

## **Anointed by the Spirit Isaiah 61:1-3**

*<sup>1</sup> The Spirit of the LORD God is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the afflicted. He sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release for those who are bound,<sup>2</sup> to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor and the day of vengeance for our God, to comfort all who mourn, <sup>3</sup> to provide for those who mourn in Zion, to give them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, a cloak of praise instead of a faint spirit, so that they will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the LORD to display his beauty.*

Our Lord Jesus began his earthly ministry by being baptized in the Jordan River. When he came up out of the water an amazing thing happened. Matthew tells us in his Gospel, *"After Jesus was baptized, he immediately went up out of the water. Suddenly, the heavens were opened for him! He saw the Spirit of God, descending like a dove and landing on him, and a voice out of the heavens said, 'This is my Son, whom I love. I am well pleased with him'"* (Matthew 3:16,17). God voiced his approval on his Son's work. With all three persons of God present at his baptism, Jesus begins his earthly ministry with complete backing of our God. One of Jesus followers would later describe what happened to Jesus that day: *God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went around doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the Devil, because God was with him* (Acts 10:38). Anointed by the Spirit of God, Jesus set out to complete God's plan to save humanity.

When Jesus was well into his earthly ministry, he returned to his hometown of Nazareth. On the Sabbath Day Jesus went to the synagogue as he normally did on the Sabbath. Word was out about this famous preacher from Nazareth. So they handed him the scroll to read that day. He turned to the part where it reads, *"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed, and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor"* (Luke 4:18,19). Our Lord took those 700 year old words of the prophet Isaiah and brought them to life. He handed the scroll back and sat down. Every eye in the synagogue was fixed on him. Our Lord then offered this brief explanation: *"Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing"* (Luke 4:21) Jesus was telling his listeners, "I'm the one Isaiah is writing about. I've been anointed by the Spirit. I've been sent to preach good news to you poor people." To understand how Jesus was going to do this, we turn our attention to the original prophesy recorded in Isaiah chapter 61. These words will help us see how Jesus would comfort people with his preaching. We'll see what happened when he was anointed by the Spirit.

700 years before Christ began his earthly ministry, God had his prophet Isaiah write the words that Jesus read on a Sabbath in Nazareth. *The Spirit of the LORD God is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the afflicted.* Since Jesus is

the One anointed by the Spirit and set out to preach, let's consider to whom he was sent to preach. In his famous Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, "*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted*" (Matthew 5:3,4). Jesus wasn't sent to preach only to people on the lowest level of income. He came to preach to the poor in spirit. The poor in spirit are those people who have felt the rod of God's law. They mourn because they have taken God serious when he set his standard — "Be holy as I am holy." They are brokenhearted because they realize that "*whoever keeps the whole law and stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it*" (James 2:10). They are held captive because they know full well that "*There is no one righteous, not even one*" (Romans 3:10). They are prisoners who know God owes them death for their sin (Romans 6:23). They see God's day of vengeance is coming their way. How can they escape? They have sinned. They have brought God's wrath on themselves. They are going to die for their sin. They are the poor to whom God anointed Jesus to preach.

But Jesus didn't come just to preach doom and gloom to them. Instead Isaiah tells us "*He was sent...to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release for those who are bound, to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor and the day of vengeance for our God, to comfort all who mourn, to provide for those who mourn in Zion.*" Before Jesus began his earthly ministry, John the Baptist prepared people's hearts with his message of repentance. For those who took John's words seriously, for those who mourned and grieved over their sin, Jesus' preaching brought tremendous comfort. His lessons bandaged broken hearts. His words rang out with freedom. His message was filled with God's grace. Whether he was speaking in a synagogue, proclaiming on a street corner, or teaching from a boat. Whether he surrounded by thousands on a hillside or with just a few in a single room, Jesus' preaching brought comfort.

He told everyone how he had come to rescue humanity. No longer did they need to ponder their many failures at living daily for their God. Jesus would live life perfectly for them all. No longer did they have to dread God punishing them. Jesus would take the guilt for every sin and suffer God's punishment for them on a cross. When Jesus preached forgiveness, he'd remind them of God's promise to remember their sins no more. As far as East is from West, their sins are gone forever. His preaching released them of the tremendous guilt that weighed them down. Those who rejected his words were only left with God's vengeance. But those who did believe, to those who hung on every word with Spirit-filled faith in their hearts, Jesus words brought life. As Isaiah writes, his good news preaching brought *a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, a cloak of praise instead of a faint spirit*. Instead of grief, he gave them reason to rejoice. In place of sorrow, he has drenched them in the oil of gladness. He has replaced fainting spirits with festive garments.

Isaiah tells us the result of his preaching: *they will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the LORD to display his beauty.* Our last two days in Florida the weather was a bit cool. Floridians were bundling up when the high temperature only reached the low 50s. The lady on the radio complained about being in a “deep freeze.” When the weather is in a deep freeze we’re concerned about keeping our children safe, keeping the animals on the farm alive, even about getting the car started. But we don’t concern ourselves with the trees. They spend the entire winter exposed to the elements. But in just a couple months they will be green and growing and full of life. That’s the picture Isaiah uses to show what happens to those who take Jesus preaching to heart. Nothing can move them. They are firmly planted in God’s grace. They remain fresh and strong and happy for the salvation that is theirs in Christ. The Psalmist writes: *How blest is the man who delights in the teaching of the Lord, and on his teaching he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season, and its leaves do not wither. Everything he does prospers (1:1-3).* Anointed by the Spirit, Jesus’ preaching brings great comfort.

We can only imagine what it must have been like to sit in a synagogue, or in a house, or on a hillside and listen to Jesus preach. But we never have to wonder what he said His sermons, his lessons, his words are recorded for us on the pages of holy Scripture. But can words written in a book bring us as much comfort? Wouldn’t it mean more to hear Jesus preach from an offshore boat or in the temple courts? Take time each day to read God’s Word. It will fill you comfort especially when sin leaves you feeling empty inside. You’ll find God’s law there. It will convict you of sin leaving you grieving and mourning for your impoverished soul. But keep reading. You’ll find comfort in Jesus. He’ll show you that you don’t have to move a muscle to get close to God. Jesus will show you love. Love led our God to send his Son into our world. Love led Jesus to a cross where Jesus suffered and died. You no longer need to feel guilty. Jesus took the guilt for every sin. They’re forgiven forever. How far is east from west? How deep is the ocean? The Micah tells us God has hurled all our iniquities into the depths (Micah 7:19). Your sins are gone. They are forgiven. Your Savior has paid for them all by giving up his life for you. You need proof. His grave is empty. Death could not hold him. His Father is satisfied. He was put to death because of our sin. He was raised to life because we are justified (Romans 4:25). Before our God we are spotless. There is now no condemnation left for us in Christ (Romans 8:1).

Dear friends, I pray you never tire of hearing Jesus preach. His words bring healing. His words bring freedom. They bring life. They bring you favor from God. They leave you firmly planted in righteousness. Do you feel poor in spirit? Listen to Jesus. He comes to you not to condemn, but to save you. He comes to you with good news for you to hear. He comes anointed by the Spirit.