

# Liberty to Captives – Isaiah 61

**Introduction** – Having spoken of the city of God and what that city will look like in all its light, Isaiah now speaks of the Light, the One Who will bring those blessings upon the city. We discover that Isaiah was quoting Jesus before Jesus came, that Jesus ushered in an age known as “*the year of the Lord*,” and that in that age, God’s strategy for bringing forth salvation for the nations brings much joy to Jesus. The atmosphere of this City is Joy; it has been since the angel announced, “*I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all people*” (Luke 2:10). You are invited, even now, to enter into the joy of the Lord in this year of the Lord.

**To Preach the Good News** (vv1-3) – This is one long sentence declaring the mission of the Messiah (“anointed one”). The Spirit of the LORD God upon Him, He is sent to preach the Gospel (good tidings). We know that these are actually Jesus’ words, for He repeats them and preaches on them (Luke 4:16ff), declaring that “*Today, the Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing*.” He is to preach this “*to the poor*,” not exclusively to those in certain financial conditions, nor limited to an oppressed minority, but rather to all who are “*poor in spirit*” (Matt 5:3). In doing so, He brings healing to the brokenhearted, sets free the captives, and lays aside all debts in a year of Jubilee (by bringing “*the day of vengeance*” as well). An entire exchange of garments takes place as well: beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and so on. The resultant, established, righteous oaks grow, and God is glorified; His gracious glory is magnified.

**A Priestly People** (vv4-7) – The City of God, these oaks of righteousness, people who once were captives of sin and misery, guilt and shame, become the very instruments of repairing and rebuilding a desolated culture/land. The church is a gospel-liberated people whose mission is to be a creative force of grace for the restoration of a lost world. That is what it is to be a priestly nation (1 Pet 2:5, 9; Rev 1:6, 5:10). Those who stood against Messiah and against His people will be brought into the fold to serve with the church (and here we are!); our riches and glories are now the property of the City of Zion. And now, instead of shame, we have a double portion of honor, our sins all washed away and our resurrection life bringing forth “*everlasting joy*” (v7), “*joy inexpressible and full of glory*” (1 Pet 1:8).

**Because God Wants To** (vv8-9) – Why will this occur? Why is this occurring? Because the LORD loves justice, the way human life and human society and human wholeness was originally meant to be (justice = to set things right). He loves to see His kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven. And He loves seeing it spread to all nations and over generations. As that gospel-transforming work transcends people-groups and generations, the work of the Spirit is evident and “*All who see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the posterity whom the LORD has blessed*” (v9, see Acts 2:38-39).

**An Anointed Messenger** – This passage was fulfilled in Christ, who then told His church to go and preach likewise after receiving the same Spirit (Matt 28:18-20, Acts 1:8). The Gospel was driven by a Spirit-filled man. Preaching is not just putting forth truth, but Spirit-drenched truth. But we cannot control the Spirit; we can’t whistle Him up or schedule Him for our next revival meeting. We need the Spirit of the Lord upon preachers today. Our Christianity is wide and shallow. We are numerically large but relatively impotent. It begs the question, “is the Spirit in our midst?” This is why we pray for reformation and revival.

**An Anointed Message** – Jesus, and then His church, was sent to preach liberty to captives because there is no deeper dungeon than the captivity of sin. No man has ever gotten himself out of that dungeon. Our debt is immense and our slavery impenetrable. But the Redeemer has come and announced the Year of Jubilee. Debtors who have nothing are set free. Slaves with no way out have their chains broken. Only people with nothing in their hands to show for their salvation can receive it – but they do receive it. The Gospel is the great transaction, consolation for the mourners, beauty for ashes. Do you want the oil of joy? Give over your mourning. Do you want the garment of praise? Turn over your spirit of heaviness. “*Come to Me...*” Jesus said (Matt 11:28-30). But everyone loves their sin and no one wants to turn over their sin (they may want to be released from the consequences). And that is why the Holy Spirit must be in the preaching, for only He can make us hate sin itself.

**An Anointed Joy** – Are you living in this joy? Do you really believe in this Savior? Is your life still consumed with habitual sin, with excuses, with depression, with the tolerating of sin. Do you wonder why you do not have the joy of salvation in your daily life as described here? You may be a Christian who needs to be told that you are not. Or, you may be a true Christian who, through any number of a series of events, is caught up in your sins – and you need to repent and confess. If He forgave all your sins when you first came to Christ do you think He cannot forgive you now, wash you now, and restore the joy of your salvation now (Psalm 51:10-12, 1 John 1:8-9)?

**An Adorned Bridegroom; A Fruitful Garden-City** (vv10-11) – Over and over again we are summoned to believe the victory of the Cross and the truth of the Gospel: Jesus Christ came to save sinners, to save the world, to restore His creation to its rightful place under His gracious Lordship. Jesus was a Man of Sorrows (Isaiah 53:3). But not anymore. Now, He is greatly rejoicing, clothed with the garments of salvation and the robe of righteousness. “*Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation*” (2 Cor 6:2). As sure as this spring will bring forth a crop, even more so, “*the Lord will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations*.”