

Marks

Daily Prayer ■ Weekly Worship ■ Bible Reading
Giving Time, Talents & Resources
Spiritual Friendships ■ Service In & Beyond the Church

of Discipleship

December 12, 2021

Day 1: Isaiah 61:1

The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners;

If, because you have been through a loss, you tell someone who has also suffered a loss “it will be ok,” your words will not have much effect if the one listening does not take and use them. The news the servant is proclaiming is good but the servant is concerned that those to whom it is directed will not act on the news. The good news is that the time of redemption has come. Now let’s get up and go to Jerusalem and see this new thing God has done. The servant is announcing that God is still directing His children and has not left them alone. But the ones to whom this message was addressed had to leave behind all they had and go to Jerusalem. We today are told that God is with us and will lead us to new life. Until we accept that God, in Christ, can bring us to new life, we will not go where God is directing us to go.

Question: How do you think the Lord “anointed” this person?

Challenge: Think of some group in our world today that is oppressed. What would be good news for them?

Scripture: Isaiah 60:1-7

Day 2: Isaiah 61:2

to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn;

Comfort is more than emotional support and well wishes. To provide comfort for those who mourn is to provide assurance that life will go on and that the one mourning will be cared for by others. The job of the servant is to announce the time has come to believe and to act on that belief. The servant must do this in a manner that is understandable to those who mourn. When someone is in pain we have to offer real help, not just words.

Question: Upon whom do you think the Lord is having vengeance?

Challenge: Think of a time when you were comforted. What happened and what was comforting?

Scripture: Isaiah 62:1-12

Day 3: Isaiah 61:3

to provide for those who mourn in Zion—to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit. They will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, to display his glory

The people in Zion, who were mourning, were doing so because they thought they had no future with hope. The images of a person in mourning are changed into images of a person celebrating. The garland has flowers and recalls life and growth. The oil is like a welcome scent that is appealing, not covering. A mantel is usually heavy and oppressive but this one is light. Recall the words of Jesus (Matthew 11:30) - an oak is a sturdy tree and one that stands for a long time.

Question: Why did they not know if those who were taken away had children?

Challenge: Are you an oak of righteousness?

Scripture: Leviticus 25:8-17

Day 4: Isaiah 61:4

They shall build up the ancient ruins, they shall raise up the former devastations; they shall repair the ruined cities, the devastations of many generations.

The Lord provides vindication for the people of Israel. They have been faithful to God even though they have suffered. The Lord has not given them up but has chastened them. In their punishment they have not given up, saying, “the Lord our God is one God.” The return of God’s people to Jerusalem proves that even though the nation was punished still they are God’s choice to be the light to the world. Not only will the people know that God is still blessing them but the nations of the world will now know that their God is Lord of all.

Question: Who will build up the ancient ruins?

Challenge: Think of someone (past or present) who has been faithful to God even in the midst of terrible circumstances.

Scripture: Isaiah 58:7-59:3

Day 5: Isaiah 61:9

Their descendants shall be known among the nations, and their offspring among the peoples; all who see them shall acknowledge that they are a people whom the Lord has blessed.

When God called Moses to go to Egypt and free the Hebrews, God did so they (the Hebrews) could come to the holy mountain and be consecrated in service to God. God was fulfilling a promise to Abraham. The promise was that his descendants would inherit a life beyond their imagining. The journey through the wilderness and finally to the holy land was another step in fulfilling that promise. God’s plan of salvation was for all people, and the Israelites were to be both the messengers and embodiment of that plan.

Question: How will the nations know that the Lord has blessed them by seeing them? What are they seeing?

Challenge: How do people know you are blessed by just seeing you?

Scripture: Isaiah 54:1-17

Day 6: Isaiah 61:10-11

I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my whole being 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 with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. For as the earth brings forth its shoots, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring up before all the nations.

The result of God’s people following God’s law will be a transformation of the world. It begins with a transformation of the children of God. In Christ we are a new creation however we can act as if we were not new creations. When we act in our daily life as redeemed people we will see creation around us respond by growing. We say thank you to people who do something for us but how do we say thank you to God? By being the people God created us to be.

Question: What other word would you substitute for Righteousness in this verse?

Challenge: This verse implies that if we are faithful the land will respond by being fruitful. If you think this is true, how does it work that the land becomes fruitful if we are faithful?

Scripture: Isaiah 55:1-13