

January 27, 2013

Epiphany 3

"The Holy Spirit Anoints Jesus as Your Good News Messiah"

ISAIAH 61:1-6

- ¹ *The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me,
because the Lord has anointed me
to preach good news to the poor.
He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim freedom for the captives
and release from darkness for the prisoners,^[a]*
- ² *to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor
and the day of vengeance of our God,
to comfort all who mourn,*
- ³ *and provide for those who grieve in Zion—
to bestow on them a crown of beauty
instead of ashes,
the oil of gladness
instead of mourning,
and a garment of praise
instead of a spirit of despair.
They will be called oaks of righteousness,
a planting of the Lord
for the display of his splendor.*
- ⁴ *They will rebuild the ancient ruins
and restore the places long devastated;
they will renew the ruined cities
that have been devastated for generations.*
- ⁵ *Aliens will shepherd your flocks;
foreigners will work your fields and vineyards.*
- ⁶ *And you will be called priests of the Lord,
you will be named ministers of our God.
You will feed on the wealth of nations,
and in their riches you will boast.*

Last summer we were driving through Nebraska on Interstate 80. The question came up, "Where can we get a quick bite to eat?" My son-in-law Nathan pulled out his I Phone and checked for restaurants at an exit ten miles ahead. He read a list of restaurants. We chose one. He checked out their menu and even checked for favorable reviews. It sure is handy to have such a smart phone while traveling.

Long before the days of smart phone technology, the Lord your God told you exactly where you need to go for salvation. He did this through the pages of the Holy Bible given to us by the Holy Spirit. In the words just read to you, Jesus the Messiah speaks to you 700 years before he comes into the world. He says, "The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor."

Jesus shocked the people in his hometown of Nazareth by reading these words of Isaiah in the synagogue and applying them to himself. They said to each other, "Isn't this Joseph's Son?" Their reaction to his claim to be the Messiah anointed by the Holy Spirit was to

drag him out of the city and attempt to throw him over a cliff. Check the ratings on Jesus from the people of his hometown and you will find very few stars. Ask them what they thought of Jesus and some would say, "He is a lunatic."

What rating does the Holy Spirit give Jesus here in these words? There is no question it is a five star rating. Jesus the Messiah, anointed by the Holy Spirit, brings you good news that totally changes you every day of your life on this earth.

He brings you good news that changes you

Listen again to the five star rating the Holy Spirit gives to Jesus your Messiah. "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim freedom to the captives, and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor and the day of vengeance for our God."

Jesus was anointed by the Holy Spirit at this Baptism. Recall how the heavens opened up and the Spirit of the Lord came down on him in the form of a dove. John the Baptist gave this powerful testimony to Jesus, "I saw the Spirit come down from heaven in the form as a dove and remain on him." John knew Jesus was the Christ. The first thing Andrew told his brother Simon was, "We have found the Messiah" because of what John told them and what they heard first hand from Jesus.

Jesus is our five star Messiah. He is everything these words of Isaiah tell us about him. Your Messiah brings good news to people who are poor. He binds up the brokenhearted. Look at the world in which you live and then honestly look into your own personal life. Realize how poor you are and how desperately you and your fellow human beings need your Messiah to bring you good news. Psalm 14 begins with the familiar words "The fool has said in his heart, 'There is no God.'" Then it goes on to describe a universal problem that makes us poor and destitute when it comes to the righteousness we need to be accepted by God. "They are corrupt, their deeds are vile; there is no one who does good. The Lord looks down from heaven on the sons of men to see if there are any who understand, any who seek God. All have turned aside, they have together become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one."

Maybe you have had a rare moment when you felt rich when it comes to money. There is no way we can ever feel rich when it comes to having the righteousness we need to be accepted by God? When I was a child I was pleased and maybe even proud of the little bit of money that I had accumulated. My grandfather gave me a savings bond that would be worth a hundred dollars when I turned twenty five. I had a small amount of money in a savings account with an actual passbook that recorded the amount and interest earned. I had a little bank where I could save coins. When it came to having righteousness that is pleasing to God, I had nothing. The same is true also of you. I inherited a sinful nature from my parents and grandparents. That sin showed itself in actual sins that are still found in my life today that cause me and you to fall short of God's glory. We use a confession of sin in our worship that began with the words, "I a poor miserable sinner confess unto Thee all my sins and iniquities."

The Messiah comes to people who are poor and brings them good news. He binds up the broken hearted. Everything about Jesus life as the Messiah speaks good news to us and tells us how rich we are in him. You see him as a child growing up in Nazareth, living the perfect life you were never able to live. You see his perfect love in the way he holds children in his arms and blesses them. You hear good news when he tells you he is the shepherd who gives his life for sheep that love to wander. Jesus your Messiah, your five star Messiah carried out his work of saving you with great specificity. He cries out from the cross "It is finished!" This five star Messiah comes to you and shows you the nail marks in his hands. Here is the supreme forensic evidence every sin has been paid for.

The Spirit anointed Messiah proclaims freedom for captives and release from darkness for prisoners. Satan loves to put people in cages and torture them. He loves to see them languish in the deep dark dungeons of despair. He chortles with delight when he successfully leads people to persevere on sins of the past. He laughs in glee as he flashes across the mind high definition multipixelated images that would shame hell itself. Jesus breaks down the prison doors with the good news. "The blood of Jesus Christ his son cleanses us from all sin." Captives come home joyfully telling each other and the whole world, "Christ (Christ means the anointed one, the Messiah) Christ has redeemed me a lost and condemned creature...." He comes in vengeance. Chapter 63 of Isaiah speaks of this vengeance. "Who is his coming from Edom, from Bozrah, with his garments stained in blood?" The Messiah answers, "For the day of vengeance was in my heart, and the year of redemption has come." God kept his promise. Satan's head is crushed. Vengeance is realized. We are free.

You enjoy an extreme makeover when hear this good news the Messiah brings. The Messiah says the Spirit has anointed him, "to comfort those who mourn and provide for those who grieve in Zion- to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning and garments of praise instead of a spirit of despair." See the face of Job during the lowest part of his life when everything seemed to be going against him. In angry he says to his friends, "Have pity on me, my friends, for the hand of God has struck me." There in the ashes of despair and filled with anger, a new face emerges and a new voice suddenly cries out for all the world to hear, "I know that my Redeemer lives and that in the end he will stand upon the earth." There is no pit so deep that Christ is not deeper. "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies, and my cup runneth over." We smile with joy.

You have seen the before and after pictures. We are skeptical of the infomercials that promote skin care products and weight loss programs. We know how we can make the picture look better by holding our stomach in for the camera. You may have even tried your hand at touching up photos. The change you have in Jesus your Messiah is no fake or pretend picture. It is real, the ultimate extreme makeover, "a crown of beauty instead of ashes, oil of gladness instead of despair."

He uses you to bring good news to others

The Messiah wants everyone to share in this good news. He could use his power as God to cause messages to appear on cell phones and computers and I Pads all over the world the way Google intrudes into your life with advertising. He could use marvelous angels to share the good news in these last days. The Spirited anointed five star Messiah has set

forth a very specific plan that involves you in sharing this good news with the world. "They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendor." The beautiful California coastal live oak sinks its roots deep into the soil to pull up moisture that keeps it green in the hottest days of summer. Dear Christian, you are deeply planted in Christ and his righteous. The Apostle Paul said of his life and yours, "That I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ." Anyone who gets to know you will soon discover that you exude from every pore the belief that you are saved by a righteousness outside of yourself that is found in Christ. Every word that comes from your mouth and every task you undertake pulsates with the belief you are saved by this righteousness.

I visited someone in their home and noticed on their living room wall two posters that had been framed. One poster had all the names of Jesus written down in artistic style. The other had the names the Messiah gives to his people, names such as oaks of righteousness, salt of the earth or light of the world. Here the Messiah calls you priests of the Lord. "And you will be called priests of the Lord, you will be named ministers of our God." How surprised Old Testament people must have been to hear these words. Only the clan of Levi and descendants of Aaron could serve in the temple as priests and high priests with special clothes. In these last days of our Messiah's reign on this earth, everyone serves as priests in his kingdom. You serve wherever you go whether you wear clothes for construction, a shirt and tie for banking, scrubs for the hospital, or a uniform with the name of your company written on it. 1 Peter 2 says, "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who calls you out of darkness into his marvelous light."

We may use smart phones and the internet to research products and even find how they are rated. God's plan is still to use ordinary, garden variety, people like you and me to direct others to the Spirit anointed Messiah who brings good news. Your rating for Jesus is always five stars. The people living in the wastelands and ruined cities need you to guide them to Jesus. Amen.