Luke’s account of Jesus, moves away from Bethlehem, to Jerusalem, where he records Mary and Joseph presenting Jesus and offering a sacrifice to God, as required by the purification rites – it was also an opportunity for the parents to make a thanksgiving for the child’s life and dedicate Him to God.

It is after that ceremony we are introduced to two of my favourite Bible characters, Simeon and Anna. They are not related, but they both appear to have the same love of God, to the point where the Holy Spirit enables then to recognise the Messiah.

First Simeon takes Jesus and blesses the child and God. We are not told how old Simeon was, but his entire life focus seems to have been waiting to see the Messiah. After that, he had completed the equivalent of his ‘to do’ list.

Simeon’s blessing is an early indication that Jesus ministry was always to be both to the Jews and the Gentiles. He says Jesus will be **a light for revelation to the Gentiles and the glory of your people Israel.’**

Anna’s words aren’t recorded – Luke possibly couldn’t find anyone who was able to quote her with accuracy, so he sums up what she said with, **she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.**

Two people independently prompted by the Holy Spirt to be at the same place at the same time, predicted the Messiah had come and He would be for all people.

We are not told what Mary and Joseph thought or how they responded, except that **they returned to Galilee to their own town of Nazareth. 40And the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was on him.**

Twelve years later, Jesus would be in the same Temple at Jerusalem and He would again be the focus of attention as He listened to the teachers and asked them questions.

A further eighteen years would pass before we arrive at the passage that Luke recorded in **4:14-21**, which is where Jesus quotes from **Isaiah 61**.

**SLIDE** **Isaiah 61:1 – 2a**

**The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and give sight to the blind, 2to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour…**

One of the first acts of Jesus’ public ministry was to declare Himself as Messiah, to those who wanted to listen. Isaiah has already prophetically spoken for the Messiah, by saying He will be blessed by God.

Whether this was the assigned reading for that week, or He chose it Himself, it was ordained by God that Jesus should read it in the synagogue of His hometown, Nazareth.

We are told that He read what are our first one and a half verses, before closing the scroll, handing it back, sitting down, then He said, ‘**today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing**’ **Luke 4:21**. That would not have been all Jesus said that day, but it was enough to declare His Messianic credentials to all present.

Hebrew kings were not crowned, they were anointed. Jesus describes how He has been anointed to do the work He has been given. Jesus is further identifying Himself as the Messiah, to anyone who will listen, saying that **the LORD has anointed Me**. Those people who knew their Scriptures would know that in places such as **1 Samuel 2:10**, the Messiah is called *His anointed*.

The Hebrew word ‘Mashiach,’ meaning Messiah, means ‘the one anointed with oil / the anointed one’. The custom of anointing with oil was a ritual act designed to elevate those designated for priestly, royal or prophetic roles.

Jesus declares that He is the person described by in **Isaiah 61:1-3** – He is the one the Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon. He is the anointed one – He is God’s Messiah.

So, what is this Messiah going to bring?

First, His coming will be to restore a right relationship with the Lord.

**SLIDE** **Isaiah 61:2b - 3a**

**2to comfort all who mourn, 3and provide for those who grieve in Zion – to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair.**

Jesus has fulfilled these words. He has restored comfort, He has changed ashes to a crown of beauty, He has given us the ability to praise when others only have despair.

Clearly, that restoration has not been completed, nor will it be until He comes again, but for us as believers and for Israel in Jesus’ time, that restoration had just become a reality.

Those verses are a mini description of Jesus’ ministry.

Israel was supposed to be a nation of priests for God, but they fell well short of what God had planned and instructed. By introducing other gods, they became just like the surrounding nations – no one could tell the difference, certainly not God.

Every person on earth has been created in God’s image, to reflect His splendour, so when we don’t do that, it disappoints Him.

So, God brought His punishment on them, sending them into exile, from where a remnant would return, but they would have a recommitment, a second chance.

That is what Jesus brings – an opportunity to be redeemed from sin. To restore the relationship that God really wants with us as individuals.

Jesus will free us from being captives to sin and he says, recover sight for the blind. We can be free from the captivity that sin brings, the inability to have true joy because we are burdened by lifestyles and possessions that do not honour God.

Jesus is declaring the need to get rid of spiritual blindness, but also the restoration of physical blindness was one of the attributes required of the Messiah.

When Jesus healed those who were physically blind, He was clearly declaring Himself to be the Messiah to those who wanted to see or listen.

Jesus has promised that having faith in Him will open up the prison doors, so that we can return to God and know His favour.

Jesus finishes His synagogue reading by saying that God has sent Him to **proclaim the year of God’s favour.**

The last time we heard about God’s favour from Luke was when the angels praised God and declared to the shepherds that God’s peace would be **on whom His favour rests Luke 2:14**.

Jesus stopped halfway through what was a statement in Isaiah’s writing.

He declared what would be His ministry on that occasion – to be a servant, rather than a conquering King.

Much of what Isaiah wrote on behalf of the Messiah has yet to come and for that we should all be grateful.

That delay has allowed every single person since, the opportunity to turn to Jesus for salvation. God may seem slow to act at times, but consider those periods may actually be for your eternal benefit.

But what Jesus didn’t say is part of our ministry that we can complete on His behalf. God's people will rebuild what is ruined.

**SLIDE** **Isaiah 61:4**

**4They will rebuild the ancient ruins and restore the places long devastated; they will renew the ruined cities that have been devastated for generations.**

Isaiah may have been talking about rebuilding physical buildings such as house and the Temple, but as believers we can rebuild our lives and those of others, with the help of the Holy Spirit.

Isaiah is saying that even things that have been broken for generations can be restored – just because a person may have no Christian heritage in their family, or they have turned their back on God many years previously, that damage can be restored and the relationship with God rebuilt.

**SLIDE** **Isaiah 61:5-6**

**5Strangers will shepherd your flocks; foreigners will work your fields and vineyards. 6And you will be called priests of the Lord, you will be named ministers of our God. You will feed on the wealth of nations, and in their riches you will boast.**

The result of that restoration will be that we again set apart for God’s work. We **will be called Priests of the LORD, you will be named ministers of God**. Other versions say we will be servants of God. In that servanthood, God provides through His provision - others will be assigned to take care of the **flocks** and **work your fields**.

None of us have fields or flocks to look after, but the modern-day equivalent would be that God provides – as Jesus said in **Matthew 6**, we should not worry about a thing as God knows our needs.

**SLIDE** **Isaiah 61:8**

**8‘For I, the Lord, love justice; I hate robbery and wrongdoing. In my faithfulness I will reward my people and make an everlasting covenant with them.**

Through Isaiah, God promises an everlasting covenant for those who trust the Messiah.

The writer to the Hebrews pronounces a blessing regarding this **everlasting covenant**: *Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever.* **Hebrews 13:20-21**

Last week we looked at **Isaiah 60** and that began with a commandment that is a for us today – **Arise, shine, for your light has come and the glory of the Lord rises upon you.**

Paul writing to the Ephesians **5:14** says, 14**… ‘Wake up, sleeper, rise from the dead and Christ will shine on you.’**

We are truly blessed at this time and in many ways beyond the times of Isaiah. We have the knowledge that the Messiah has come and we are seeing His vision fulfilled.

**SLIDE** **Isaiah 61:11**

**11For as the soil makes the young plant come up and a garden causes seeds to grow, so the Sovereign Lord will make righteousness and praise spring up before all nations.**

God’s blessings can’t be bought in shops, they grow.

God’s blesses us with life, but it is up to us to create the right environment for our faith and our relationship with God to grow and be fruitful.

The way to create that environment is in fellowship and obedience to Him.

That fellowship with God and obedience to Him, is what both Simeon and Anna had nurtured for years – being always in the Temple to worship their Heavenly Father.

Let us as individuals and a fellowship, be determined to root ourselves firmly in the Lord in this coming year, to accept the good news that God has to offer and to take it to others.

**OFFER / PRAY**