

Sermon Outline

THE YEAR IN OUR LORD, 2012-2013

The Advent and Christmas Messages:

- Nov 25: Christ Jesus for the Poor (Isa 61:1) • Dec 9: Christ Jesus for the Sad (Isa 61:1)
- Dec 16: Christ Jesus for the Captives (Isa 61:1) • Dec 23: Christ Jesus for Offenders (Isa 61:2)
- Dec 25: Christ Jesus Is Born (Lk 2:1-12)

CHRIST JESUS FOR THE POOR: AN ADVENT MESSAGE (ISAIAH 61:1)

I. The Gift that Gave Christmas

II. Why There Is Suffering in the World

- A. There is much suffering in the world today.
- B. Have you ever wondered why that is the case? Why is there sickness, poverty, war, and death?
 - 1. People trace the cause of suffering to various things such as...
 - a. Lack of education
 - b. Economic problems—Those reasons are all parts of the puzzle in the big question of suffering.
 - 2. But Scripture says that our suffering boils down to one main source—*sin*, a refusal to live by God's will.
- C. Since God is the Creator, God alone can define what is good or bad—and how to live in a way that benefits those around us.
- D. When we sin, we turn from God's instructions, bringing about all the different kinds of problems we see in the world today.
 - 1. The process of sin follows this pattern:
 - a. God made us in such a way that we cannot be fully alive and happy apart from him.
 - b. When we reject God, we no longer seek our complete happiness in him.
 - c. Instead, we seek our ultimate happiness in a combination of other things (e.g. wealth, pleasure, health, friendships, respect, etc.).
 - d. But since earthly things are temporary and people are sinful, those things cannot give us the peace or fulfilment only God can give.
 - e. As a result, we become frustrated and discontented.

- f. As a result, we become greedier for things and services.
 - g. As a result, we hurt those we perceive to stand in the way of our happiness.
- 2. That is basically how sin works itself out.
 - All the sins we know, big or small, develop along those lines.
- E. Sin takes different forms.
 - Disrespect to parents
 - Rebellion against authorities
 - Greed, theft, deceit, and murder
 - But whatever form sin takes, its root cause is always the same: *Sin begins with our rejection of God.*
- F. If sin can destroy the peace between two people, can you imagine what sin can do on a national and global scale?
 - The effects of sin all over the world are clear: Injustice within nations, distrust amongst nations, etc.
- G. Yet, through his prophets, God promises that one day, he would end sin and restore life and peace to his world.
 - God would do this through the special king he has chosen, the Lord Jesus Christ.
- H. Isaiah 61:1, 2 teach us what God’s special king, the Lord Jesus Christ, will do.

***Questions for reflection:** (1) In your view, what is the root cause of suffering in the world? What does the Bible say is the root cause of suffering? (2) Who alone can tell us how to live? Who alone can define what is good or evil? (3) How does sin develop? (4) What forms does sin take? (5) “If sin can destroy the peace between two people, can you imagine what sin can do on a national or global scale?” Discuss. (6) How will God restore order and life to his world?

III. The Spirit of the Lord God Is Upon Me

- A. Isaiah 61:1 begins with these words: “The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me...”
- B. The Spirit of the Lord God is God himself, the Creator of the universe, the king of all creation.
- C. But when the Scripture talks about God’s Spirit, Scripture is referring to that aspect of God that can be described as God’s Power, the Enforcer of God’s holy will.
 - 1. The Spirit of God was present at the moment of creation (Gen 1:2).
 - 2. All throughout history, the Spirit of God empowered ordinary people to do great things for God and his people.
 - a. The Spirit empowered the prophets of Israel to know the mind of God and speak the words of God.
 - b. The Spirit enabled the rulers and leaders of Israel to do great things for God.

- D. Thus, when the king says, “The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me,” all those important facts about the Spirit’s work are brought to mind.
1. This coming king is going to be an awesome, powerful, and *good* king because the very Presence of God rests on him.
 2. Unlike the kings and the leaders of the world, God’s special king will govern his kingdom with divine power; and lead his people with divine wisdom.
- E. But there is more that Isaiah says about the Spirit of the Lord God and his work through God’s special king.
1. Isaiah 11 is another passage that talks about the Holy Spirit resting upon God’s special king.
 2. As a result of his dwelling upon the king, a new world reality would emerge:
 - “The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat” (11:6)
 - “the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea” (11:9).
 —In other words, global peace and harmony will result from the rule of this king.
- F. When our Lord Jesus Christ announces, “The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me,” he doesn’t just mean that God would bless his work in a general sort of way.
- He means that God would work through him to bring about the new world, the new age that God has long had in mind.
- G. In the opening words of Isaiah 61:1, we are already hearing God calling out to us.
1. God is effectively saying to us, “Come to my chosen king. Come to the Lord Jesus Christ. Trust in him. Put your hope in him. Do not put your hope in ordinary human beings, because they too are sinners like you. But go instead to my chosen king, Jesus, and give yourself to him.”
 2. God is not simply inviting us to Christ. He is commanding us to go to Jesus Christ the Lord, because he is the royal Vessel of the Holy Spirit.

***Questions for reflection:** (1) Who is the Spirit of the Lord God? What did the Holy Spirit do in history? (2) If the Spirit of God is upon the king, what does that tell us about this king? (3) According to Isaiah 11, what would happen as a result of the Spirit dwelling upon the king? (4) How is God calling you to respond to his appointed king?

IV. The Lord Has Anointed Me

- A. We also see the reason God places the Holy Spirit upon his chosen King.
—It’s “because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the poor.”
- B. Concerning anointing.

1. In the ancient Middle East, anointing is the application of oil upon a person...
 - a. to soften sun-burnt skin
 - b. to restore the body to freshness and suppleness (Ps 104:15 and Matt 6:17) (Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith*, p. 289).
2. Anointing was also used for people who had been called by God to do a special work.
 - a. In the Old Testament, the kings (1 Sam 10:1; 1 Sam 6:13; 2 Sam 2:4) and the prophets (1 Kgs 19:16; Ps 105:15) of Israel were anointed with oil before they began their God-given assignment.
 - b. When used for holy people, the anointing came to symbolize God's choosing of that person, and also the presence of the Holy Spirit of God upon that person.
- C. When this king says that he has been anointed by the Lord God, he is acknowledging himself to be chosen by God.
 1. God's authority and presence rest upon him.
 2. Thus, this king is one the world must take seriously—or risk offending God himself.
 3. The anointing of God brings with it special rank and authority.
 4. It makes the person who is anointed—the Anointed One—the representative of God himself.

***Questions for reflection:** (1) Why does God place the Holy Spirit upon his chosen King? (2) How was anointing used in the ancient Middle East? What was the significance of anointing in the Old Testament? (3) What is the king saying about himself when he says that the Lord God has anointed him?

V. The Anointed One Is the Lord's Messenger

- A. What is the Lord's Anointed One to do? How will he represent God?
 1. The Scripture says, "the LORD has anointed me *to bring good news...*"
 2. God's Anointed One is a messenger from God, a prophet.
 3. God's Anointed One is also a bringer of good news.
- B. It is a relief to know that this good news is from God himself!
 1. God is the all-righteous, all-good, and all-holy One.
 2. For sinful people like ourselves, God is not necessarily good news.—Because God is good, God will destroy all that is evil.
 3. Thus, we should receive God's good news with gratefulness, even surprise.

***Questions for reflection:** (1) What will the Lord's Anointed One do? (2) Why is it wonderful that the Anointed One's good news is from God himself? What should our attitude be toward God's good news?

VI. The Anointed One Brings God's Good News to the Poor

- A. What is this good news that God has authorized his Anointed One to bring?
- B. Whatever the good news is, it must be good news "to the poor."

***Questions for reflection:** (1) What is the good news that God's Anointed One will bring? (2) To whom does the Anointed One bring his good news?

VII. Not Just Victims

- A. *Who then are the poor to whom the Anointed One speaks?*
—A little bit of context will help us understand who the poor are, and help us further appreciate what God is saying.
- B. When Isaiah was speaking God's words to Israel, he was addressing a nation that was soon to be punished for their sins.
 - 1. Israel was God's special people.
 - 2. God wanted Israel to be a model nation to the world.
 - 3. During Isaiah's time, the nation of Israel had begun to lose its way.
 - a. The Israelites were abandoning God.
 - b. Since the Israelites were no longer finding contentment in God above all, they were beginning to find their happiness in the things of the world.
 - c. This resulted in a culture of excessive wealth and luxury.
 - 4. Of course, God does not condemn the accumulation of wealth by itself.
 - a. Yet, God always asks: *What do you do with your wealth?*
 - b. God wanted wealthier Israelites to be generous with their surplus wealth and help those Israelites who had become poor due to forces beyond their control.
 - c. But during Isaiah's time, Israelite culture was becoming more and more materialistic and unjust.
 - 5. God had decided that the time had come to punish this nation.
 - 6. Punishment came in the form of destruction and exile:
—Part of Israel was destroyed by the Assyrian empire; another part was taken captive by the Babylonian empire.
 - 7. When Israel fell, the whole nation came to know the meaning of poverty.
 - a. The haughty rich lost their lands and joined the ranks of the poor.
 - b. God's special nation became a beggar amidst the rich powers of the world.
- C. When Isaiah says that God's Anointed One will good news for the poor, he had the whole nation of Israel mind.
- D. But since the Anointed One is also God's appointed Ruler for the whole world, the poor also include those of all the nations of the world.

- E. In general, the poor are those who have been disempowered and made weak.
— They are those who are financially broken and have had their fundamental rights trampled on (Jer 5:28).
- F. But we must recognize that the poor are themselves sinners.
1. Our poverty is not always the result of the sins of others.
—It can be due to our own sins as well.
 2. This was certainly the case for Israel when the nation was taken into exile—and it is certainly the case for the world in general.
 3. The ultimate reason there is poverty in the world is because God has placed a curse on all creation as a punishment for our sins.
—Genesis 3:17, 18: “...*cursed* is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field.”
 4. Because of this curse, poverty will continue in the world in spite of our best laid plans.
—Deuteronomy 15:11: “For there will never cease to be poor in the land.”

***Questions for reflection:** (1) Who are the poor to whom the Anointed One will speak? (2) Why and how does the nation of Israel become poor? (3) How can we say with confidence that the poor of the whole world are also addressed by God? (4) What is the ultimate reason behind poverty in the world? (5) Do you consider yourself one of the poor?

VIII. Christ Jesus, Good News for the Poor

- A. But whatever the nature and reasons for our poverty and misery—even if they are due to our own sins—God has good things to say to us.
1. God’s good news is not just for the *innocent* poor, but for the *sinful* poor.
 2. God gives this good news through the King whom he has sent.
- B. But as we listen to what Scripture says about Jesus, we realize that King Jesus doesn’t just come to bring the good news—he himself *is* the good news.
- C. There are two very important things that happened to Jesus that make him the good news we poor sinners need.
1. First, *King Jesus is God’s good news to us poor sinners, because he takes the curse of God upon himself and dies for the sins of the world.*
 - a. In Romans 3:24-25, we are told that God himself gave Christ Jesus to us “as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith.”
 - i. The word “propitiation” means “appeasement,” “satisfaction.”
 - ii. Jesus died to satisfy God’s requirements for justice.

- iii. Because Jesus has died, you and I do not have to compensate God anymore for our sins.
 - iv. We do not have to suffer eternally for our sins because Jesus has paid the price.
 - b. In Christ Jesus, we have “redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses...” (Eph 1:7)
 - c. The work of our King can summarized by these words in 2 Corinthians 8:9: “...though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.”
- 2. Second: *King Jesus is God’s good news to us poor sinners, because he rose from the dead and became our king.*
 - a. We poor people lack is someone to look out for us, someone to defend us and to ensure our security.
 - b. When Jesus became our king, he accepted full responsibility for the lives of those who trust in him.
 - c. By his divine power, Jesus will preserve his own.
—John 10:28: “I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.”

***Questions for reflection:** (1) When God speaks his good news to us, is he only addressing the innocent poor? (2) How is Jesus himself the good news of God? What are two things that happened to Jesus that make him God’s good news to us?

Through our King, Jesus Christ, God restores life and health to the poor. We may be poor because of what others have done to us. We may be poor because of our own sins. Whatever the immediate reason of our poverty, sin is always the root cause. But the good news is that God has come to save us from our sins and our poverty through Jesus Christ. God placed his Holy Spirit upon Jesus so that Jesus could *be* the good news that he brings. By his death, Jesus took the curse of God upon himself and compensated God once and for all for our sins. By his resurrection and his exaltation as our King, Jesus became the guarantor of our salvation.

Will you obey the Word of God and receive Jesus as your Savior and King?