

## Jubilee (Lev 25:8-24, Luke 4:14-21)

Think **JUBILEE** – well known word – associate with celebration – recently with Queen – Diamond 2012, Golden 2002, Silver 1977 (who remembers?) – one of family members swallowed a wasp!

**Where does word come from?** Clue in another Jubilee of a few years ago – anyone remember JUBILEE 2000 CAMPAIGN back in 2000? Movement for cancellation of developing world debt. Marches, lobbying – some success, though not complete cancellation. Came from original Jubilee that read about today – special season when there was effectively a wholesale amnesty on debt – everyone's debts were cancelled. Imagine that – no Wonga or payday loans companies, no ads on daytime TV – what would we do??

Background – Lev 25 – towards end of God's laws – 10 Cs first (middle of Exodus) then rest of Exodus mostly how to build Israel's place of worship (tabernacle). Leviticus a hard book to read – starts with rituals – various offerings. Then lots of other commands incl famous 'love neighbour as self' – then *finally* get to Sabbath regulations and eventually the Jubilee in ch25 – every 50<sup>th</sup> year.

**Why every 50<sup>th</sup> year?** – 7 perfect number – Sabbath every 7<sup>th</sup> day, Sabbath yr every 7<sup>th</sup> year. And after 7 lots of 7 = 49 years, a special 50<sup>th</sup> year – the Jubilee – READ v8-9.

So a special year, the 'Jubilee' – **key themes of Jubilee in v10 READ – (1) liberty and (2) return** – connected: release of debts and therefore able to return

Like (2 previous themes) Sabbath combined with Restitution on a grand, national scale. What does it teach us?

- Value of all people (equality before God and law)
- Justice – some debt caused by bad luck or bad stewardship, but some through injustice – families profiting from others misfortune. God is just and he desires his people to live justly. Jubilee promoted justice and fair play throughout nation.
- Contentment / anti greed or power of money – lots in bible about that – not many Christians realise that was written into fabric of Jewish nation. What Jesus picks up on in gospels is how it should always have been
- Stability of society – like any other society, if everyone has enough, there's a lot less unrest
- Celebration – 2 years off! (God promised to provide a good enough harvest – so faith as well). Time to enjoy God, rest and family

**SUMMARY:** After great social commandment (love neighbour as self) probably greatest expression of society under rule of God. Indeed a national outworking of what means to love God and love neighbour as self.

Great social experiment! (Some say MK a great experiment, but this >3,000 years ago – if MK built on consumption, Jubilee built on contentment and redistribution.) Truthfully, we don't know if ever practised – certainly prophetic challenges about inequality and exploitation of poor suggest not – or rarely. **So an ideal but not a reality.**

Now fast forward to NT and to Jesus – key thing about Luke 4 is that Jesus is making Jubilee claims. Jesus' arrival meant that this was now year of Jubilee (Lord's favour – READ v19). Jubilee was restored BUT ALSO and reinterpreted: words of Isaiah 61 important. Application not just physical but spiritual. Jesus is, in effect, posing the question: **what is the Jubilee really all about?**

**Good news for those who usually miss out on it: READ v18.** All these people – poor, prisoners, oppressed – have access to God's favour. In effect, they are all equal before God along with rest of us. Important to note that this is not just our decision, but God's – Spirit of the Lord is in this, it's His favour we have to share. And this should be exactly what it promises for downtrodden of our society: good news! God declares that he is for all people, he can bring true freedom. And this is found in Jesus: Jesus is true fulfilment of Jubilee.

But need to beware overspiritualising – of course Jesus brings us spiritual freedom, and that's vital – but this is still meant to be interpreted in more literal ways. As James says in his NT letter, it's not much good wishing people well in God's name, if we're not actually doing something about it. That was part of the motivation for the Jubilee 200 campaign back in 2000. So 2 questions for us to reflect on today:

- **Are we Jubilee people**, living a life of freedom and justice as people of God? Do we practise what we preach? Does inequality in our society matter to us? Are we generous with our resources, fair to all people, and sometimes willing to forgive debts? Not just socialism, these issues are at heart of bible's teaching. (Lord's Prayer original version in Luke 'debts')
- **Is what we have to share with people good news?** One of strange things about how people perceive Christians is that if you asked average person what Christians have to offer, not many would say 'good news'. We need to be good news people! Not a magic wand, or excuse to make false promises, but have to admit that if we don't think it's good news, not many others will either.

Resolution for summer and rest of year – to be good news people. To share hope and joy that is found in knowing Jesus, the life transforming power he brings. READ vv18-19. Amen.