

Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> October 2025; Bible Sunday. Benefice Holy Communion, Oswaldkirk.

Some words of Jesus from today's Gospel, *"Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."*

Today then we are going to focus on the word 'today'.

Also, today on Bible Sunday there is a focus on the Bible. The practice of preaching from a set of prescribed readings, what we call the 'ministry of the word', set out in the lectionary, dates back to Jesus' example in the Jewish synagogue, as we read today in the Gospel. Early Christians followed this practise. The author of our Book of Common Prayer, the foundation of the Church of England and world-wide Anglican Communion, Archbishop Thomas Cranmer compiled the one-year collects readings for the Church of England, in the Book of Common Prayer in 1549, which was revised over the years, until it's final draft in 1662. The collect we say on Bible Sunday, written by Cranmer, goes: *"Blessed Lord, who hast caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning: Grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by patience and comfort of thy holy Word, we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which thou hast given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen."*

The 66 books of the Bible were written over 1,500 years by more than 40 authors and present a picture of God's story for humanity. The Old Testament was finished about 330 years before the birth of Jesus and the New Testament was finished around 90 A.D. The structure of the Bible, or canon, we have today was finalised around 400 A.D. although it would be another thousand years before it was available to ordinary men and women in English. Missionaries brought Christianity to Britain long before the Norman invasion of 1066, but their Bibles were

handwritten in Latin and accessible only to the educated. Bede, the monk and historian from Northumberland, first translated the Gospel of John into Old English in the 7<sup>th</sup> century. The first complete Bible in English was produced in the 14<sup>th</sup> century by John Wycliffe, a master at Oxford University. This upset the authorities and in 1408 a new law banned anyone from translating or owning any part of the Bible in English without permission.

The invention of printing was a crucial turning point. In 1525 William Tyndale produced his Bible in English, drawing directly from Hebrew and Greek text, rather than the imposed practise of using Latin. His New Testaments were printed in Germany and smuggled into England in bales of cloth. In 1536 he was executed. However, when the Church of England was created under Henry VIII, he agreed to the printing of Bibles in English and in 1538, he commanded that every parish church have a whole Bible in English.

Many versions of the Bible exist now. Scholars continue to go back to newly discovered manuscripts such as the Dead Sea Scrolls, to produce more exact translations linking us with the time of the early apostles. Brand new versions have been produced with more contemporary styles of language. The Bible has now been translated into more than 2,500 languages so that billions of people around the world can read it in their mother tongue. There are multiple versions online and downloadable audio versions, and there is even an Emoji Bible. Whatever the format, the Bible remains the most popular book ever produced, and it remains today for those who study its word not just a book or series of books but a conversation with God through His Holy Spirit that touches every aspect of life.

In today's gospel then we go back to the beginning. Jesus has returned to Nazareth, the town where he grew up, to the synagogue where he worshipped as a child, and to the

people who know him. He unrolls the scroll of the Prophet Isaiah and reads and then He announces, *“Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”*

The reading from Isaiah and Jesus’ comment on them are the first recorded words of Jesus’ public ministry and He chooses and arranges portions of Isaiah’s text to create a specific message. It’s as if Jesus is saying, *“This is who I am and what I’m about. These are the values that motivate my life. Today I am giving myself to something larger than myself and my own interests.”*

Jesus neither reminisces about the past nor forecasts the future. He comes to His people and speaks about today. He says that today is the day of fulfilment. Is he talking about today, October 26<sup>th</sup>, 2025, or he talking about today as in that day he was in the Nazareth synagogue? We are told elsewhere that Jesus is the same, yesterday, today and tomorrow. The question therefore arises, is Jesus the only one anointed to fulfil the words of scripture? What about you and me? Might we not also be anointed to do that too? What if that’s our work too? What would that look like in your life today? In what ways have love, injustice and suffering shaped who you are and revealed to you the life and love that wants to enter the world through you?

Jesus says ‘Today, is the day of fulfilment.’ Today. There is no other day. Today is the day when fulfilment is in progress and that means today becoming who we are and realizing what our lives are to be about.

Thanks be to God. Amen.