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**Sunday 23rd January At Home worship sheet**

**Epiphany 3 - Set free to serve**

Above all, clothe yourselves with love,

which binds everything together in perfect harmony.

And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts,

to which indeed you were called in the one body.

And be thankful.

Colossians 3.14,15

**Call to worship**

Come and join the body of Christ.
Come whether you feel weak or strong.
Come whether you are suffering or rejoicing.
Come whether you feel oppressed or free.
All are welcome here.
Side by side, hand in hand,
we all stand together in the body of Christ.

**Confession:** take time to quietly say sorry to God for all the things you wish you hadn’t done or said this week.

Our Lord Jesus Christ says,

‘A new commandment I give you,

that you love one another as I have loved you.’

Let us confess to almighty God

our failure to accept his love

and to share it with others.

**Assurance of forgiveness**

Those who are in Christ are a new creation: everything old has passed away;

see, everything has become new!

All this is from God with whom we have been reconciled through Christ. (2 Cor. 5:17-18)

Thanks be to God!

**Affirmation of our faith** – let’s affirm our faith together now.

Let us declare our faith in the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

**All**   **Christ died for our sins**

**in accordance with the Scriptures;**

**he was buried;**

**he was raised to life on the third day**

**in accordance with the Scriptures;**

**afterwards he appeared to his followers,**

**and to all the apostles:**

**this we have received,**

**and this we believe. Amen.**

**Sing;** **Jesus stand among us at the meeting of our lives**. 303 sof [Jesus Stand Among Us [with lyrics for congregations] - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mC16hj3RoXo)

Jesus, stand among us
At the meeting of our lives;
Be our sweet agreement
At the meeting of our eyes.
O Jesus, we love You, so we gather here;
Join our hearts in unity and take away our fear.

So to You we're gathering
Out of each and every land;
Christ the love between us
At the joining of our hands.
O Jesus, we love You, so we gather here;
Join our hearts in unity and take away our fear.

**Prayer for the Day - Epiphany 3**

Almighty God, whose Son revealed in signs and miracles the wonder of your saving presence: renew your people with your heavenly grace, and in all our weakness sustain us by your mighty power; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen**

# **Bible Reading**

# **Luke 4:14-21** **New International Version**

### Jesus Rejected at Nazareth

**14**Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside. **15**He was teaching in their synagogues, and everyone praised him.

**16**He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read, **17**and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:

**18**“The Spirit of the Lord is on me,
    because he has anointed me
    to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners
    and recovery of sight for the blind,
to set the oppressed free,
**19**    to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.”[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=luke%204:14-21&version=NIV#fen-NIV-25083a)]

**20**Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. **21**He began by saying to them, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”

**Reflection**

Do you remember your school Motto? Mine was “*Members one of another*.” It was an all-girl’s school. Not overly inspiring really! The Canterbury Christ Church University’s is *Veritas liberabit vos* (Latin: *The truth shall make you free*). (Bedford School: *Floreat schola Bedfordiensis* (Latin: *May Bedford School Flourish*) A bit insular!!

Sometimes companies have mottos to fashion their desired environment. A friend saw a poster for Nationwide employment : ‘*Bring the whole of yourself to work*’

Some of us like mottos and others are more sceptical of them. But if we are starting in a new job or at a new educational institution the motto might genuinely inspire us, and let us know what is important to the organisation.

In the passage today Jesus shares some uniquely special words of wisdom which he wants us to forever associate with him. We are continuing through the season of epiphany and we come across another key time for Jesus leading in to his ministry. After his resisting of the temptations in the desert, Jesus travels to his home town of Nazareth. In his home synagogue, Jesus is handed the scroll of Isaiah, and he selects a very particular passage to read out. The passage quoted from Isaiah is one which I revisit, and which stands out to me as a revelation of the very **heart of God**. Some Churches even have these Isaiah verses as their key mission passage. Because Jesus read the verses out on this occasion in Nazareth, it is often referred to as Jesus’ mission statement. Here Jesus is reading it out to declare the start of his ministry but it is so much more than a motto. Because his proclaiming of it heralds in the kingdom of God, the very fulfilment of the scripture he quotes! Rather than a motivational motto, Jesus is saying a bold and disruptive statement. This is what he is here to do, and he is here to put the poor and oppressed at the very centre.

*The Spirit of the Lord is on me,
    because he has anointed me
    to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners
    and recovery of sight for the blind,
to set the oppressed free,
    to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.”[*[*a*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=luke%204:14-21&version=NIV#fen-NIV-25083a)]

Jesus was speaking to his home town; people who knew him as a child. I wonder how they received both the Isaiah scripture and his declaration of its fulfilment – shock, disbelief, inspiration? If we’d have read further, we’d have heard how the people were amazed and spoke well of him at first. However, this later turned to anger when Jesus challenged their faith and forecast that his hometown was not ready to accept him. Whether people are ready for a message or not, Jesus words of mission are just and true. The mission that Jesus declares continues to be a challenge to us all throughout the generations.

But we don’t have to do this in our own strength. Jesus gives us his Holy Spirit to enable and to inspire us in serving the poor, ill and oppressed. What we do to help others matters deeply. Our gospel of Christ is a gospel of grace, we believe that we are saved and united with God by Jesus’ death and resurrection for the forgiveness of sin. We can’t earn an eternal relationship with God; it is a gift of grace. And yet, we receive grace, in order that we can live sacrificially **for the sake of others.** Each of us is called to a life full of compassion and active love for others. As we see in various other parts of Luke’s gospel, the Holy Spirit is what fills, empowers and leads people to live Godly lives. Zechariah, Elizabeth, Simeon, John and of course Jesus. That same spirit is gifted to us as followers of Jesus to help us to serve. How amazing is that!

It is not easy to live in a missional way though is it? There are all sorts of reasons why we do it poorly, if we’re honest. I ask myself, why don’t I do a lot more for other people who are struggling, people unwell, oppressed people. Partly, I think we live a great deal by habit. But there are all sorts of things which can bind us, stopping us from loving and caring more freely. It might be circumstances; we have some struggles ourselves for instance, or feel overstretched already. We might be bound by worry; worrying that something might happen, worrying about people we love. Or it could be the attitudes in our hearts that keep us from serving others well, judging other’s mistakes, comparing ourselves. Perhaps we are bound by hurts from the past that stop us loving freely. But the good news is that we have access to the power of Jesus to set us free from all that binds us. We can ask for the Holy Spirit to fill us, and to enable us to live more from that freedom. Free to love and serve those in need.

Let’s be inspired by the verses Jesus shared today, to partner in his work to free those who are oppressed and captive. To help and pray for those who need healing, and to share the good news of the freedom we have in Christ. I wonder if Jesus was sharing this scripture with us here today, what chains of oppression might he have spoken of in Swindon? What poverty around us is on Jesus’ heart?

The Isaiah verses end with hope, declaring the year of God’s favour. The Message translation describes it as ‘God’s time to shine!’ Isaiah spoke the original verses to Jews in need of new hope and promise. He spoke of a coming freedom for the Jews living in captivity in Babylon. His words also pointed to the coming Messiah. Jesus spoke to people in need of the same hope and promise, and his declaration of purpose was a call to the hearers to join a new community who serve. It was, and is, an invitation to stand together and get involved where we are needed. I think it is a good time to challenge ourselves to partner God in his favour and healing for the poor and oppressed.

The Diocese of Bristol had undertaken a process of discernment about our vision and strategy, called Transforming Church, for which they invited views from across the Diocese. What has come out is 4 threads that we want in our Christian lives together: to be **creative, open, generous and brave**. As we think and pray about being a community who serve, can I encourage us all to think of ways in which we can do so in creative and generous ways, with openness and bravery. Let’s encourage one another to be set free to Serve. And let’s be creative, open, generous and brave.

**A prayer of praise and thanksgiving**

We praise you for the freedom we take for granted, Lord –

the freedom to serve you every day of our lives,

openly and seldom challenged.

We give so little thought to this freedom

that we sometimes fail to exercise it.

So, we thank you, Lord,

for every opportunity that comes our way

to be your hands, your eyes, your heart in this world;

to do your will, to see things as you do, to share your love.

We praise you that in serving, we stand alongside

our sisters and brothers in Christ, in a ministry stretching down

the generations from Jesus himself.

All thanks and praise be to you, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

**Amen.**

Song, **How good and how pleasant it is.** Graham Kendrick. Copyright © 1995 Make Way Music [Graham Kendrick - How Good & How Pleasant (Glastonbury Abbey 1996) - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1S0i5YVbyTY)

How good and how pleasant it is
When we all live in unity
Refreshing as dew at the dawn
Like rare anointing oil upon the head

It's so good, so good
When we live together
In peace and harmony
It's so good, so good
When we live together in his love

How deep are the rivers that run
When we are one in Jesus
And share with the Father and Son
The blessings of his everlasting life

**Intercessions**

Dear God, as food prices rise and fuel costs increase, we pray for wisdom in how we use our resources. Guide us and help us not to overspend. We pray for those who struggle to pay their bills and those in debt. We ask your blessing on food banks, debt counselling services and credit unions. Help us all to be generous in supporting one another and sharing what we have.

**May your kingdom come through our prayers, actions and words.**

Dear God, we pray for our justice system, for the police, lawyers, judges, probation officers and those who work in our prisons. May justice be served in the courts. May all be treated with fairness and equity. Be with those who have been convicted and those serving prison sentences and support their families and all whom they love. May your presence bring comfort and hope.

**May your kingdom come through our prayers, actions and words.**

Dear God, sometimes the way forward is unclear, we hope for easing of restrictions, but we wonder about the timing or risks. Give insight to scientists and politicians that we may be led in the right direction and be encouraged by the hope which your Spirit offers us.

**May your kingdom come through our prayers, actions and words.**

Dear God, in these challenging times give wisdom and strength to those who are trapped in lives of addiction, who feel there is no escape. We pray for Alcoholics Anonymous, Gamblers Anonymous, Drug Addicts Anonymous and all groups who seek to show people a path through addiction and offer kindness and support.

**May your kingdom come through our prayers, actions and words.**

Dear God, we thank you for the mission and ministry of Jesus, for the challenge he offers, the peace with which he fills us and his love which inspires us. We pray that we may find imaginative ways to share his love and to proclaim his good news. Bless the church throughout the world. Enable the stronger to support the more vulnerable that Jesus name may be known and honoured in every place.

**May your kingdom come through our prayers, actions and words.**

**Hear us for Jesus’ sake. Amen.**

**Lord’s prayer**

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever.
Amen.

**Sing: I the lord of sea and sky sof 830** Daniel L Shutte 1981

[I, The Lord Of Sea And Sky - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mgLwH5RdtPk)

I, the Lord of sea and sky,
I have heard My people cry.
All who dwell in dark and sin,
My hand will save.
I who made the stars of night,
I will make their darkness bright.
Who will bear My light to them?
Whom shall I send?

Chorus: *Here I am Lord, Is it I Lord?
I have heard You calling in the night.
I will go Lord, if You lead me.
I will hold Your people in my heart*

I, the Lord of snow and rain,
I have born my peoples pain.
I have wept for love of them, They turn away.
I will break their hearts of stone,
Give them hearts for love alone.
I will speak My word to them,
Whom shall I send?

I, the Lord of wind and flame,
I will tend the poor and lame.
I will set a feast for them,
My hand will save
Finest bread I will provide,
Till their hearts be satisfied.
I will give My life to them,
Whom shall I send?

## A sending out prayer

God, you call us to be the body of Christ in this place.
Side by side, hand in hand, help us to stand together,
to stand with our neighbours,
to break free from all that holds us back
from making the world as you want it to be.
In Jesus’ name.
**Amen.**



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