

Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11

**“Bringing the Good News of Salvation”
Third Sunday in Advent (Series B)**

December 17, 2023

**Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, West Salem, Wisc.
Pastor Peter Adelsen**

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Amen! Dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

A messenger of God proclaims: ***“The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn”*** (Isaiah 61:1-2).

Isaiah writes our text looking ahead to a day when God’s people are stuck in Babylon. Judah and its capital city of Jerusalem have been replaced by Babylonian building projects. Israel has no king, no temple, no royal city, no land, no liturgy, no sacrifice, no hope, and no future. By the rivers of Babylon, the Jews sit and weep and they reminisce about the good old days when they worshiped in the splendor of Solomon’s Temple. They are permanently exiled in a foreign land.

The Babylonian captivity of the Jews was horrific as the city they knew was no more and now they were forced to bow down and worship the Babylonian false gods.

The Jewish people had felt the hammer of God’s judgment, because of their persistent pride, inflated egos, and their own worship of false gods. In the 6th century BC, God sent these Babylonians as His hammer to smash His people’s egos to smithereens. Some of their relatives had been murdered. But the entire country of Judah had been mocked. Babylon, sent as God’s agent of judgment, maimed the mauled God’s people.

But as God’s people who were under judgment, a messenger of God proclaims: ***“The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn”*** (Isaiah 61:1-2).

Our text for the Third Sunday in Advent is remarkable. First, like last Sunday, our text has multiple fulfillments. The initial fulfillment anticipates the return of God's people from their Babylonian Exile. After years in captivity, due to their unfaithfulness to God, God announced their freedom and their return back to Jerusalem to rebuild their land. Even as the Jews were delivered, they, like us, were still held captive. They were held captive by sin and death. So, our focus this morning will be on the fulfillment that would occur in the fullness of time.

In the fullness of time, the Messiah would come bringing the good news of salvation bearing these words from Isaiah 61.

As it was His custom in Nazareth, Jesus went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day. On one particular day, Jesus was given the scroll of the prophet Isaiah. So, Jesus unrolled the scroll and spoke our text: ***“The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to proclaim good news to the poor”*** (Luke 4:18a).

After Jesus finished reading, He rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. All the eyes of those in the synagogue were fixed upon Jesus as they awaited His interpretation of Isaiah 61. But then Jesus said, ***“Today, this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing”*** (Luke 4:21).

This was a dramatic moment for everyone in the synagogue. They were amazed and perplexed. ***“Is this not Joseph's son?”*** (Luke 4:22). Then they become furious. They were so angry that they sought to throw Jesus off a cliff. But their reaction does not change the fulfillment. Their reaction did not change that Jesus is the One in whose coming fulfilled these prophecies. For Jesus has come to preach, to proclaim, and to comfort. He came as our Savior from sin, eternal death, and hell.

Jesus came to fulfill this promise of God. Jesus came as the Servant Messiah. He came to preach the good news to the poor. Now, Christ is not speaking of finances, but being poverty stricken because of iniquity and sin. For Jesus says, ***“I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance”*** (Luke 5:32). To this, Jesus says that His Gospel will have no effect on the callous and comfortable, but only changes the lives of those who are stuck and mired in sin, guilt, and shame.

Now, Jesus stops with the words ***“the year of the Lord's favor”*** because He came not to condemn the world, but to save the world (John 3:17). But there will be a day, when at His Second Advent that He will execute this ***“day of vengeance”*** (Isaiah 61:2b).

But before that day, Jesus has come ***“to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor”*** (Isaiah 61:2a). Jesus has come to bring good news of salvation. He has come to announce a Jubilee, first announced by Isaiah, begun in Nazareth, and is still going on today.

To a dead son in the village of Nain, Jesus says, ***“Young man, I say to you arise”*** (Luke 7:14). To a sinful woman at the house of Simon the Pharisee, He says, ***“Your sins are forgiven”*** (Luke 7:48). To a woman with a flow of blood for 18 years, He says, ***“Your faith has healed you”*** (Luke 8:48). To Jairus’ daughter, He says, ***“Child, arise”*** (Luke 8:54). To the disciples, He says, ***“Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom”*** (Luke 12:32). To the starved, the famished, the empty, Jesus says, ***“Come, for everything is now ready”*** (Luke 14:17). To Zacchaeus, He says, ***“Today salvation has come to this house”*** (Luke 19:9). Even to the Romans, who maimed Him, mauled Him, and mocked Him, Jesus says, ***“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do”*** (Luke 23:34). And to the repentant thief, Jesus says, ***“Truly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in paradise”*** (Luke 23:43).

Jesus has come to bring the good news of salvation to a weak and sinful people. Jesus came to bring the good news of salvation to a people unable to save themselves.

And we need to hear this good news now more than ever, because all too often, we hear bad news. A doctor brings you the bad news of being diagnosed with cancer, or that the cancer in remission has returned. Or, you hear from your boyfriend or girlfriend, “It’s not you, it’s me.” Bad news is all around us.

Some of us actively choose to let bad news control us. As we turn it on in our living rooms, read it in the newspaper, or scroll for it on social media.

Our lives are often filled with misery and trouble. We endure defeat and failure more than we triumph. So, our hearts are broken. And we are disappointed again and again. Those we love even inflict pain upon us.

We, like those in Babylonian captivity, are being held captive to sin and death. But unlike them, we don’t have to wait for salvation, since the Savior from sin has come!

“Hark the glad sound! The Savior Comes!” He has come to bring the good news of salvation! Jesus comes with the soothing voice of salvation!

Christ's preaching is the glad sound by which the Old Testament Scriptures are fulfilled in the ears of those who hear. His same voice is heard today at Prince of Peace Lutheran Church and His same voice will be heard to the end of the age, in the preaching of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

It is through the preaching of the Gospel that those who are held in the bondage of sin and death – *you and me* – are set free. For Christ the Lord bears all the burden and the weight, and He suffers all the brokenness and bloody death of sin, in order to release the prisoners of Satan and grant them the peace of heaven.

Through the healing Gospel, Jesus ***“binds up the brokenhearted”*** (Isaiah 61:1d). He does as a physician does. He binds up and heals our wounds: the Law, our sin, and eternal death. Christ alone is the cure from the Law's demands, our sin, and eternal death. Without Christ as the Physician, the Law would trouble us, since we always fail at doing what we ought to do. And if we can't do the good we ought to do, we get our reward: eternal death.

But not with Christ, He came to ***“proclaim liberty to the captives”*** (Isaiah 61:1e). He came to die, so that we by grace through faith in Him alone would be free from the power of sin and death. Through His death and resurrection, Jesus has opened the door to everlasting life. Jesus has come to proclaim the healing message of forgiveness from God. He bandages brokenhearted sinners with His soothing message of forgiveness. He removes the burden from guilty consciences. He releases sinners bound in the hopeless dungeon of our own depravity. He breaks the bondage of Satan's controlling influence over our lives.

The promised Messiah has come to heal, to console, and free us from all evil. He has come with the never-ending message of deliverance from sin, death, hell, and Satan.

Today, Christ is here to bring you His good news of salvation! We hear His voice as He absolves our sins. In His Body and Blood, He removes our sorrow and gives us joy. He has come to bind up your wounds by bringing you the good news of your salvation! Amen.

The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.

+ SOLI DEO GLORIA +