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St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749

Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
December 1, 2013
1st Sunday in Advent

Scripture Lessons: Revelation 1:4-8 Luke 1:68-79

Hymns: 20; 66; 65; 377:10 (387:1,5)

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and
our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: Isaiah 61:1-3

“The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me,
Because the Lord has anointed Me
To preach good tidings to the poor;
He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted,
To proclaim liberty to the captives,
And the opening of the prison to those who are bound;
2 To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord,
And the day of vengeance of our God;
To comfort all who mourn,
3 To console those who mourn in Zion,
To give them beauty for ashes,
The oil of joy for mourning,
The garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness;
That they may be called trees of righteousness,
The planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified.”

(NKJV)

This is the Word of God!

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

In Christ, our coming Savior, dear fellow Redeemed.

INTRO: Advent

Today marks the beginning of what is a joyous season of the Church year. While it is actually the Advent season, we commonly think of this time of year as the beginning of the Christmas season. That is the way it is in the world around us, and it is of course very appropriate since we are preparing to celebrate the Savior's birth later this month. However as we prepare for celebrating the Lord's birth there is so much more for us to consider than just the events of that one day. We will want to think about the different ways that the Lord comes to us. Of course we will be singing some of the Christmas hymns as we approach Christmas, so we will be thinking of His birth, His incarnation the physical first coming of the Christ into the world. But we will also be talking about when He comes into our hearts, as well as Jesus' second coming when He shall physically, visibly return in glory to judge the world.

All of these considerations are a serve well as portion of the Christian's preparation to receive and celebrate Jesus' birth for these preparations remind us of the true magnitude of the event and in its impact upon our lives.

This morning we turn to the words which the Prophet Isaiah received as they were coming from the voice of Christ, the Servant of the Lord. In these words the Holy Spirit reveals that --

THEME: Jesus Comes with Purpose.

Indeed --

I. He Comes with Divine Purpose.

Isaiah 61:1 “The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me,
Because the Lord has anointed Me
To preach good tidings to the poor;
He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted,

Several hundred years after these words were written Jesus read them in the synagogue in Nazareth, the town where Jesus had grown up. When He had finished reading them the Lord declared:

Luke 4:21 “Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”

The people response was immediate but also very volatile.

Luke 4:22 So all bore witness to Him, and marveled at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth. And they said, “Is this not Joseph’s son?”

They marveled at Jesus’ wise and wonderful words, but then very quickly turned on Him, because they regarded it as presumptuous for this son of a tradesman to proclaim Himself to be the Messiah who was to come into the world. That was indeed what Jesus declared with by reading these words and proclaiming that these words were fulfilled in Him. These words are a portion of what are referred to as the Servant of the Lord revelations of Isaiah. And indeed Jesus was the one referenced by these words! Jesus was not being presumptuous at all, but rather He was acknowledging His special anointing. It

was the Spirit of God that had anointed Jesus with His abiding presence.

This anointing was presented visibly at Jesus' baptism when the Spirit descended in the form of a dove and landed on Jesus and stayed with Him. The Spirit's anointing not only assures us that all that Jesus taught was truth from God, but it also designated Jesus as the Lord's anointed, receiving His office and authority as Christ from God. The nature and activity of Jesus' ministry corroborates this truth. Jesus was sent by God to preach good tidings to the poor. He was sent by God to serve the poor in spirit who had humbled themselves before the Lord. He was and is this Servant of the Lord that was sent to bring salvation and comfort to the people.

So we see that Jesus' purpose in coming was a **divine** purpose. It was not a purpose that was proposed by man according to man's wisdom or ambition. It was not a purpose founded by man's vanity. And so His divine purpose was pure and undefiled. And so we should expect to see that --

II. He comes with a Spiritual Purpose.

Isaiah 61:1b- 3a He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives, And the opening of the prison to those who are bound; 2 To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, And the day of vengeance of our God; To comfort all who mourn, 3 To console those who mourn in Zion.

These words speak right to the heart, that is the broken heart. They speak to the heart that is broken by sin and

guilt and all the heartache that sin has brought into the world. This is why Jesus came to the world, to address this **spiritual** distress. When others address only the physical distress that is so apparent in the world what they are doing may be good and loving, but they are addressing only the outward symptoms of inner disease the disease of sin. Because of human limitations they are addressing them very poorly at that. Only Jesus gets to the true cause of the distress that afflicts mankind. Only Jesus can heal the brokenhearted, because Jesus is the one that who brings the gospel of peace and forgiveness. The indebtedness of each person's sin is overwhelming. It is a cause captivity in the everlasting prison house of hell. It pulls people into slavery as every sinner knows the controlling power of sin in their hearts and in their lives.

Jesus addresses this with His own sacrifice. He declares the “**acceptable year of the Lord.**” That references the year of jubilee which came only once every 50 years. In the year of Jubilee debts were forgiven; properties were restored to the original owners. People found hope and life again as they were freed from any and all forced labor, or servitude, and from any sentence of death that hung over their heads. All this symbolized the work of Jesus as He came into the world and took our debt and our death sentence upon Himself. “He bore our sins in His own body on the tree” of the cross (1 Peter 2:24). Jesus did this once and for all! He came into the world and fulfilled the righteous requirements of the law **once and for all**, for all time and for all people. He came into the world and presented Himself to God as the perfect sacrifice and died upon the cross once and for all, **for all time and for all people!**

He told the people that they were forgiven and that they were brought into the kingdom of God through faith in His name. The relationship with God that had been torn apart by sin was fully restored.

The question is, was His purpose seen in this sacrifice effective? Was this message of love and forgiveness effective in relieving the spiritual distress that afflicted all people?

The words of the prophet assure us that

III. Jesus Comes with an Effective Purpose.

Yes, all these wondrous things was fulfilled by Jesus' coming into the world. More importantly it is made a reality for people by Jesus' coming into people's hearts.

The message of our text concerning Jesus is clear "**The Lord has sent Me**" ...

Isaiah 61:3b To give them beauty for ashes,
The oil of joy for mourning,
The garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness;
That they may be called trees of righteousness,
The planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified."

The phrasing of the translation is a little stilted so it may be hard to catch what is going on here. The phrasing ties more to the expressions of the middle-eastern Hebrew culture than to our own times. What is described in these verses is an exchange going on, an exchange that is not only outward, but also very much inward. People in that culture expressed their grief not only openly but dramatically. They did not wear fine clothes of any kind

but rather wore coarse uncomfortable sackcloth. They didn't appear in public clean and presentable, but filthy from the ashes they had literally dumped on their heads. They didn't participate in the traditional anointing with fine aromatic oils which kept their skin supple in the dry heat of the region and helped them to remain presentable for the public. Everything about their appearance spoke loudly of the grief in their heart, the grief the sorrow the despair was all worn out there as we would say, right on their sleeve. Here the Spirit is talking about the spiritual grief that sin brings into **our** hearts.

How effective is Jesus' coming into the world? His coming is the **acceptable year of the Lord**, the Jubilee. He effected a great exchange. In place of ashes there is beauty and adornment. In place of the harsh garments of grief that speak of a heavy spirit there is set in place the garment of praise. That is the joy and rejoicing that we feel as we gather to celebrate our salvation on the high feast days of the church year like Christmas and Easter. We see Jesus' purpose as being effective, but there is more!

The final picture presented in our text speaks of believers as being trees of righteousness. The terebinth trees of the middle-east were very sturdy and stood up to the harshest weather conditions. They were seen as being as sturdy as any tree one could find in all of God's creation. That's what Jesus' coming brings the believer. No more "are we weak and heavy laden, cumbered with a load of care" (TLH 457). Now we have been delivered from sin's curse, and the evil one can no longer harm us. We are delivered from the power of the devil because Jesus did what only Jesus could do. He destroyed the works of the devil. He sets us free. He makes us strong!

Conclusion: Today we observe Jesus' coming with His purpose fulfilled.

He still comes to us. He enters our hearts through the message preached. His Word, the inspired record given and preserved by the power of the Holy Spirit, assures us that Jesus is **our** Lord also. It assures us that Jesus lives within our hearts where He rules according His grace. We have life in His name. We are comforted and consoled by the message of God's love and forgiveness which only Jesus could deliver to a fallen mankind here on earth.

Our hearts have been changed. He has lifted us up from the ash heap and restored us to the family of God. Let us rejoice in the advent of our Lord!

AMEN.

And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.