

Set free to serve

Luke 4.14-21

Jesus returns to his hometown of Nazareth and attends the synagogue. He reads from the prophet Isaiah about being anointed to preach good news, and declares that the prophecy is coming true now.

Now read **Luke 4.14-21** see p.2 for text.

A note on the passage

Jesus makes it very clear from the outset what his mission is: to place the poor and the oppressed at the heart of all he did. This is what God's kingdom is all about. And, he invites us all to join him and get involved in changing the perspective.



How easy is it to find ways to serve/work together within your church community?



Think, literally and metaphorically, about who the poor, the blind, the oppressed and the prisoners are in your community – e.g. 'prisoners' might be the housebound, or those who feel trapped by anxiety. Draw round your shoes and cut out footprints – one for each person you thought of. Write their names or situations on the footprints and make a trail round your house. Pray for them every time you pass a footprint. Change the trail each day by adding more footprints. Towards the end of the week, consider if there is anything you could do to help 'set free' any of the named people.



Choose a favourite character from a book or film, and read or watch an excerpt where they have a dilemma (*Dogger* by Shirley Hughes is an excellent example.) How would you respond in the character's shoes? How would you feel? If you were there with them, what would you do to help them? How does this activity make you more empathetic towards your family and friends?



Play 'make a body' card game. For four players, you will need: four sheets of A4 card; coloured pens. Draw a person on each card so that the shape almost fills the card. Cut each one into five pieces: head, upper body, lower body, legs, feet. Shuffle the cards and lay them face down. Take turns to draw a card and place it in front of you. The aim is to complete a body. Once you have five cards, ask what it might feel like if the body really looked like this (e.g. no head but four feet). Imagine 'the body' is your household or church – what could and couldn't it do? Continue the game, placing a card you don't need face down then taking another. The first person to make a complete body is the winner.

Pray



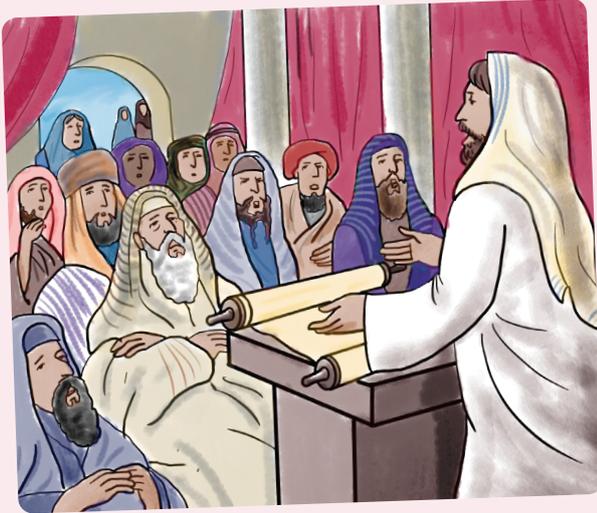
Use the hymn 'Brother, sister, let me serve you' as a daily prayer this week. Sing or say a different verse each morning, and commit to behaving that way to everyone you meet during the day. Sing/say it again at the end of the day, and prayerfully review how you responded to the people you met.

IN ORDER

Play a sorting game together. Stand in a line, side by side. In turn, each person suggests a way to sort the line – e.g. by age, height, birth month, shoe size. How many different combinations can you think of? After each one, discuss briefly how it feels to be in the position you find yourself. When time is up or ideas have run out, ask yourselves: When did you feel the most/least comfortable? Were there any occasions when you felt some sort of power or superiority? Reflect together about similar issues in everyday activities. Does this lead to a greater understanding of Jesus' words in Luke chapter 4?

Choose a version of the passage to read. The first is the ROOTS version for children, the second is the NRSV text which may be suitable for older children, young people and adults.

Jesus had been away in the wilderness but it was time for him to return home. Filled with the power of the Holy Spirit he went back to Galilee, and very quickly news about him spread right across the area. He taught in the synagogues and was praised by everyone.



Then he went to Nazareth, where he'd grown up, and on the sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as he was used to doing. He stood up to read from the Jewish Scriptures, and the scroll of Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:

'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 release the prisoners, heal the blind so they can see again, and set the oppressed free. He has sent me to tell everyone that the year of the Lord's favour is here.'

After he had finished reading, he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down again. Everyone was watching him, and he looked at them and said, 'Today this Scripture has come true.'

Luke 4.14-21

Did you know?

- A synagogue is a place of Jewish worship.
- Isaiah was a Jewish prophet who told people about the things of God. One of the books in the Bible is full of things he wrote. The Scriptures Jesus read from were very like the first part of our Bible – the Old Testament.
- 'The year of the Lord's favour' was a time when people would experience God's blessings.

Luke 4.14-21 (NRSV)

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

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, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

'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,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.'

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. Then he began to say to them, 'Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.'