



SESSION

4

Year of jubilee



MEETING AIM

To understand how Jesus announces himself to the Israelites.



BIBLE PASSAGE

Luke 4:16-30



BACKGROUND

This passage is a tricky one without context. In the previous sessions we've explored Jesus foretold by the prophets, Jesus' birth, and Jesus' baptism and temptation at the start of his ministry. This passage is one of the ways Jesus announces himself to the Jewish people, where Jesus alludes to who he is, which leads to a reaction of both amazement and outrage. That he might claim to be the one who the Israelites are waiting for is somewhere between preposterous and wonderful, but then he goes on to reference two stories from the Israelites' history where only outsiders of the community heard and believed (verses 24-27), which leads to the fury and rejection of Jesus from his community.

GATHERING TIME



As the group arrives, have refreshments and ask them to think about and discuss people who are a bit like 'Marmite'; those who people have a strong positive or negative reaction to. You might make some suggestions, like Jeremy Corbyn, Russell Brand or Donald Trump.

RIDDLES



Give the group some riddles and see if they guess them:

- He has married many women, but has never been married. Who is he? A priest.
- What is so delicate that when you say its name it is broken? *Silence.*
- The strangest creature you'll ever find: Two eyes in front and many more behind. *A peacock.*
- It is not an ox, but it has horns; though it is not an ass, it has a pack-saddle; and wherever it goes it leaves silver behind. What is it? *A snail.*
- Take away my first letter; take away my second letter; take away all my letters and I would remain the same. What am I? *A postman.*

- I saw a man in white, he looked quite a sight. He was not old, but he stood in the cold. And when he felt the sun, he started to run. Who could he be? Please answer me. *A snowman.*
- Bobby's mother has four children.... Penny, Nickel, Dime ... and what's the name of the fourth child? *Bobby!*
- I travel the world and I am drunk constantly. Who am I? *Water.*

The link between these riddles and the passage is Jesus introducing himself, but in a way that is difficult to understand and has mixed reactions!

BIBLE EXPLORATION



You will need: Bibles

This is quite a hefty Bible passage, where it is more helpful to understand the context, so the way you're reading this with the group is in order to help them understand the context of the passage.

Read the story together, asking each group member to take turns at reading a verse. Warn them that it is a tricky passage to understand, but that you'll explain more about it afterwards.

Explain that this passage is how Jesus introduces himself to the Israelites at the start of his ministry. The passage he reads announces the "year of jubilee to the Israelites". This passage was written by the prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 61:1-2), who was prophesying about Jesus' coming.

The year of jubilee is a year of freedom from debts and restoration to the Israelite people. The people are amazed and astounded as Jesus announces himself. When the people doubt Jesus, he suggests that people struggle to believe a prophet from their hometown and tells two stories that they would know and understand from the Old Testament about Elijah and Elisha, where only outsiders heard and believed the prophets' messages from God. This outrages the crowd.

After explaining these things, ask if the passage makes more sense. You may want to read it together a second time. Allow some time for any questions about the passage.

CHATTING TOGETHER



Use this time and these questions to unpick the Bible story a bit more. Ask the group to discuss:

- Why was Jesus' message so shocking and amazing to the people in the synagogue?
- What was wonderful about what Jesus was saying?

- What was offensive about what Jesus was saying?
- Why do you think Jesus announced himself in this way?

CREATIVE RESPONSE



You will need: A3 sheets of card; art materials

Jesus reading the section of Isaiah 61 is a bit like a political leader announcing their manifesto: who they are and what to expect. You could read the wider passage in Isaiah 61 to give the group more context.

Ask the group to design posters announcing Jesus, like a propaganda poster. You could show them examples. Ask them to think about key symbols and words they would include to give people a sense of who Jesus might be and what he might be coming to do. Encourage the group to make their posters eye-catching and stylish.

Give the group some time to do the posters and then ask them to present what they've done, explaining what they've included and why.

Ask them to discuss the kinds of people that would be excited to see the posters and the kinds of people who might be offended by them.

PRAYER



You will need: a plate of crackers with Marmite; a plate of crackers with jam (be aware of allergy and hygiene issues)

Set out the two plates of crackers and ask the group: who might find Jesus offensive today? Whose promises leave a bitter taste in your mouth? How can you pray for these people? Lead the group in prayer given their suggestions, and then invite them to take a cracker with Marmite on as they reflect on how Jesus' message offends people even today.

Ask the group: who might welcome Jesus today? Whose promises are sweet? How can you pray for these people? Lead the group in a second prayer for this group, given their suggestions, and then invite them to take a cracker with jam on as they reflect on how Jesus is still beautiful to so many today.

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