

Good Shepherd, Beaver Dam
December, 2022
Isaiah 61:1-9

The Spirit of the Lord God is on Me. That's how our text begins. Who is speaking these words? You know the answer. It is the Servant of the mighty God. It is Jesus Christ. In the gospel reading today, Jesus read these words, from the prophet Isaiah, in Nazareth. When Jesus finished reading, He said, Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.

When the people heard what Jesus said, they were amazed and furious and wanted to throw Jesus off a nearby cliff. Why did the people of Nazareth react that way? Because Jesus identified Himself as the one who would fulfill Isaiah's prophecies.

Jesus says the Spirit of the Lord is upon Him. This happened at Jesus' baptism. The "Lord" is the all powerful God who controls the winds and the waves and who promises grace and mercy to the sinful world. The Father sent Jesus on a mission and blessed Him with the Holy Spirit. Notice the Trinity here: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. All three working for our salvation. Today we see -

The Center of the Season is the Christ.

Jesus is the Messiah. Jesus did not come to restore the earthly kingdom of David or to establish a better kingdom on earth. He came to bring good news, to preach, to proclaim, and to comfort. Jesus came to bring spiritual healing and freedom, to proclaim the message of forgiveness from a gracious God. We have been set free from the prison of sin where we were living in total darkness, and God said "You are free because of Jesus!" From that dark prison we were released so we could live in spiritual freedom and speak about the Light of the world to the world.

All human beings need to hear the good news of Jesus.

- *Our lives are often filled with misery and trouble.*
- *We experience defeat and failure more often than we triumph.*
- *Our hearts are broken often.*
- *We are disappointed again and again.*
- *Our loved ones suffer pain and die.*
- *Sometimes our family and friends inflict pain upon us and perhaps desert us in our troubles.*
- *There are times we suffer from the bitterness of a spouse, the lack of love from a parent, or the unfair criticism of family or friends.*
- *Our moments of happiness pass by quickly and then we mourn another loss or another failure.*
- *Our lives are filled with many different sins.*
- *At the end of life stands death, inescapable death.*
- *Human beings suffer these things because of our sin and our rebellion against God.*

However, the Lord does not want human beings to suffer. You can see the difference the Savior brings to lives in verse three: He brings comfort instead of mourning; a crown of beauty instead of grieving; the oil of gladness instead of ashes; praise instead of despair. At happy times, (wedding) people would put aromatic oil on their head to celebrate not to mourn. We can celebrate! The Lord changes everything!

The Lord bandages brokenhearted sinners with his soothing message of forgiveness. He takes away the burden from guilty consciences. He breaks Satan's control over human lives. His message announces deliverance from sin, death, hell and Satan.

The result of the preaching of the good news is strength and life. The believers are pictured as trees. Trees grow tall and strong. This is a picture of God's people, righteous only because of what the Messiah would do. The righteous grow

strong because of the promises of the Lord. They are happy because of their Savior. They endure in a world of violence and evil because of the grace of God.

Isaiah speaks of the NT Church. We have a part in the building of Christ's church. We talk to our children about the baby of Bethlehem. We explain to our friends why we attend church services so often at this time of the year. We come often and gladly to the Lord's Supper. We rejoice in our inheritance as the children of God. We will inherit something awesome and stupendous! But the Lord promises joy – everlasting joy. We won't inherit land in Israel. God has a greater gift to give us – we will share our Father's mansion!

Those who believe the good news of our Savior will inherit an awesome heavenly home. Those who do not believe in Jesus as their Savior will share a prison cell with Satan.

Friends, the Lord has called us out of this world. We trust in Jesus as our Savior. We are different from those who live without Jesus. Our faith shines in the darkness of this world so that people can tell that we are the Children of God!

The message of God to the world is both law and gospel. Isaiah mentions the year of the Lord's favor. This comes from the Year of Jubilee in ancient Israel. In that year, property that had been sold went back to its original owners, debts were forgiven, and those who were made slaves because they could not pay their debts were set free. That would have been a year full of the blessings of God!

A **year** of freedom and a **day** of vengeance. God wants people to know Him as a merciful Savior. But one day those people who refused to trust God's mercy will be judged and condemned!

There is a sense of joy since we celebrated Jesus' birth. Jesus is the heart of the good news not only at Christmas but every day of the year.

We can look forward to the new year not with fear, but as another year of our Savior's love. Remember the words of the Lord – I will never leave you; I will never forsake you!

There is more good news: Jesus will come again!

We see signs urging us to Put Christ back into Christmas. Christ didn't leave! Jesus remains in Christmas. Our concern is to come, worship and rejoice in the Christchild who would grow up to become our wonderful Savior!

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