

Sermon Outline

GOSPEL SERVICE

TO BIND UP THE BROKENHEARTED: CHRISTMAS FOR SAD PEOPLE *ISALAH 61:1-3*

I. Introduction

II. Isaiah

- A. The prophet Isaiah was God's messenger to Israel.
- B. During Isaiah's day, Israel was in trouble with God, because over the years, Israel had grown further and further away from God.
- C. God had warned his people many centuries ago that if they turned from him, God would have to punish his people. One of the means of punishment is an invasion by foreign invading powers.
- D. When God deals with Israel, he also addresses the rest of the world.
 1. If Israel, God's special people, had received God's Word and seen his glory, and still could not be faithful to God, what more the rest of the nations of the world?
 2. As God punishes Israel, God is simultaneously warning the rest of the world that this is exactly what we deserve for our sins.
- E. God sent Isaiah to warn Israel about what was going to happen. Israel had plenty of reasons to be afraid, because the clock was ticking and judgment day was coming.
- F. But turning from God also has consequences for the rest of us.
 1. God is the principle of Life. We cannot reject God without also suffering the loss of life in some form. For instance:
 - A pervading and paralyzing sense of guilt or inferiority
 - Living in constant fear, anxiety, and defensiveness
 - The breakdown of relationships and loss of health
 - eternal separation from God
 2. Judgment is the consequence of rejecting the God Who Is Life, and will bring sadness.

- G. Even in the midst of all this bad news, God holds out hope to his people: Judgment will not be the final word that God's people hear from God. When God's punishing work is done, God himself will come to save his people from their sins.
- H. As gloomy as the book of Isaiah is, there are also many promises of hope in Isaiah. One of those promises is the one that we have in front of us now in Isaiah 61.

III. The Spirit of the Lord

- A. In this chapter, God tells us that he is going to send a man to restore Israel back to life. Through this special Human Being, God is going to end the judgment and bring the salvation of sinners. It is on this premise that the Christian Faith exists.
- B. *Christianity is not first and foremost a religion for do-gooders.*
1. While the Christian faith will, over time, produce people who love what is good, the primary, core message of Christianity is not first and foremost for good, virtuous people.
 2. It's for people like Israel who are punished, precisely because they are not good. It's for...
 - people like that tourist who punched his wife and then got fined for it.
 - students who cheat on their exams and get expelled.
 - soldiers who disobey authority and get thrown into detention.
 - thugs and pimps who get caught in police sting operations.
 - Seemingly law-abiding citizens who try to do good but know deep in their hearts that they have done things for which they are ashamed.
 3. If you feel like you're not good enough to become a Christian, there is good news for you: If you are a mess, you are good enough to be a Christian!
 4. What makes us "Christian" is not our good works.
—It is the One in whom we trust, the special Human Being of whom Isaiah speaks of in this passage, the Christ.
 5. Christianity, in short, is a religion for sad losers in every shape and form.
- C. "The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me..."
1. The Spirit of the Lord refers to God himself.
 2. He is God's own Spirit; God's own Presence, God's eternal, inexhaustible energy and power.
 3. The Spirit of the Lord is the Creator of the universe. He is life in all of its fullness, intelligence, purity, and ferocity. All life and all being comes from the Spirit of the Lord.

- D. Because the Spirit of the Lord is ultimate life, he is also ultimate truth, ultimate reality.
- E. If there is to be any hope for this world, any true joy for you and me, it must come from God's Spirit. Only God's Spirit can undo the death, destruction, and sadness that we have brought upon ourselves.

IV. The One on Whom the Spirit Rests

- A. The Spirit of the Lord accomplishes our salvation by means of the special Human Being he indwells—the Lord Jesus Christ.
- B. Why is Jesus so important to Christians? Why do churches around the world celebrate his birth? It's because Jesus has come to do what we cannot do for ourselves—to get us out of the mess we have made of ourselves and of others.
- C. The Scripture says,
 - The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me,
because the LORD has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor...
 1. The word “anointed” denotes someone who has been “chosen by God.”
 2. Jesus was divinely appointed by God himself—the ultimate and final Authority in the universe—to do something. Whatever Jesus does, God initiated and approved.
 3. During Isaiah's days, kings were often seen as servants or agents of God.
 4. Before a king began his reign, he was first anointed. Oil was poured upon him as a sign that God's favor and authority rested on him.
 5. Jesus was directly anointed by God himself not with oil but the Holy Spirit himself.
 6. The Spirit of the Lord has been given to Jesus. Everything that Jesus did has the full backing of God himself. Everything that Jesus did represents the mind and will of God for his people.

V. To Bind Up the Brokenhearted

- A. Jesus was sent “to bind up the brokenhearted...”
- B. For those who are sad today, we hear in these words: “Someone does care for me—and can do something about my sadness. Someone does hear the aching of my heart, and cares enough to put it to an end.”
- C. God, the ultimate Reality and Giver of life, has sent Jesus to heal our broken-hearts.

- D. No matter what caused our hearts to be broken, Jesus can heal our sadness—even if that sadness was something we stupidly brought upon ourselves.
- E. Bear in mind that the people who first heard Isaiah’s prophecy were those who were about to suffer for their own (individual, cultural) sins.
- F. If God wants Jesus to heal the sadness caused by our own sins, why not also the sadness caused by the sins of others against us, or the pain that comes as a course of life?
- G. So you rest assured: No matter what pain you carry with you in your heart, no matter what trauma you carry in the memory of your own body, God has sent Jesus for this very purpose—to *heal your sadness*.

VI. To Proclaim Liberty to the Captives

- A. Jesus was sent “to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound...”
- B. These captives are in prison because...
 1. of their own sins.
 2. of the sins of others.
- C. Do you feel that you are a captive in some way?
 Do you live under guilt?
 Do you live under a cloud of bad memories?
 Did someone do something to you that caused you shame?
 Did someone say something to you at an impressionable point in your life that destroyed your dignity as a human being?
 —There again, maybe you were the one who did those things. And you live under a cloud of sadness, precisely because you know you are deeply guilty.
- D. Whatever the case, whether you are victim or victimizer (and all of us are both at some point in our lives and to some degree), God has sent his Man for you.

VII. To Proclaim The Year of the Lord’s Favor

- A. Jesus was sent to proclaim “the year of the LORD’s favor, and the day of vengeance of our God...” He comes “to comfort all who mourn...”
- B. Christmas God’s gift first to sad people—even those of us who are sad because we deserve to be sad—because Jesus has come to announce the end of punishment.

- C. The year of the LORD's favor is another way of saying, the time of our release.
- D. The year of the LORD's favour is also associated with "the day of vengeance of our God."
 - 1. When God sets us free, he takes vengeance against those demonic powers that have oppressed us.
 - 2. Satan, the leader of the powers of evil, functions as a cosmic prosecuting attorney (Zech 3:1; Rev 12:10).
 - 3. Satan accuses God's people for their sins before God, because his primary aim is to keep God away from his people.
- E. When God sends his Anointed One to set us free, Satan the prosecuting attorney will be silenced. His case will be thrown out of court.

VIII. The Joy of Christmas

Christmas is not first for those who have their lives all together. It is for those who are *sad*—either because they have brought that sadness upon themselves through their own misdeeds, or have that sadness cruelly visited upon them by others. Whatever the cause of your sadness, there is real reason to rejoice, because heaven has answered our sadness. God's Answer comes to us in the form of a man, Jesus the Anointed One. Through Jesus, God re-affirms his love for us. God himself steps between you and your accusers and tells you that he is no longer angry at you and that he wants you to come home with him. Through Jesus, God forgives our sins, wipes our tears away, and embraces our trembling, guilt-stricken beings. Whatever reason you have for being sad, go to Jesus. He has come for you.