

## THE MOMENT WE'VE ALL BEEN WAITING FOR

Is.61:1-2; Luke 4:16-21

8/11/19

### *Introduction:*

- A. Isaiah the prophet foresaw the day when Israel's utter rebellion against God would bring them to a place of deep darkness with no hope whatsoever of rescue. **Turn to Is. 60.** But then Isaiah was given God's own words of hope for Israel: "*Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD rises upon you. ... Nations will come to your light.*" Then God gave his beleaguered and benighted people an eye-popping vision of their future; or to be more precise, of the future for those in Israel who would not forget the LORD. Ending with this assurance:

***I am the LORD;***

***In its time I will do this swiftly.***

- B. But then the long dark waiting began. They waited through years of disgrace and centuries of humble restarts, of invasions and death threats, waiting during some 400 years without any prophet from God, all the time reciting God's promises to his people waiting in the deep, down dark. "*I am the LORD. In its time I will do this swiftly.*"

### **I. "IN ITS TIME I WILL DO THIS SWIFTLY" (Luke 1-4)**

- A. Then, on one ordinary day, when almost no one was even thinking about it, God's pushed the button on his stopwatch. Zechariah, Elizabeth and the birth of John the Baptist. Angelic announcements to Mary and to Joseph. **Nine months passed** and "*when the time set had fully come, God sent his Son.*"
- B. **Twelve years more** till Jesus was found by his worried parents "*about his Father's business*" in the temple. Then

**18 more years** as he “grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.”

- C. Meanwhile, “**in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar**... the word of God came to John in the wilderness. He went into all the country around the Jordan, preaching a baptism for the forgiveness of sin.” Just like Isaiah had promised: “A voice of one calling in the wilderness, ‘Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him. ... All people will see God’s salvation.’”
- H Luke writes, “When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as he was praying, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: “You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.” [Luke adds,] Now Jesus himself was about **thirty years old** when he began his ministry.”
- I. After **40 wilderness days** of hunger and the devil’s fruitless tempting Jesus returned to Nazareth, his home. There in the synagogue on the Sabbath he was handed the scroll of Isaiah. “Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:
- “The Spirit of the Lord is on me,  
because he has anointed me  
to proclaim good news to the poor.  
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners  
and recovery of sight for the blind,  
to set the oppressed free,  
to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”*
- Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. He began by saying to them, “Today this

*scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.* ” **It had all happened so swiftly. And now the long, long wait was finally over.**

As beautiful as those promises were—gracious words, the people there called them—people didn’t really know what they meant. All that waiting, and they hadn’t actually realized how wonderful God’s promises were. As soon as Jesus told his hometown crowd, pointblank, that they were a faithless lot and that a prophet is never accepted in his home town, they turned into a mob and would have thrown him off a cliff if they could have. **So to appreciate God’s promise of the Messiah, you need to know how to listen.**

Once, an African-American pastor friend invited me to an ordination service for a couple of young men in his church. Susan and I had slipped into the back row of the crowded church when my friend tapped me on the shoulder. “Come with me,” he said, “you’ll be in the processional.”

Not only was I in the procession of pastors but once I was seated in a kind of VIP section, my host, who was sitting right in front of me, turned around in his chair and whispered over his shoulder, “You’ll be reading the Scripture text. Isaiah 61:1-2.”

“Ah, o.k.,” I said, and thumbed my way to this text. “Oh yes, that one,” I thought. “Just two verses. I can do that. It’ll be over in a second.” So I waited about an hour for my turn.

Finally, I climbed the platform steps to the old pulpit. I opened my Bible and intoned, “The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is upon me.”

The congregation stopped me dead in my tracks: “Amen! That’s right! Amen!”

After I found my place again I forged on, “. . . because the Lord has anointed me to *preach* good news to the poor.” I was feeling the love so I punched the word *preach* a bit and there it came again:

*“Preach the good news! Amen! Preach!”*

I girded up my loins and marched boldly onward. “He has sent me to BIND UP the brokenhearted.”

And it rolled back at me like an echo from heaven. “Bind UP!”  
“Praise God!” “Thank you Jesus!”

“To proclaim FREEDOM for the captives.”

Some laughed for the joy of it. Some clapped their hands.

“And release from DARKNESS for the prisoners.”

Again, they ran out to meet the Word with palm branches and hosannas.

Two verses could take a long time to read. “To PROCLAIM the year of the Lord’s FAVOR and the day of vengeance of our GOD.”

“Yes!! Hallelujah!” Feet stomped on the wooden floor. Applause—*applause!*—for the greatness of the commission.

I closed my Bible and stood there amazed. And I wished like everything they’d given me more than two verses to read.

**That is how to welcome these promises!**

## **II. THE MESSIAH GOD SENT WAS *MORE THAN* THE MESSIAH PEOPLE WERE EXPECTING!**

A. Luke has prepared us for the first line, “*The Spirit of the Lord is on me.*” The Spirit is in every scene leading up to this point. John the Baptist was “*filled with the Holy Spirit even before he is born.*” Mary was told, “*The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you.*” When Zechariah’s wife, Elizabeth, saw Mary, she “*was filled with the Holy Spirit.*” Once the dumbstruck Zechariah got his voice back he “*was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied...*” “*The Holy Spirit was on*” Simeon, the devout old man in the temple. Later John promised the crowds who came out to him that the coming Messiah would “*baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.*” And when Jesus came to be baptized, “*the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove.*” When Jesus was done with the trials of the wilderness, he “*returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit.*”

So when Jesus reads, “The Spirit of the Lord is on me,” we’ve been prepared by Luke. God’s Holy Spirit had moved in every key person in this story. Jesus himself, who was *born* full of the Holy Spirit, had now been *anointed* by the Spirit, as a King anointed with oil at his coronation. The Messiah is God’s Spirit-empowered King. He will do what only God himself can do.

- B. Look with me at the royal mission of the Messiah: ***“he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor.”*** I’m sure that people who didn’t have two shekels to rub together hoped the Messiah would give them gold, but he never did that. He came for people whose poverty ran far deeper. Jesus would preach, *“Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of God.”* He told his disciples that their spiritual models were to be little children. God’s Messiah came for people who know what paupers they are at heart.
- C. ***“He has sent me to proclaim freedom for prisoners.”*** There is no story of Jesus releasing anyone from jail, but there are astonishing stories of his power over those bound by demons, like the man so controlled and corrupted that he could break chains and he lived in the graves. After Jesus cast out a legion of demons from him, the townspeople found the man *“sitting at Jesus’ feet, dressed and in his right mind.”* **Get out of jail free for every prisoner of sin, the devil, or death who asks for Christ’s redemption.**
- D. ***“And recovery of sight for the blind.”*** Jesus healed blind people often. But it was never just so they could see the world around them. Take the blind beggar in Luke 18 who cried, *“Son of David, have mercy on me!”* Jesus stopped and asked him, *“What do you want me to do for you?”* *“Lord I want to see,”* he replied. Jesus said to him,

*“Receive your sight; your faith has healed you.”* (Now note this:) *Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus, praising God. When all the people saw it, they also praised God.* People were beginning to see.

- E. Finally, the Messiah’s commission was **“to set the oppressed free.”** The word here means *broken, crushed*. The Jews hoped for deliverance from Roman oppression, but the Messiah would do more. He set free people oppressed by the empty religious legalism that kept them from God’s grace. He even set free people broken by grief and death itself. Once he met a forlorn little funeral procession for the only son of a widow. Jesus said, *“Young man I say to you, get up!”* And, of course, he did! A broken woman and her crushed son *set free*. Christ meets people who are broken with the good news of everlasting freedom.
- F. Jesus’ brief reading of Isaiah ended well before Isaiah did, with one more purpose: **“to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”** That day in unfriendly confines of Nazareth, Jesus, anointed by the Spirit as the Messiah, inaugurated God’s era of grace. Judgment will surely come. That is actually what the next line in Isaiah says, *“and the day of vengeance of our God.”* But not yet. Not now. Despite our sin-saturated lives and world, the good news is **that this is still God’s season of salvation.** Now is when Jesus is preaching God’s favor—his grace—to the impoverished, imprisoned, blind and bruised [A. Maclaren].
- Not long after that Jesus asked his disciples who people thought he was. *“Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, that one of the prophets of long ago has come back to life.”* *“But what about you?” he asked.* *“Who do you say I am?” Peter answered, “God’s Messiah.”* [Lk 9:18-20]

## Conclusion:

“To PROCLAIM the year of the Lord’s FAVOR ....”

“Yes!! Hallelujah!” Feet stomped on the wooden floor. Applause—*applause!*—for the greatness of the commission.

The long wait ended when Jesus Christ read those words from Isaiah. You and I are living in “*the year of the Lord’s favor.*” Grace waits. Mercy is offered to you. No one needs to remain poor at heart. No heart must remain behind bars. No one must remain blind to God’s wonderful Kingdom. No one must remain oppressed and crushed by this world or the devil nor even death itself. Jesus Christ is Lord of all, and he will save anyone who puts their faith in him.

And all of us who have believed are not also *filled with the Holy Spirit*, ordained like the two young me in that service, to carry on the mission of Jesus. The Holy Spirit equips you

*to proclaim good news to the poor.*  
*to proclaim freedom for the prisoners*  
*and recovery of sight for the blind,*  
*to set the oppressed free,*  
*to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”*