Jesus is rejected outright by his own town – he doesn't fit their understanding of restoration, or how it should come about.

That is so often the case with Jesus, even amongst people claiming to be his mob: they reject him because he doesn't fit what they desire, perceive or want as restoration. Even those claiming to be God's people take a passage like this and make it solely about societal transformation, or violent revolution, or social revolution. Even more so, Jesus doesn't bring this good news the way we want, the way we would, the way we have 'planned'.

The good news that Jesus is announcing has come is that sin – the root of all brokenness and all damage and all dislocation and all death – is being dealt with, as God promised (REPEAT).

This means that the good news of the sin being dealt with is connected to Jesus and Jesus alone. And that is why I love him – he has come to bring about the end of sin, and to bring the

restoration of everything that sin has stained and tarred and warped and broken. Jesus has not come with a face mask, with unlimited handwash, and the required social distancing: Jesus has come to deal with the root cause of the virus, with sin!

In this world, this is the good news – NOW, the cause of our brokenness has been dealt with. Over the next three weeks, we will see how that takes place, how the good news announced is good news accomplished.

This is available for everyone broken by sin. This is offered to any person who is a human being. This is announced to all humanity. But let me hasten to point out – this is a limited offer. There is a day coming when such an offer will cease.