



## Celebration Sunday

### HEARING THE WORD

Sermon by UCA President Dr Deidre Palmer.



Love your global neighbour. joining in Christ's transforming mission.

Luke 4: 14-21

#### The Beginning of the Galilean Ministry

14 Then Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding country. 15 He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone.

#### The Rejection of Jesus at Nazareth

16 When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, 17 and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

18 "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,  
19 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

20 And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. 21 Then he began to say to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

1 John 4: 7 – 12

### God Is Love

7 Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows

God. 8 Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. 9 God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. 10 In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. 11 Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. 12 No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us.

### SEVEN DAYS OF SOLIDARITY

Love your global neighbour

Deidre Palmer, President Uniting Church in Australia

Loving God and loving our neighbour are woven together as we open our lives to the transforming power

of the Risen Christ. In the first letter of John, we hear:

“Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God.”

“Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another.”

What form does God's love take in our world?

In this seven days of solidarity, we see and hear the form that love takes as we participate with our sisters and brothers in the global community of Christians. Uniting World has shared with us over the past week stories of our global partners in the Pacific, Asia and Africa – churches who are embodying Christ's transforming love and hope in their particular contexts. We see disciples of Christ faithfully bearing the good news of Christ in their communities: through action for justice, addressing climate change, advocating for gender equality, supporting health care, education and raising up leaders.

The ministry of UnitingWorld and our global partners arise from the ministry of Jesus, the good news that he embodied.

In the pastoral and prophetic ministry of Jesus Christ we see the heart of who God is – a God of love, compassion, justice and reconciliation.

In the Gospel of Luke, we hear Jesus proclaiming and see him embodying God's vision for our world. This is the vision in which Christ calls us to participate – a vision where there is good news for the poor, liberty for captives, sight for the blind, freedom for the oppressed and a Jubilee year, when debts are forgiven, and there is enough for everyone.

In Luke 4: 16-21, the 'sermon at Nazareth', Jesus is announcing the program of his ministry.

Jesus spoke to a people who were longing for liberation, longing for a word of hope. Jesus read the Scripture from a scroll of the prophet Isaiah. The people listening were probably familiar with the text - faithful Jews hearing a reading from one of the Hebrew prophets.

Jesus reads these words:

"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. From Isaiah 61:1-2a, then Jesus inserts "to let the oppressed go free" from Isaiah 58 and concludes with Isaiah 61: "to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour."

David Bosch, in his

book *Transforming Mission*, notes that the Isaiah passage that Jesus is drawing from was first directed to the Jewish community" shortly after the Babylonian exile". It was meant to be a word of encouragement to remind them that God was still with them and would bring in "the year of the Lord's favour".

This is a reference to the year of Jubilee. Isaiah was critiquing the social inequalities of his time. And the exploitation of the poor by the rich. The Jubilee year was described in Leviticus 25 – it was a time when wealth would be redistributed, where debts would be forgiven, when slaves would be set free.

The people in the synagogue in Jesus' time may have also seen this text through their own situation in that first century – they were a people in a situation of oppression – ruled by and paying taxes to a foreign power. Jesus spoke to the longings of the people for freedom. Jesus finishes reading the text, he sits down and declares to the people that this text of good news and liberation "has been fulfilled in your hearing."

Luke describes that in the ministry of Jesus through the power of the Spirit, those who are vulnerable, living in difficult circumstances, where they are prevented from flourishing, will be liberated – their eyes open to a new life through God's transforming activity.

In Jesus' sermon at Nazareth, Jesus, anointed by the Spirit of God, offers a word of hope and calls for a reversal of all those situations in which people are exploited, oppressed, and burdened.

In this seven days of solidarity, we have seen and heard love expressed through the ministry of our global neighbours, and we are invited to join with them in embodying the Spirit of Christ.

In our advocacy for justice for all, and through sharing the resources we have – our money, a

We are also called to share the stories of our global neighbours in our communities and networks, including them in our prayers, educating ourselves about their contexts, and genuinely entering into a mutual partnership.

The Spirit of Christ sustained and empowered the early church and is present among us today as the One who now commissions us to be Christ's agents of compassion and transformation. The Risen Christ comes to us to remind us who we are and to whom we belong – from where our vision and strength comes. The Holy Spirit empowers the community of Christ to be courageous enough and persistent in standing up against all those things which threaten to dehumanise, or exploit or prevent people from flourishing as human beings and give voice to the vision of God's justice and love in our world.

Our global partners, our sisters and brothers in Christ in the Pacific, Asia and Africa, are calling us to join them in taking seriously God's call to embody the good news of Christ in ways that touch on every aspect of people's lives – socially, psychologically, economically and spiritually.

As the Uniting Church, we join with our global neighbours in solidarity. Together we are called through the transforming presence of the Risen, Crucified Christ, to actively live out Christ's liberating mission of love, justice, peace and reconciliation.

We are called to live Christ's vision of hope, so that the voices of all people who cry out for justice are heard, all people are invited into the horizons of hope, and the life of abundance that Christ intends for us all and the whole of creation.

May Christ, our Liberator, empower us with courage to embody in our partnerships, communities, nations and world, the abundant grace, compassion, and hope of God.

Amen.

