

**DATE: Sunday January 23, 2022**

**CHURCH: St Matthew's Kensington**

**BIBLE PASSAGE: Luke 4:14-21**

**GENERAL THEME/TOPIC: Epiphany – Jesus reading at Nazareth**

There are various helps to assist us in reading the Bible. I grew up with various grades of Scripture Union Notes, notably *Daily Bread*. Then there is the system called *Every Day With Jesus*. The *Navigators* have their Scripture memorisation scheme. Then there's *Crossway*, and *Bible Gateway*, and *The Blue Letter Bible*, *The Bible Reading Fellowship*, plus other Bible Reading helps that I don't know of.

Reading the Bible is the very centre and heart of Christian private devotion and of traditional Anglican worship. If we analyse the form of Communion Service that we use here at St Matthew's, it quickly becomes apparent just how much of the Bible is in it. (*See the table at the end of these notes*). There are the 3 readings that we have, as well as direct quotes from the Bible, references to what the Bible says, and oblique head-nods to the Bible.

For us, the Gospel reading about Jesus is very important – and in this season of Epiphany we have been following through various epiphanies that people had. Our Old Testament reading, and our responsory psalm reading also refer us to what the Gospel reading has said. For example, today, the Gospel reading is about Jesus reading from the prophet Isaiah in the synagogue at Nazareth. Our Old Testament Reading from Nehemiah was about Ezra the famous scribe reading the scriptures in public to all the people. Our responsory Psalm 19 verses 7 – 14 was about the quality and importance of the Scriptures. They all carried the same theme.

This is an important consideration for understanding today's Gospel reading when Jesus read from the Prophet Isaiah in the Nazareth synagogue. Jesus stood up to read. That was a Jewish custom at their services. Synagogues back then did not have a single leader who preached every week, like a rabbi or Rector does today. Instead, one adult member of the congregation (or an educated visitor) would be invited to read the Torah portion. That educated man would then choose a prophetic passage that fit the reading from the Torah that had already been read, or chanted, and would give a brief meditation on how the passages relate to each other. This second reading from one of the prophets was called the *haftarah* (HAHF-tah-rah), meaning "completion." Just like our Nehemiah reading today related to the Gospel reading today. Thus our Nehemiah reading is a HAHF-tah-rah in Jewish terms.

This is what we see Jesus doing in Luke 4:17-18 when stands up in his hometown synagogue and reads from the Isaiah scroll. From the ***scroll***. These scrolls were written on vellum, and Jesus would have gone to the big reading desk, the ***Bimah***, something like a large table, nothing like our lecterns, and there he would have unrolled the scroll to the section of Isaiah 62. It may have taken some time – much longer than it takes us to flick over the pages of a book to find the passage we want.

We said last week that maybe Jesus had started his public ministry of teaching and healing. In the synagogue, Jesus was recognised as an educated visitor and was offered the chance to read from the Torah and also the HAHF-tah-rah.

Jesus read from Isaiah 61:1-2, just a brief passage. But it was a stark contrast to the blood and fire and thunder that John the Baptist had preached. Isaiah's words were about preaching the good news to the poor, it was about releasing the captives, giving sight to the blind, setting at liberty people who were oppressed, and proclaiming the acceptable year of the Lord. Jesus read Isaiah's **good news** – so different to John the Baptist's thunderous denunciations.

The good news of God – the good news of the gospel – all contained in the Scriptures. Do you know what our Anglican Church says about the Bible? Article 6 of our church's 39 Articles says, "Holy Scripture contains all things necessary to salvation: so that what is not read in them, nor may be proved by them, is not to be required of anyone that it should be believed as an article of the faith." For our Anglican church the Bible is the touchstone of faith – nothing else, just the Bible. If you're an Anglican, the Bible is the basis on which everything is built.

Whenever people are ordained as priests or are consecrated as bishops in our church, this is one of the questions that they have to answer:- "Are you convinced that the holy Scriptures contain all doctrine necessary for eternal salvation through faith in Jesus Christ, and are you determined to instruct from these Scriptures the people committed to your care, teaching nothing as essential to salvation which cannot be demonstrated from the Scriptures?" And the answer that must be given aloud and publicly is, "I am convinced, and will do so by God's grace." If you're an ordained Anglican minister, you declare publicly that the Bible is the basis on which your Christian ministry is built.

On Tuesday February 1, at his commissioning, Tim Harris will receive 6 symbols of ministry from members of the congregation. The first symbol is a Bible. As it is presented, the Archdeacon will say, to Tim, "Take this Bible. Always be faithful in reading, studying, and meditating upon the word of God, diligent in proclaiming it and in encouraging the study of it." Tim will give this response: - "I give thanks to God for this privilege and accept this ministry." If you're the Rector of St Matthew's Kensington, you declare publicly that the Bible is the basis on which your parish ministry is built.

But the congregation also has a response at the commissioning. The congregation responds, "We promise to hear, read, and study the word of God. If you're a member of the congregation of St Mathew's Kensington, you declare publicly that the Bible is the basis on which your congregational life is built.

So .. if you're an Anglican, an ordained Anglican person, an ordained Anglican person with a parish ministry, an Anglican congregation member, you declare publicly that the Bible is the foundation of your Christian life – and on that foundation is built worship, fellowship, service, witness, outreach, mission, private devotion, daily living ... everything.

The brass lectern is an important symbol for any congregation's life – on it is the Bible, open, to be read, to be understood, to be meditated on, to be practised.

Jesus in the synagogue at Nazareth, the members of the congregation at each and every Anglican Church, the congregation at St Matthew's Kensington – people of the book; people of the message of the book; people who practise the book, and who demonstrate the love and grace of the God who is revealed in the book. (1113)

**THIRD ORDER HOLY COMMUNION. APBA PAGES 168 – 180**

| PAGE    | Description   | Bible Reference  |
|---------|---|--|
| 168 #1  | Sentence of Scripture                                       | Matthew 22:37-40,<br>Mark 12:30-31                             |
| 168 #2. | Gloria  | Luke 2:14  |
| 169 #5  | Bible Readings  |  |
| 169 #6  | Psalm   |  |
| 169 #7  | Gospel Reading  |  |
| 173     | Lord's Prayer   | Matthew 6:9-13<br>Luke 11:2-4                                  |
| 174 #13 | Sentences of Scripture in preparation for the Lord's Supper | 1 Corinthians 11:26-28<br>Isaiah 55:6-8<br>1 John 3:2-3        |
| 175 #15 | Sentences of Scripture assuring God's forgiveness           | John 3:16<br>Psalm 103:12<br>1 Peter 2:24                      |
| 176 #18 | "You are worthy ... to receive glory and honour and power"  | Revelation 5:12  |
| 176 #18 | "..making us in your own image."                            | Genesis 1:26   |
| 176 #18 | Holy, holy, holy Lord ...                                   | Isaiah 6:3   |
| 177 #18 | Take and eat; This is ...."                                 | Matthew 26:26<br>Mark 14:22<br>Luke 22:19<br>John              |
| 177 #18 | Drink from this .."   | Matthew 26:28<br>Mark 14:24<br>Luke 22:20                      |
| 177 #18 | "Come, Lord Jesus."   | Revelation 22:20   |
| 177 #18 | "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain" ..                       | Revelation 5:12  |
| 179 #22 | "... living sacrifice ..."                                  | Romans 12:1  |
| 179 #23 | "Glory to God in the highest ..."                           | Luke 2:14  |
| 180 #24 | "The peace of God that passes all understanding ..."        | Philippians 4:7  |
| 180 #25 | "Go in peace ..."   | Judges 18:6, 1 Samuel 1:17; 1 Samuel 20:42; 2 Samuel 15:9 etc. |