Isaiah 61:1-3 The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion—to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendor.

You heard it. You heard it in the Old and in the New Testament readings. You heard the history, the applied history of this text and if you remember, I actually mentioned this text and gave you its application last week in our sermon. So let’s just go back and review what we said last week.

Last week as we spoke of chapter 62 our first question was, “Who is speaking?” And then I took you through this history of the texts before us. In chapter 60 we heard God introduce the Light that was coming, the light that would shine in the world and bring glory and honor to the Lord. That Light was a promise of the Messiah, yes, of Jesus and what Jesus would do and be. And do you remember how I told you the whole of chapter 60 was then all about the Messiah and what He would do. Then comes chapter 61. Chapter 61 starts with very startling words, words that startle because all of a sudden you realize the text is in the first person.

It was then that I directed your attention to the history of Jesus. Today we had the advantage of hearing the Gospel lesson from Luke 4 that related the incident in the town of Nazareth. In his early ministry, Jesus went back to visit Nazareth where he grew up. Already Jesus has been recognized as an up and coming Rabbi, already Jesus is known for the miracles that he is doing. So when He, as was his custom, goes to the Synagogue to worship on the Sabbath, Jesus, as a kind of celebrity is asked to speak. He is then handed the scroll of the prophet Isaiah. Jesus finds Isaiah chapter 61 and reads the first two verses or so. And then he does something that puts everyone on edge. He says, **“Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”**

In other words, Jesus tells them this section of scripture is about Him! Think about this. Everyone, well those who knew their scripture, knew this chapter of Isaiah was a prophetic utterance about the Messiah, with the Messiah himself speaking. For Jesus to claim this was about him meant that he was claiming to be the Messiah, the Christ of God. Next week you will hear the conclusion of this history of Jesus. Initially the people are excited and very approving of the gracious words that Jesus speaks, yeah, they liked his preaching. But then they began to think about what they thought they knew about Jesus. They began to question where Jesus got this wisdom and knowledge from. After all, he was just Joseph’s son right? Jesus, knowing their hearts were closed told them so and they got upset. They were going to take him to the local cliff and throw him off! Well I think the reaction of the people of Nazareth exactly what the world does with Jesus. They just get mad and upset with him, even though his words are gracious. They don’t bother to take to heart the lesson, but rather quickly and sadly throw Jesus from their hearts.

So what could Jesus have said about this text? I find that a wonderful thing to contemplate. His words were called gracious. Let’s you and I look at this text and find the grace and wonder Jesus would have shared. Our theme will be: **THE ANOINTED ONE. 1st. A Preacher. 2nd. A Healer. 3rd. A Bestower.**

To begin, recognize that this text is about the Anointed One, the Messiah who would come to carry out the work of the Lord. If you pay attention it is rather clear this work of the Lord is the work of taking care of people, specifically it is taking care of the spiritual needs of the people although we do need to understand that when Jesus returns again we will also be physically blessed with the gift of eternal life in heaven. So make sure you grasp that it is the Anointed One we are speaking of, the Anointed One who has on him the Spirit of the Lord. That Spirit of the Lord moves the anointed one to preach, to heal and to grant or bestow blessings on the people. So let’s look at what those things are.

The first thing we consider is that the Anointed One is a preacher. We can see that foretold in our text when it says, **“Because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news…to proclaim freedom, release, and the year of the Lord’s favor…to comfort.”** That’s quite a list of things to do and say, but if you grasp what is going to be taught you would then realize that yes, that is exactly what the Messiah did bring.

The Messiah brought the good news. In the Greek language that phrase “good news” is literally the word for “gospel.” The Messiah is going to bring the gospel, but even better the Messiah is going to be the Gospel, the good news of God for all the world. And isn’t that true? Jesus came to live the life we could not in order to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Jesus in total love for us, for joy, endured the cross in order to pay for our sins. Then Jesus rose from the dead to let us clearly know that what He had done was complete and sure. We have the forgiveness of sins and eternal life in Jesus. We have the assurance of God, that because of his love and His Son’s redemptive work we are saved. That means we have the gift of eternal life forever. We are counted God’s children and heirs of His Kingdom, not because of our works but because of this good news. The Savior has come and the Savior will make sure through his apostles and evangelists that we know this good news, we know that salvation and God’s grace are ours! Yep, that what Jesus came to do and to share with us.

From there everything else follows. We have freedom. Freedom from sin, guilt and worry. Freedom to live to the glory and wonder of God, not to earn anything but because Jesus has given us everything. We have been released from the power of Satan, sin and death. I especially like that this verse says, **“release from darkness.”** Darkness is what is of sin and evil. It no longer controls us and smothers us with its horrors and fears. Why at just the name of Jesus the powers and forces of darkness must flee from our lives. Such is the wonder of Jesus. And as if that weren’t enough, Jesus tells us of **“the Year of the Lord’s favor.”** That is a phrase that speaks of the time of the Kingdom of Grace, that time what we have in this life to learn of Jesus and His precious gift of life and love. You could probably translate that phrase as “the time of the Lord’s grace!” Dear people, that’s what we have in Jesus. And the comfort, well, if you don’t grasp the comfort of everything I just said, you really are missing something.

Let’s go on. We spoke of the Messiah as a healer. Just listen to the phrases found: **“bind up the brokenhearted, to comfort those who mourn, provide for those who grieve.”** Really those words are only a partial picture of the wonder of the Messiah. Think of what Jesus did on a physical level while he walked this earth. Think of the vast array of miracles and wonders he did that brought people healing and relief from their trials. But more important, think of the spiritual way in which Jesus has brought healing and relief to the souls of the world.

Just because of Jesus and what he has done, our troubled hearts can find peace and know the balm of God’s grace and love. Because of Jesus we have a whole different viewpoint. We don’t grieve like men who have no hope, rather we put our trust and confidence in the resurrection and promises of eternal life in Jesus. During my ministry, because of the wonderful and gracious message of Jesus I can tell you of hearts healed, captives made free, and prisoners of darkness released. I can tell you about going to funerals where the loss of a loved one was not so much mourned but rather the joy of the victory of Jesus for that person was what was on hearts and minds. There is no doubt that Jesus is a healer, first and foremost of the soul, but finally and eternally even of our physical struggles and problems.

Now again, if this is all that Jesus has done, it would be more than enough, but nope, there is still one more thing to be spoken of. To me it is the most important. I spoke of it as “Jesus is our bestower.” What that means is that Jesus is the source, the power behind everything we have and are. Again listen to our text to capture some of the flavor of this wonder. **“To bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of a mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendor.”**

Did you notice how upbeat and absolutely positive all of those things are? Just think of someone you know who was in a period of dejection and despair, filled with sorrow and it is clear they had been doing a lot of crying. Not ever a pretty picture is it? Yet because of Jesus we are told that those things will be changed. Not down in the dumps blues but rather a crown of beauty. Not the red eyes of crying but rather a shining face full of smiles and laughter. Not the cringing and despondence of gloom but the perfect and uplifting garb of thanks and praise for the blessings of the Savior. This is what Jesus has done and is doing for us. Yes, I will admit it is true that this world can be a trial and filled with so many difficulties but I believe, truly believe what we are told in Romans. **“Our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.”** Or what of those words found in 2 Cor. 4! Start with verse 7 and read to verse 18. Those concluding verses say to us, **“For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.”** That is the picture of Jesus as the bestower. He gives us all we need for life and salvation. And it is always by grace!

So what is wrong with the world or even with the people of Nazareth? This section shows us the wonder of the Savior and what He does for us. They are gracious words. They are uplifting words. They are words of good news, the good news of Jesus our Savior. May you hear them and believe. Amen.