Isaiah 61:1-3 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, 2to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor and the day of vengeance for our God, to comfort all who mourn, 3to 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.

It is so interesting to read a modern commentary of this particular verse, especially if that modern commentary has been written by a liberal Christian or if it has been written by a Jewish scholar. It is interesting to read because they go out of their way, they take great steps to make sure you understand this text is nothing more than one that speaks to the issue of the Babylonian Captivity and God’s promises that the Jewish people would be returned to their land and faith. Now don’t get me wrong, that is a legitimate understanding of these words, but it is not and cannot be the only understanding.

Do you know why I say that? I say that because of what is found in the Gospel of Luke in the New Testament. Listen to the words of the Luke 4:16-21. **“He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. As was his custom, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day and stood up to read. The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it is written: The spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has 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. 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 to tell them, ‘Today, this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.’”**

That Isaiah saw something greater than just a partial fulfillment of his words is made clear. It is made clear by Jesus. Jesus says that these words are about him, that he is the one who fulfills and carries out this 700 plus year old prophecy. That’s what Jesus said and claimed! Now what you have to do is wrestle with “is Jesus right?”

From my point of view there is no question that Jesus is right. When we take a look at the history of Jesus it is clear he is unique and special. I mean, just consider all the things that surrounded his birth that happened. Or consider later on, his ministry and the miracles, the 1,000’s of undisputed miracles that Jesus did before the people. Clearly something unique and special was happening. But the biggest reason is what happened on that Sunday morning we call Easter. That was the morning Jesus rose from the dead. Friday he had suffered, was crucified and buried like a common criminal and then Sunday morning he rose from the dead, exactly what God’s Word said would happen. The importance of that is pointed out to us by Paul in his book to the Romans. Paul, writing under inspiration of the Holy Spirit says: **“This gospel is about his Son—who in the flesh was born a descendant of David, who in the spirit of holiness was declared to be God’s powerful Son by his resurrection from the dead—Jesus Christ our Lord.”**

Really, here is the only question you need to ask. Is Jesus the Son of God and the Savior of the world? If your answer is “No” then you will reject Jesus’ claim that Isaiah was about him, you will reject his resurrection and eternal life, yes, you will reject Jesus as God’s Son and our Savior. What you are left with is nothing. You have nothing. You have no Savior, no God, no revelation of salvation, no eternal life, and no knowledge of God on any level. When your answer is “Yes” then Jesus is all that he claimed, all that is proclaimed and all that is exclaimed about him in the Bible. Jesus is the Son of God, the Lord, the Savior from sin and the complete and perfect Judge of all. So if Jesus says these words are about him, then they are! God says so! Pretty simple, isn’t it?

Let’s you and I look at these words and see just how they pertain to and are fulfilled in Jesus. Our theme will be: **JESUS, CAUSE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.**

So what does Isaiah reveal about the Savior to come and does Jesus fit these words? Let’s look at sections. It starts, **“The spirit of the Lord God is upon me.”** Let’s see, did Jesus display God’s Spirit? The twelve year old Jesus said, **“Did you not know that I must be taking care of my Father’s business.”** As Jesus began his ministry, he did so with miracles, wonders, and signs that could only have come from a man filled with God’s Spirit. But consider the next line with this one also: **“because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the afflicted.”** Before Jesus began his ministry, the first thing he did was go and have himself baptized by John the Baptist. It is at that baptism, the anointing of Jesus, that we are told the heavens were opened, the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove landed on him, and the voice of the Father spoke of him. Taking all that into consideration, yep, these words are about Jesus.

And what does Jesus come to do. We will take a longer section here and wrestle with what it says. **“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, 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, 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.”**

These words are filled with such marvel. If you are only going to consider them in a physical and worldly way, they will lack but if you grasp that these are words speaking of our spiritual hope and comfort then you will see their true marvel and see how they fit Jesus. Now clearly Jesus was a preacher. He was a preacher of both Law and Gospel. He preached that he came to fulfill the law with its condemnation of sin and he preached that his work would be the good news, the Gospel of eternal life and salvation. So, those afflicted with sin, those brokenhearted, who think there is no hope for being with God, those who are captive and bound by fear and sin, there is good news. The good news is Jesus and that he came to declare the year of the Lord’s favor, God’s grace was before the people in the very presence of Jesus. Because of Jesus things would be different. God would be the judge over all. But for those who mourn, who are saddened by this valley of the shadow of death, they would find in Jesus beauty, joy and praise galore.

I especially like those last lines: **“so that they will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord to display his beauty.”** The oak is a tree that really is such a beautiful part of God’s creation but most important here is the idea of the size and strength of the oak. Only it is people who are called oaks. More specifically they are called “oaks of righteousness.” Notice it is God who calls them that. Believers in Jesus have the righteousness of Jesus, this sure righteousness big enough to cover everything and strong enough to stand for all eternity. This righteousness will be for the praise and display of God’s beauty, in other words, when you get what is spoken of here, you will break out in praise, glory and honor to God because you see and understand it is his work and accomplishment displayed. Simply put, Jesus is the cause of righteousness.

Now I realize we covered that fast, but here is the bottom line. This is a picture of the salvation and the forgiveness of sins Jesus will bring. It is a picture of a Savior who will do it all, completely, truly and eternally. It is pointing to the salvation that Jesus provides for all. Yes, we are those who mourn, the afflicted, the brokenhearted, and the captives who need release. Jesus did that by his sacrifice on the cross. He died for our sins. He rose again to proclaim without doubt that what He has done and accomplished is sure and certain. We are forgiven our sins. We are given the comfort, hope and wonder of God’s love for our lives. We are a people who have become the children of God and heirs of eternal life simply because of what Jesus has done and accomplished. All of that pictured wonderfully in the words of Isaiah that point to Jesus.

Case in point is the next words. As you listen to these words, I want you to realize that these words are not about Jesus but rather about the church or again about the believers of the church and what Jesus brings them. **“10I will rejoice greatly in the Lord. My soul will celebrate because of my God, for he has clothed me in garments of salvation. With a robe of righteousness he covered me, like a bridegroom who wears a beautiful headdress like a priest, and like a bride who adorns herself with her jewelry.”**

Here is the gospel found in Old Testament words. Why will we be filled with rejoicing in the Lord? Because God has covered us in garments of salvation, yes, the robe of righteousness that is found in Jesus. Just to help you grasp this hear what Romans 3:21-22 says to us. I share this because it is telling us what Jesus has done. **“But now, completely apart from the law, a righteousness from God has been made known. The Law and the Prophets testify to it. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all and over all who believe.”** Or listen to 2 Corinthians 5:21, same lesson. **“God made him who did not know sin, to become sin for us, so that we might come the righteousness of God in him.”** Our faith, our forgiveness and righteousness from God literally shines to the glory of God. In other words, it is clear that Jesus has fulfilled these words for us. He has brought us eternal life and salvation, the righteousness of God because of what He did and accomplished as our Savior.

In that regard I want you to think of the picture of the saints in heaven that is found in Revelation, chapter 6-7. There we are told of the multitude in white robes who are before the throne of God giving thanks and praise for the salvation God has given. Those white robes are really “the robes of righteousness” given to us by Jesus. Rev. 7:14 proclaims, **“These are the ones who are coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.”** In other words, Revelation is declaring exactly what Isaiah had foretold in Jesus. In Christ we are the bridegroom or the bride beautifully dressed and adorned before the Lord. Jesus is the cause of righteousness.

One last section yet. **“For as the earth produces growth, and as a garden cause what has been sown to sprout up, so God the Lord will cause righteousness and praise to sprout up in the presence of all the nations.”**

Years ago I had read an article on seeds and such. It stated that as science analyses seeds, though they can boil any seed down to each minute ingredient found in that seed, science has to admit that they can find nothing, absolutely nothing that indicates that there is any kind of life in that seed. The same with soil. You can analyze soil and boil it down to each nutrient found, and yet there is nothing is soil, as far as we can see, that causes life, or if you would, that causes any plant to grow. Yet when seed and soil are combined, up sprouts the plant. You can say, “Oh, that’s just nature,” but people, it is the wonder and marvel of God! God causes that life and growth to happen.

The same for us. God causes righteousness and praise to sprout up. God sends forth the message of Jesus, Savior from sin, deliverer from affliction, brokenheartedness, captivity and mourning. The message that God in Jesus has granted forgiveness and eternal life just because of Jesus, because Jesus grants us his righteousness simply by faith, that is a most remarkable and awesome thing. That is exactly what God calls upon his church to do. To proclaim the righteousness of Jesus and in that to cause the praise of God throughout the world. The church is to sow the seed of righteousness found in Jesus and somehow, as God desires that seed grows to the glory and honor of his name. Such is the wonder and marvel of God.

Thank you Jesus for helping us to grasp the wonder and total joy found in these words of Isaiah. How blessed we are that even today, we hear how Jesus has fulfilled these words to our eternal life. Amen.