

What am I ?

27 1 13

Almighty God,
whose Son revealed in signs and miracles
the wonder of your saving power:
renew your people with your heavenly grace
and in all our weakness
sustain us by your mighty power.

Our text may be found in today's gospel and is Luke chapter 4 and verse 21:

'Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.'

Today is the third Sunday of Epiphany and with it, the season of Epiphany draws to a close. You'll remember the Greek word 'epiphanos' means manifestation and the theme of the season is how God has manifested himself to us through his Son Jesus Christ our Lord. So it was on 6th January on the Feast of the Epiphany itself, we looked at how the Wise Men in the east had seen the rising of the star that was a sign to them that the King of Jews, the long-expected Messiah had been born. The following Sunday, we looked at the Baptism of Jesus, at how the voice from heaven and the dove descending from heaven were signs at least to Jesus and to his cousin, John, who exactly Jesus was. Last week, in the changing of water into wine at the wedding in Cana of Galilee, Bartholomew's home town, we saw Jesus' first public miracle which pointed to the power to transform us which comes from

a belief in him as Lord and Saviour. Today, we turn to his visit on the Sabbath to the synagogue in Jesus' home town of Nazareth.

The passage is curious in what has just gone before and what happens immediately after.

What happens before, according to Luke, is the 40 days Jesus spent in the Wilderness – a time when he wrestled and debated within himself in the peace and solitude of the wilderness about the direction he needed to take in order for him to fulfil God's will for him. It is a period of time which, according to Matthew and Luke, climaxed in the three temptations. After successfully avoiding the pitfalls the devil lays at his feet, Jesus is ready to begin his ministry which according to the opening of today's gospel is a great success. Let me highlight just two points from Luke's account: 'a report about him spread through all the surrounding country' and he 'was praised by everyone.' Clearly, Jesus is making a big impact on the people by his teaching and preaching and the miracles he performed.

What is most unusual about today's gospel is that it stops before it has really got going. David rightly stopped reading the gospel and sat down just as Jesus did when the set reading from scripture for the day is over. Quite so; absolutely correct. But fact today's gospel has been left hanging in the air, midway in a situation which is about to rapidly turn nasty with the folk of Nazareth, all who would have known Jesus as a boy and his family, some his friends and neighbours, reject his claim to be the Messiah – simply a matter of a prophet never being recognised in his own country as the saying goes. And things go

from bad to worse when they want to seize Jesus and take him off and throw him over the edge of a nearby cliff. But miraculously, they don't and Jesus leaves to go off to Capernaum to continue his three year ministry.

So why did whoever put the Lectionary together deliberately stop half-way through a dramatic account? Simply to allow us to focus on this one point: that Jesus is pointing to himself as the Messiah. The passage he has just read is from the prophet Isaiah. Just as who John the Baptist is seen in terms of a prophecy from Isaiah – as 'the voice of one crying in the Wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord', so too now Jesus is implying that he is the Messiah by reading a messianic prophecy then saying that that prophecy has been fulfilled:

'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.'

Jesus is setting out according to Isaiah what the Messiah will do. If he is truly doing such things, then might he not be the one Isaiah is taking about?

The challenge is for them to decide for themselves. The challenge is framed neatly in what must be the shortest sermon ever: one sentence, nine words and is our text today: 'Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.' Sadly, we know that many did go on to reject him. But the question for us is not what other

people think of Jesus but what we ourselves think of him and how we will respond to him.

I have spoken in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,
Amen.

Preached at the Eucharist

St Bartholomew's, Dinard

27th January, 2013

G: Sermon 27 : re What am I

