

All Saints' Bible Study – September 5, 2008

We read Luke 3:21-22, Jesus baptism, again and considered the question of whether this was a revelation to Jesus, or did he already know he was the Son of God?

We saw how in Luke's gospel there has already been a build up to this and the reader is already aware of Jesus identity from the angel's visit to Mary and Jesus himself appeared aware of his special relationship from his escapade in the temple as a boy (Luke 2:49).

We talked about the dual nature of Jesus, fully God and fully man.

We paused to reflect on what are the major problems besetting humanity. We thought about what *we* would do about them if we had all power at our disposal. Is there a bigger problem underlying all the others of which the problems mentioned are only symptoms?

We read Luke 4:1-13, the Temptation of Jesus:

The devil is trying to make Jesus question his identity. Jesus was affirmed at his baptism: 'You are my son' – now the devil asks for proof: 'if you are the son of God...'

Jesus is tempted to avoid the suffering of hunger, his own and that of others, ('man' refers to all) and take the short cut of making the stones into bread.

Jesus is tempted to take a short cut to political worldly power which the people were waiting for and would understand.

Either of these would solve short term problems and the symptoms of the underlying problem, but not the underlying problem itself.

Jesus is tempted to take his place on top of the temple and test out God's relationship with him. But any irrefutable proofs for God negate the possibility of choice and therefore of self-giving, love, trust etc.

What sort of messiahship should he pursue?
Satan's challenge to Jesus in the desert is 'can you be truly human?' Will he take the way of suffering and trust?

Jesus' response 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test' is both an answer to the devil's temptation and a rebuke to him not to test Jesus.

At the heart of our resistance to temptation is love and loyalty to the God who has already called us his children in Christ.

Jesus was tempted to be anything but the suffering messiah, but Jesus puts himself under the authority of scripture and so under the authority of God. His role is to worship and to serve – to be the servant of the Lord

We read again last Sunday's gospel : Matthew 16:21 - 28

We observed the path of suffering chosen again here and that it is also what a follower of Jesus will expect. Also **Hebrews 4:15, Hebrews 2:14-18**

We read Luke 4:14-21, Jesus' introduction of himself in the synagogue.
“Jesus 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 Jesus 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.’ ”

Jesus had read from Isaiah 61, and in effect said ‘this is me’. We observed all the references from Isaiah that had already been quoted in the gospel. Could Jesus have known what was in store from him?

We considered an exercise that had been set in another course of study, to look at the Servant songs and summarise from them the privileges, tasks, dangers and costs of being the servant and the encouragement for the task. Please find following:

The Servant –Isaiah 42:1-9, 49:1-6, 50:4-9, 52:13-53:12.

The privileges of being a Servant

What a privilege to be chosen and have the Lord delight in you (42:1), to have the Lord's personal presence with you! What a privilege to know that the Lord had called you to a role whilst you were still in the womb and that your life was held in God's careful grasp (49:1,2)! It is God himself who equips you for the task you are to fulfil, giving you the weaponry (you are like a polished arrow and you have a sharpened sword at your command (49:2)), the knowledge, and the ability to learn (50:4) and to bring refreshing words to the weary. He himself is the source of your wisdom (50:4) and your strength (49:5) and he even considers that the amazing task of restoring the tribes of Israel is not enough and has given you the special role of bringing God's own salvation to the whole world (49:6) as well, working on God's behalf and in His place! In your privileged position God will reveal to you things that are to come (42:9) and he will display his splendour through you (49:3)! Privileges indeed, but what a task you have before you for which you will need to be equipped in this amazing way...

The tasks set before God's Servant

The task to be undertaken willingly is no small matter. You are going to bring total healing and release from all sickness and all oppression both physically and figuratively (42:6-7, 53 :4). So for example, not only will you physically open the eyes of the blind, but the build up of the imagery suggests you will also bring enlightenment. You will in some way bear away the pain and wrongdoing of people (53:4-6, 53:12). You will take whatever punishment was due to the people (53:5 and possible reading of 53:8) and you will mediate between people and God and bring peace (53:5, 53:12). Your actions will not just affect individual well-being though, but you are going to have an effect on a national and international level bringing about justice and understanding and this definitively, since you will not deviate until this is done (42:1,3,4). People will be cleansed and anointed by you in such a way that even kings will be taken aback (52:15). God will use you to restore the broken relationship with his special people who are now not just the tribes of Israel but also people from gentile populations (49:6). You yourself will in some way become the covenant between God and these people (42:6), the means of conveying the relationship: the fulfillment of the relationship will take place in you. This fulfillment and restoration will be total, affecting the individual, society and the conditions they live in.

The dangers and pressures God's Servant needs to keep in mind. The cost of being God's Servant

Sadly the fulfilment of this task is no easy matter and is going to demand great endurance, patience and long-suffering on your part. You will not complain at the suffering (42:1). Although sometimes you will feel that you are achieving nothing and your efforts are to no avail (49:4), you will remain resolute and never waiver in the fulfilment of your task (42:3, 50:6-7). You will allow yourself to be beaten (52:14). You will be totally disfigured until you are unrecognisable (52:14). You will be mocked and spat at, suffer utter

rejection and be despised (52:14, 53:3). Deep sorrow of the soul will be your lot (53:3, 53:11) You will be wounded, pierced, and crushed (53:5) and die and people will consider that God has done this to you (53:4) because you are identified with wrongdoers and the wicked (53:9,12) taking the punishment of all people on yourself (53:7) in the same way as a sacrificial offering (53:7). You will not just feel the pain that comes from the wrongdoing of others: you take up the 'infirmities' and sorrows of humanity (53:4). The wrongdoing of all will be laid on you by God himself (53:6). You, the Servant, will suffer in the place of others: pierced for humanity's transgressions and crushed for humanity's iniquities. Humanity is healed by your wounds and brought peace by your punishment (53:4 NIV). You alone can do this because all humanity has done wrong (53:6). God will indeed smite, strike and afflict you, but not for your own wrongdoing, but that of others.

The encouragement for God's Servant as the task is fulfilled.

So what can possibly give you the courage to do this? What hope or incentive is there to keep you through all that? Well, you have the assurance that God himself, the creator, the one and only Lord, will take you by the hand and be with you through it all (42:6). He tells you some things in advance so that you know what is going to happen (42:9). We will accompany you (he is near (50:8)) and help you (50:9). All the accusations that will be levelled at you are of no import because the sovereign Lord will not let you ultimately be shamed or disgraced (50:7). He will vindicate you (50:8). If God himself is for you, who can be against you? You can trust God. You know this suffering is the Lord's will, but through it you are carrying out the utterly wonderful plan of God (53:10). The Lord will give you your reward (49:4). Despite your death, strangely, your life will be prolonged (53:10), you will see the offspring you were unable to have before you were killed (possible reading of 53:8), you will see life and gain the satisfaction of knowing that you accomplished God's will (53:11). You will be raised and 'highly exalted' (52:13), language used of God himself (Ps 57:5,11)