

Isaiah 61:1-3

December 23, 2018

JRR Tolkien wrote a trilogy for the ages, *The Lord of the Rings*. In the first book, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, the venerable wizard Gandalf writes Frodo a letter.

He says this,

Dear Frodo,

Bad news has reached me here. I must go off at once. You had better leave Bag End soon, and get out of the Shire before the end of July at latest. I will return as soon as I can; and I will follow you, if I find that you are gone... You may meet a friend of mine on the Road: a Man, lean, dark, tall, by some called Strider. He knows our business and will help you. Make for Rivendell. There I hope we may meet again...

PPS. Make sure that it is the real Strider. There are many strange men on the roads. His true name is Aragorn.

The reason that Gandalf was concerned Frodo would not see notice or find the real Strider is because he blended in and did not seem impressive at first glance. Gandalf penned a poem about Strider where he says,

All that is gold does not glitter,

Gandalf doesn't say it this way, but he knows that Strider is vastly more important than Frodo might

think. Strider might not appear to be much but he would prove to be the King. He may look like an ordinary ranger but he was much, much more important. His ordinary outward appearance concealed an important man.

All that is gold does not glitter.

Today we look back again at a frightfully ordinary birth of a baby that looked just any other ordinary baby. This ordinary birth concealed the most important mission known to man.

And no one noticed. Yeah, some shepherds came running but only because the angels announced what had happened. No one on their own noticed that heaven bent low and touched earth.

Jesus came to earth in the normal way, in the way you and I arrived here. He was born. Everything about his birth is so very stark ravingly normal. Average. Regular.

Why do we remember this birth that no one seemed to notice on the night of his birth?

Because all that is gold does not glitter.

The stable, manger, animals did not glitter that night, but the baby born might didn't shine but was vastly more important than anyone knew.

All that is gold does not glitter.

But we look again to Isaiah and push past the manger scene and see once again our Lord and his great purpose shining brighter than gold.

PROP: Because mankind does NOT naturally see what is important; we must look to Jesus this Christmas.

Move toward Jesus who offers more than you could ask.

A baby in a manger does not seem like much—but all that is gold does not glitter. The manger held the baby that could not only change the world but you and me.

Christmas might seem like a holiday that has nothing to do with you—false. Jesus has something to do with everybody.

We move toward him today.

Isaiah knew the mission of this baby come to earth to change history. He gives us a peek in Isaiah 61.

“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;
² to proclaim the year of the LORD’s favor,
and the day of vengeance of our God;
to comfort all who mourn;
³ to grant to those who mourn in Zion—
to give them a beautiful headdress instead of
ashes,
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,
the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit;
that they may be called oaks of righteousness,
the planting of the LORD, that he may be
glorified.” Isaiah 61:1-3

PRAY

The baby
The baby grown up

1. The baby—

Vs. 1,

“The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me,
because the LORD has anointed me...”

Here we have the prophet Isaiah speaking but he is speaking the words of Jesus centuries before he was born. The words of Christ Jesus tell us that the Holy Spirit is upon him and the Lord has anointed him (tasked) him to do something specific.

We see these incredible and somewhat overlapping purposes of the Messiah. What is he anointed to do?

1. To bring good news—

to bring good news to the poor (afflicted/oppressed);
he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,

He has come to bring good news to the oppressed of the earth. He has sent me to bind up or heal the brokenhearted.

The good news that he brings will be the means by which he heals the brokenhearted. There is no news like this news and this news changes everything for the afflicted and oppressed of the world.

Isaiah wants us to see that this Jesus doesn't need any help doing this work.

"The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me..."

He has sent *me* to bind up the brokenhearted.

Do you see the word 'me' being over and over? Isaiah wants us to understand that this Jesus will do this on his own.

He needs nothing from us to save us—but it will take everything from him.

He has come to bring good news to the poor. He doesn't just make a bare announcement, he has come personally to bring it to us for us himself.

He comes to the afflicted and the oppressed, those that are not used to anyone bringing them anything much less good news. Those harassed and blown about by the winds and gales of life—he comes to them.

He comes to the afflicted with good news.

He does not inflict further pain on the afflicted.

His news is good.

He will not condemn the afflicted.

He will not deride the oppressed.

He will not mock the poor.

He will not afflict the oppressed.

He will bring them good news.

Move toward him and his news.

And watch what this news does--

to bring good news to the poor;

he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,

The effect of the good news is that there is a way out from under your affliction, your affliction—come to me.

You do not understand how you must live UNLESS you first understand what your savior has done. He binds up the brokenhearted.

His news heals the brokenhearted.

You see this news is not just meant to ring in the ears but reach into our lives to fix what is broken in us at the most fundamental level.

He has come to restore that which is broken inside. Doctors may be able to fix broken arms or legs—but what about the brokenness inside that seems to rot away at our souls?

He has come to heal all brokenness.

All of humanity is broken. We are all broken. We all carry around our brokenness and can't get rid of it on our own.

Some have been broken because those that should have loved and helped hated and hurt.

Some have been broken because those that they trusted crushed them with their words.

Some have been broken by a darkness that never seems to go away.

Some have been broken because they always carry around a sense of self-hatred.

Some have been broken because they have been ravaged by constant neglect.

Some have been broken by alcohol-fueled rampages.

Some have been broken because no one seems to care that they feel like they are dying inside.

Some have been broken by regret for past misdeeds.

Some have been broken by past sins that come around and around and around again.

Every person on the planet carries some degree of brokenness inside. Every person carries this brokenness but ONLY one can bind up the brokenhearted.

The baby might not have looked like much but he came to heal the brokenhearted.

This is astounding for a couple of reasons.

He has great power—and great compassion.

Do you see this?

He has power great enough to see into your inmost parts to see where you are broken. He can see and he knows where you are broken.

Move toward this Jesus.

But he also has compassion. Not only does he know where you are broken he can heal where you are broken.

In our world, those with power do not often have compassion and those with compassion do not often have power.

But not Jesus.

He did not look like much but not all gold glitters—we move to him because he came to bring good news and bind up the brokenhearted.

And also,

2. To Proclaim freedom—

He has come to announce a new and lively freedom from human captivity. He comes not just to announce something he has come also to break captives out of jail.

He has come to cut chains and lead a jailbreak.

Every person is bound by unseen shackles. We are all born shackled to sin and imprisoned by death. You might think it is normal for people to be born, live for a while and die.

Just because everyone dies does not mean that it is natural. Death is not a part of life. The reason everyone is imprisoned by death is because it the sentence/punishment that comes because of sin.

We all know we fall short in many ways.

We have hurt others.

We have hurt ourselves.

We have hidden vices.

We give advice and don't follow it.

And the sentence for those things is death.

But the baby born in Bethlehem that night might not have looked like much but his coming inaugurated a new freedom.

The oppressed and afflicted he comes to are those that are oppressed and afflicted by sin and death.

He came and says I've got a new hope—

to proclaim liberty to the captives,
and the opening of the prison to those who are
bound;

In other words, he is proclaiming a freedom from sin and a release from the sentence of death. In still other words, it is safe to move toward him.

He proclaims a message NOT of condemnation—you aren't good enough—but the message he gives is—I am enough for complete freedom.

Jesus matters to you. He gives freedom from the sentence of death.

Make no mistake people die everyday—I went to a funeral yesterday—I'm not saying that following Jesus means your body doesn't wear out. It does.

But here is the difference, though your body wastes away and dies—Jesus announces a way to escape the punishment of eternal death.

He has come to say—I have a liberty for those captive to the power of sin. I have the power to open those imprisoned by the power of death.

For those that welcome Jesus and his message of freedom—he has freed you from the power of death.

It is not death to die
To leave this weary road

And join the saints who dwell on high
Who've found their home with God
It is not death to close
The eyes long dimmed by tears
And wake in joy before Your throne
Delivered from our fears

Further,

to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor,
and the day of vengeance of our God;

In that we see the heart and nature of God. The year of favor and a day of vengeance. We will come back to that in a moment.

The baby came to—

Bring good news
Proclaim freedom

And to,

3. To comfort the hurting

We all go through times in life where we mourn losses. We lose a friend, we lose our health, we lose our youth, we lose our spouse.

There is much we mourn over.

In the day of Isaiah when people would mourn they would wear sackcloth and smear their faces with ashes.

Why?

So that the whole community could see that they had something to mourn about and others could commiserate.

We might not dress in mourning clothes but have you ever been in a spot where you don't care what you look like?

You are so sad and mournful that it affects your appearance?

You don't eat?

Or you eat too much?

You don't wash clothes?

You neglect basic hygiene.

That is what mourning looks like for us.

Jesus promises to strip us of our clothes of mourning and replace it with a garment of praise. With a headress.

Or we might say—

Jesus brings such joy that everything will change and one day we will have no more reason to mourn ever.

It will be a day of tuxedos and party dresses. instead of putting ashes on our head and face he will crown us with joy.

And it won't be a put on.

This doesn't mean that Jesus will say—okay now it is time to have a party. Be happy! Have fun!

Rather, because of the good news, the healing of the brokenness, freedom from sin and death—

We will have great reason to for great joy. We have heard the good news!

No more enslavement to sin!

No more bondage to death.

No more mourning about anything.

The baby born in Bethlehem will do this. And look at what happens to us!

Others will look upon his people and call us

that they may be called oaks of righteousness,
the planting of the LORD, that he may be glorified.”

Who we will be will speak more of what he has done
in and for us than what we have done for ourselves.

We will be oaks, standards of righteousness.
Christians, he has already planted us and though we
may be seedlings now—one day we will be mighty
oaks.

We will stand forever.

We will be

Strong.
Durable.
Impressive.

Not because we are in any way

Strong.
Durable.
Impressive.

But why?

that they may be called oaks of righteousness,

the planting of the LORD, that he may be glorified.”

In other words, what we will become is entirely because of what he has done in and for us.

The baby would inaugurate an age of complete and total restoration. That baby born in Bethlehem that seemed so very normal would be uniquely commissioned to—

Bring good news
Proclaim freedom
Comfort the hurting

We need to move toward this Jesus. Whether you are a Christian or not we ALL need to move toward Jesus who

Brings good news to the oppressed
Proclaims freedom to the oppressed
Comforts the hurting to the oppressed

A baby in a manger does not seem like much—but all that is gold does not glitter. The manger held the baby that could not only change the world but you and me.

Christmas might seem like a holiday that has nothing to do with you—false. Jesus has something to do with everybody.

We move toward him today. But we don't just move toward a baby. The Bible as we all know shows us the baby all grown up.

We move from the baby to the man.

2. The baby all grown up—

All of us know that the baby grew up and lived to be the most influential person ever to walk the face of the earth.

What you might not know is that we have record of one sermon by Jesus. He was invited to the synagogue to preach.

And do you know what text from the Bible he preached on? The one we are looking at here in Isaiah 61.

But he does something unexpected—

I'll show you. Its super cool.

[18] "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives

Skip down to verse 2, this is where it gets interesting. Remember, I'm reading from Luke and Jesus keeps reading and says...

[19] to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."
Luke 4:18–19

And stops.

Do you see the part of the sentence that he did not read?

"And the day of the vengeance of our God..."

Lets let Luke pick it up from there.

"And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. [21] And he began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." [22] And all spoke well of him and marveled at the gracious words that were coming from his mouth. And they said, "Is not this Joseph's son?" Luke 4:20–22

Do you see what happened?

All assembled said, "Wait, what? We know this guy. Who does he think he is?"

I would have thought something similar if a preacher stood up and said as he reads the Bible and says—he guys this is about me. This is talking about me. Me.

Jesus read that section of Isaiah and said—what I just read—that is about me. Mic drop.

They marveled and said—how can this be? We know his dad. We know where he came from—there is no way that he is the one that Isaiah was speaking about.

Things went from bad to worse and the crowd tried to kill him. If you are interested in what happens next, you can read Luke 4.

But for our purposes Jesus announced only the year of favor not the day of vengeance.

Do you see what that means?

Jesus came as a baby to announce the year of the Lord's favor. To announce the good news; to bind up the brokenhearted; to proclaim freedom to captives and comfort the hurting.

He will come again.

What Jesus announced that day that is not so obvious is that there are going to be two advents.

One when he comes to announce the year of the Lord's favor—

Another when he ushers in the day of the Lord's vengeance—And when he comes the second time, he is not going to come as a baby. He will come and time will come to an end.

But for now, we continue to live in the year of the Lord's favor. Christmas is the celebration of the inauguration of years of favor.

Move to Jesus.

He still brings—

Good news to the oppressed
Freedom to the captives
Comfort to the hurting

Move toward him—he brings

to bring good news to the poor;
he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,

God has come as a baby to rescue men and women from the oppression of their sins. Jesus breaks the power and punishment of sin.

Good for believers and unbelievers alike.

Believers—no matter how heavy our many sins feel, he will not hold them against us. He asks for no payment, no compensation, nothing. He brings the good news that God has come near and he is not holding men's sins against them.

Move toward him again—

Unbelievers—you do not need to be oppressed and harassed by your sins. Have you tried to change and become better, but it doesn't really stick?

Move toward him.

to proclaim liberty to the captives,
and the opening of the prison to those who are
bound;

Believers—he proclaims freedom. No matter how you feel Christmas tells us that death is a defeated enemy. You need not fear it. You are not bound by the cords of death.

Move toward him again.

Unbelievers—moving toward Jesus changes your relationship with death. Any of his followers who die go from here to be with him. You don't have to experience eternal death.

Move toward him.

He also comes to—

to comfort all who mourn;

Believers—he still comforts his people. If nothing else, Christmas tells us that God has not left us alone. He has seen us and moved to help.

If that is true at Christmas—it is true throughout our whole life.

Unbelievers—the comfort he brings is peace for all of who you are. These are still the days of his favor. Move toward him and he will comfort you.

No one noticed the baby born that night. But we do today. We might not be good at seeing what is important but Jesus has shown us how important he really is even if he came as a lowly baby.

Move toward him.

PRAY

[24] The LORD bless you and keep you;
[25] the LORD make his face to shine upon you
and be gracious to you;
[26] the LORD lift up his countenance upon you
and give you peace. Numbers 6:24–26

