

## Church @Home: Reflection for Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> Jan 2022

*Extract from Lauryn's sermon*

When was the last something you saw something or heard something so amazing that you immediately wanted to tell someone? Sadly the first thing I thought of was the insurrection last year in the White House. We often start phoning people soon after someone we love has died. But we also tell others when we have wonderful news, we want to share it... the birth of a child, an engagement, a big promotion or bonus at work. Or when we have had an experience: Guess what happened in church today? You just wouldn't believe what I heard today! ...People had heard Jesus teach, and they were talking.

In this particular teaching session, Jesus hits on the essential message of his particular good news: he is bringing good news to the poor, proclaiming release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind. All who heard it, in that little synagogue, would know immediately that Jesus is reading from Isaiah. Was he claiming to be the prophet? Or at least claiming to be A prophet?

But remember the phrase: the Spirit of the Lord is upon him. Jesus is filled with the holy spirit. So this isn't just some person who comes up with a challenging idea... this is a person who is inspired, indeed Filled With the power of God, which means that his words ring out with truth, that his passion is empowered by the *dynamus*, the power, of God.

However, God's truth is sometimes frightening, or hard to take. At first the home crowd start off by speaking well of Jesus, "they are amazed at his gracious words"... but then they start to get angry at Jesus' claims – wait, isn't this Josephs' son? and Jesus is run out of town.

What does it take to recognise the Son of God? What does it take to **hear** the Word of God?

How do we remain open to hearing the Word of God today, and how do we keep an open mind to the gospel even when it is difficult and challenging to hear? What do we do when the Good News, for the poor or for the captives, is not Good News to me?

What is Jesus' challenge to the comfortable middle class or wealthy, to the comfortable? What is Jesus' challenge to believers who gather week by week, hear the Bible read and pray together? What is Jesus' challenge to me and to you? To St John's as a worshipping community and fellowship?

I was fortunate to meet Desmond Tutu several times in the course of my work with the British Council of Churches and while studying at Union Theological Seminary. (The only time I ever saw him struggle for words was when I told him I had named my cat after him. That elicited a long pause.)

But what I and commentators the world over mostly remember about Tutu was his laughter and what my friend Roger calls Tutu's episco-disco dance of joy. In the face of a world which at times seems to be consumed by injustice, Tutu embodied a Christ like life- long commitment to a gospel which is good news for the poor, the captive, the blind and the oppressed. And he did so with a joyful heart.

As we continue into this new year where political systems seem more likely to fail than to promote justice, and where the numbers of people living under oppression seem too numerous to count, let us, like Archbishop Tutu, go out with joy, confident in the mission we are given by Jesus, knowing the direction in which we travel. We are heading down a road which leads to good news, to release and sight. Let this year be a year of the Lord's favour.