

Sermon on Isaiah 61:1-62:7 prepared by Jonathan Shradar

Read: **Isaiah 61:1-62:7**

The finished work of Jesus makes his church into a relentless force for revival.

Imagine the scene with me. There is a man, new to ministry. People are unsure about him but there has been some evidence of something special happening around him. He had been teaching in synagogues throughout the region and the authority with which he opened Scripture was something to behold. And then he returns to his hometown to his home synagogue and stands to read Scripture before everyone that has known him since childhood.

The place is packed, who would want to miss this... what could the carpenter's boy possibly have to say...

Luke 4:17–21 “And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written, [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 and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, [19] to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.”

[20] 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.” (ESV)

Those wondering who he thought he was had their answer. And by this we too have the answer to all of our questions as to who Jesus is and what it is about him that we should care about. Is he just a revolutionary? A moral example of humble living? A madman getting what he deserved? Or something miraculously more.

He is the anointed One... promised generations before, the Messiah coming with good news, liberation, restoration.

The crowd would confront him... he would answer them telling of the healing work of prophets reserved for people outside of Israel and they would be enraged. Ready to kill the teacher... the man claiming the words of Isaiah speak for him.

What unsettled the crowd in Nazareth still unsettles people today - maybe even some of us - because it tells us who Jesus is and what his work and mission are. And that confronts our views of ourselves and our place as rulers of our little universes.

What he was quoting goes further because Isaiah also tells us who we are in light of this Messiah and what our mission is...

The finished work of Jesus makes his church into a relentless force for revival.

1) This is Jesus

“The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me...”
We hear this voice and we can’t be mistaken. This is the Messiah. The servant. The Redeemer.

This is Jesus.

Some scholars demand caution any time we find Jesus in the Old Testament but the whole thing is about him, the work of redemption unfolding and his central role, the right arm working salvation when no one else could. Thankfully Jesus claims this for himself so that is our interpretive lens!

And like the Word is all about Him so is every endeavor of ours as a church - the glory of his name, the expansion of his kingdom.

Here through Isaiah we have the promise of what the anointed One, the Messiah would come to do, how salvation would be won and what it would mean for those that would be part of his kingdom.

Anointed for work, for a mission. Seven aspects or ways of ministry.

Preaching good news to the poor... news of redemption to the spiritually poor and hurting. Those that understand the need for intervention, for saving they can't accomplish on their own. This good news ties all that comes next together. And as we study the rest of the Bible we gain a full picture of this news.

The gospel, announcing that Jesus has won the victory over everything that is against us. If you have committed what you think is beyond saving, maybe the unpardonable sin, if your inability to measure up has broken you, if you think you've missed the boat on a better life; this anointed One, Jesus preaches to you new life and if you really understand what he is saying you will actually struggle believing it is yours to be had.

Good news of forgiveness. Good news of a family. Good news of identity in him.

And more than just talking about it, Jesus delivers it through his life, death, and resurrection.

That's just the first facet of his ministry.

He also comes to bind up the brokenhearted. To fill the void, heal the pain, and brighten our hearts. All the feels here in Jesus.

He proclaims liberty to captives. Those in exile, slaves of other masters, and those bound to the cruel master that is sin and separation from God. Freedom from the clutches of Satan.

His good news, his truth sets us free.

John 8:34–36 “Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin. [35] The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever. [36] So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.” (ESV)

He opens the prison and announces the year of the Lord's favor.

Reclaiming the year of jubilee. Every 50 years there was to be a wiping of the slate. Debts were forgiven, land was restored to rightful owners. This is what

Jesus does, every ounce of debt for sin and disobedience is removed and owned by him. It isn't just put into another account to be worked off, he pays in his very blood satisfying the payoff amount.

He also announces the day of the vengeance of the Lord, he is responsible for judging the world at the end of time. And even in that future-oriented work he comforts those who mourn.

We like most of this don't we? What we don't like is the necessity of it. Because what Jesus announces good news we are confronted with our own captivity, our own running after other gods or seeing ourselves as the divine to be worshiped.

But this is Jesus, this is God, the creator of the universe, who formed you and knows you better than you know yourself, and he says come to me, surrender your mourning, your shackles, your brokenness and be comforted. Be washed by the oil of gladness and wear a garment of praise. Have your life turned around by the anointed, Spirit-empowered Jesus.

And here is where it gets super good, he does this ministry, all of this proclamation and serving for a people. Not those who randomly won some lottery but a chosen family. Zion.

The City of God, the people of the kingdom pulled out of despair and planted by the Lord as oaks of righteousness. If you have put your faith in Jesus, this is you.

2) The Work of Jesus Finished in Us

From his ministry we see and he tells of, its effects on us. "Isaiah wants to inspire in us such admiration for our Messiah that we gladly exert ourselves for his cause in our generation." RO

"They shall build up the ancient ruins; they shall raise up the former devastations." The redeemed are not just stationary but what the good news of the Messiah is applied to their hearts and lives, things change, they become agents of restoration.

Used to repair the ruined cities... the devastation of many generations. Here Jesus is giving his people a picture of the fruit of his finished work in our lives, that we become those that make change, extend his hand of comfort to the hurting, value those that society rejects, and mend what generations of sin has broken. [Billboard saying “What Would Jesus Undo?” he undoes through his church, his people.]

This is our mandate, there is no secular realm and a sacred realm, we bring the sacred work of redemption wherever God has put us. Our vocation, our neighborhoods. We have purpose and you did not randomly pull a card from the pile in the game of Life, God in his sovereignty put you here for this ministry.

Makes me think of the work that Jerry has done for years, cleaning up, serving areas devastated by disaster. This is Zion’s work in the practical, physical realities of life and the spiritual emotional depths of the souls of those we encounter.

Gospel-liberated people themselves become a creative force for restoration.

We also are given favor. Strangers tend our flocks, foreigners the fields. To a people in exile as the servants of others, this is a picture of blessing and favor before God. No longer the exiles.

What’s more, all of Zion is made priests. Ministers of God is what they shall call us. No longer reserved for a special class from the right family but for all of us.

1 Peter 2:4–5 “As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, [5] you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” (ESV)

Then we are redeemed and redefined. Instead of shame there shall double honor.

A people remade by the One bringing good news. We read these things and maybe we think, ‘oh nice.’ But this is who we are in Christ. So significant. What should my Christianity look like? Start here, be a restorer, recognize the seat of

honor and favor you have in Jesus, made a child of God with an inheritance and formed into a priesthood living for the glory of God.

This last week Ancestry DNA updated my results, as they do occasionally with increased data. But in this update something new happened, I am Norwegian! 3%. I would have never thought it possible. And for a kid growing up thinking he was German and nothing else to see the results has been identity altering.

So now I want to embrace my Norwegianess. I want to be tall and blond and eat dried fish... I want to act on my identity.

This is what Isaiah would have us do, hear who we are and walk it out. Live it. Jesus works in a far deeper way even than our DNA. He adopts us and makes us his offspring. “They are the offspring the LORD has blessed.”

This is the work of Jesus finished in us, made to be those that keep proclaiming good news to the poor, liberty to the captives, comfort to those that mourn. And it is secured in us by the tenacious Savior.

3) The Relentless Christ

This is all delivered and heading to finality (judgment) because Jesus is relentless.

Did you see it? Why Jesus does what he does?

“For I the LORD love justice... I will make an everlasting covenant with them” with my people. The word “justice” means more than legal rectitude: it means the way human life and human society are supposed to be. He is bringing it and won’t give up.

If you ever feel like your spiritual life is stuck in neutral this is for you... Just as the earth brings forth its sprouts, as a garden grows, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to sprout up before all nations. He that began a good work in you will bring it to completion.

Isaiah 62:1 “For Zion's sake I will not keep silent, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not be quiet, until her righteousness goes forth as brightness, and her salvation as a burning torch.” (ESV)

“For Zion’s sake.”

The proclamation continues until Zion’s brightness is seen, established and permanent. Until you shall be called by a new name that the mouth of the Lord will give.

Until the church, the kingdom of God, wears a crown of beauty, lives no longer forsaken but as the bride of Christ. Jesus was forsaken in our place so that we would be the family that the Lord delights in.

And just like a groom rejoices over his bride so shall your God rejoice over you.

Don’t for a second think this is about someone else. If you are in Christ, you are part of Zion, the Lord rejoices over you with gladness! Let this truth lift you to where you belong!

Because what is true of Jesus is true of those who belong to him. **Isaiah 61:10** “I will greatly rejoice in the LORD; my soul shall exult in my God, for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation; he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself like a priest with a beautiful headdress, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.” (ESV)

Clothed in salvation, covered in a robe of righteousness.

With the Spirit upon him, anointed by the Lord, Jesus relentlessly finishes this work in us. And he invites us to live the same way.

4) The Relentless Church

The bride now also lives “for Zion’s sake” carrying out, extending Jesus’ mission of proclaiming, working restoration and persisting in seeking him.

As the priesthood of believers, Jesus has appointed us to be relentless in pursuit of him and renewal for his glory.

Isaiah 62:6–7 “On your walls, O Jerusalem, I have set watchmen; all the day and all the night they shall never be silent. You who put the LORD in remembrance, take no rest, [7] and give him no rest until he establishes Jerusalem and makes it a praise in the earth.” (ESV)

We as watchmen, never silent, constant in prayer, intercession. Take no rest and give him, give God no rest.

We have spiritual rest in the justification Jesus has given us and we are made relentless in our pursuit of him and revival for Zion’s sake. Until he establishes Jerusalem (his city) and makes it a praise in the earth.

What this means is that, by the power of the Spirit (Acts 1: 8), the church must be committed to evangelism and discipleship, driven on by the goal of the final consummation of the bride of Christ. Can we be about this? To restoring the church to our New Testament model, to relentlessly seeking Jesus in prayer until he grants revival by his Spirit? Or should we settle for having a nice little club of friends?

“Over the last thirty years or so we American Christians have diminished our very capacity for revival, and we’re laying a foundation of sand for the future. We’ve jury-rigged our own hybrid version of Christianity that doesn’t even think in terms of the loyalty inherent in the words “for Zion’s sake.” So many Christians today are living a conveniently free-floating way of life, it doesn’t feel misaligned. It feels normal, and costly involvement feels like a super-spiritual option. But to God, church-hopping, self-protecting, me-first-Christianity isn’t even recognizable. “For Zion’s sake” defines a way of life that works and prays and tithes and gets involved. Church membership vows could be summarized with these three words: “for Zion’s sake.” But our generation is disinclined to that kind of gutsy intentionality.” Ray Ortlund

Let’s commit first to prayer. Let it shape how we bring renewal around us, but let us give the Lord no rest until he calls us home. This is how the church is built.

“Prayer is like boring holes deep into the rock of human hearts. It’s work. It tries our patience. We can’t see results. But in God’s time, he places the dynamite and lights the fuse, and the rocks crumble. God has called us to give him no rest until he makes a revived church the praise of the earth.” Norwegian theologian, Otto Kristian Hallesby

Relentless intercession in the face of overwhelming opposition is one of the most difficult tasks given to the people of God. For us to give ourselves no rest until Zion is perfect in glory is an extreme work that will challenge every child of God until the day we die... but it is what Jesus invites us to so we know that it is good. It makes us into a force for revival.

And we work in his energy with the same Spirit upon us that captives would be free, the brokenhearted healed, the mourning comforted. The year of the Lord’s favor experienced and his judgement handled by the blood of Christ shed on the cross for us.

The finished work of Jesus makes his church into a relentless force for revival.

Returning to the scene in Nazareth... to the scroll that was read. We might notice where Jesus stopped reading. The Scripture was fulfilled in their hearing of the good news, the healing, the liberty for captives, but it is not yet the day of vengeance of our God. There is still time, we are still witnessing the unfolding of our purpose and his pleasure to bring revival... so we persist.

Gain your new name - Believe in the anointed One. That Jesus is who he says he is, proclaiming good news to the poor, giving over himself in our place that we would become the righteousness of God. Surrender to him. And begin to play for the name on the front of the jersey. Live into your identity in Christ.

These descriptions of us in Isaiah are not suggestions, they are who we are in Jesus. Walk it out.

Be Relentless - For the sake of Zion, don't be silent, take no rest in crying out to the Lord for him to move - to bring the prodigals home and to make our righteousness go forth as brightness for all to see.

This is why we do what we do - why we have budgets, why we are joining a network of churches... moving forward, persisting in petition for more of Jesus, for the expansion of his kingdom. And all the steps we take are no risk at all because we are held by Jesus and made a diadem, a jeweled crown as a symbol of sovereignty, in his hand.

There is no time for indecisiveness. We are called, equipped and commissioned. Let's do it.