

“Lord God, you have appointed me as a Bishop and Pastor in your Church, but you see how unsuited I am to meet so great and difficult a task. If I had lacked your help, I would have ruined everything long ago. Therefore, I call upon you: I wish to devote my mouth and my heart to you; I shall teach the people. I myself will learn and ponder diligently upon your Word. Use me as your instrument – but do not forsake me, for if ever I should be on my own, I would easily wreck it all.”

“Sir, we would see Jesus.”

Isaiah 61:1-6 (EHV)

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. ⁴Then they will rebuild ancient ruins. They will raise up what was formerly devastated, and they will renew ruined cities, which have been devastated for generations. ⁵Strangers will stand and shepherd your flock, and foreigners will be your farmers and vinedressers. ⁶You will be called the LORD's priests. You will be named ministers of our God. You will eat the wealth of nations, and you will boast about their riches.



A certain church polled the neighborhood, asking door-to-door who believed they were going to heaven. The poll came back with astonishing numbers: 96% of the surrounding community believed they were going to heaven. Great! What a wonderful statistic!

But then the church's outreach committee looked at the reasons why these people believed they were going to heaven. “I'm not THAT bad.” “I have a rewarding life.” “I think I've been pretty good.” “I have seen a lot.” “I have done many interesting things.”

Very few reasons stated or fully credited the gift of heaven with faith alone in Jesus.

If all of that is true, it forced the outreach committee and the whole church to ask, “What then is our mission?” Certainly the other 4% in the neighborhood needed to hear the good news, but it sounded like most of the 96% needed some bad news first: that they weren't so great in the eyes of God. Instead of good news, they needed to hear a word of warning.

Friends, you may be surprised to hear this, but **the Gospel of God isn't for everyone**. I'm not saying that Jesus didn't die for everyone – He did. I'm not saying everyone doesn't need to hear the good news – they do. But I am saying that the Gospel falls on many deaf ears. The Gospel of God doesn't help those who aren't in terror of their own sin. The prophet Isaiah helps us understand if we ask the question:

Who Gets The Good News?

1. The Christ

Kings and priests are normally anointed to a kingdom and priesthood. But this anointed King and Priest, Isaiah says here, is to be anointed by God Himself, not with any earthly olive oil but with the Holy Spirit, who rests upon the Servant of God as He says, “*The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me.*”

And so He preaches the gospel, or good news. He restores sight to the blind. He would heal all manner of sickness. He would preach the acceptable year, the time of grace. "Isaiah 35:4-6"

If we compare the Scripture with Christ's works and Christ's works with the Scripture, it becomes evident that **in Christ we have the right man**. Luke declares that at the time when the disciples of John come to question Him, "*He cured many of diseases and plagues and evil spirits, and on many that were blind He bestowed sight*" (Luke 7:21).

Many look for a different kind of good news. They seek a different hero or a different savior. They put their trust in a friend who always agrees with them; or in a yes-man who affirms all their decisions, right or wrong; or in a counselor who makes them feel like problems here are all in their head.

Instead God gives us a Christ who saves from real things. When Christ fulfilled this message, He walked the world and made them wonder at His signs and miracles. When we pray to the Father in Christ, and there's healing, we credit Jesus with that healing power. When we realize we haven't done good, the Christ binds it up with righteousness that is by faith from first to last.

2. The broken-hearted

What does Isaiah mean when he says, "to the afflicted," to the broken-hearted," "to the captives," and "to the bound"? Isn't the good news also proclaimed to the rich, the whole, and to all the world?

Here we must know what the Gospel is, or we cannot understand this passage. We must diligently observe that from the beginning God has sent two words or forms of proclamation to the world – the Law and Gospel. These two forms of proclamation we must recognize and separate.

Lists passages.

Think about a prison filled with criminals. You might guess that, while a certain percentage of criminals have been wrongly criminalized, and some of them have been rehabilitated, many of the criminals in the prison are guilty of the crime. But when we visited a prison when I was in seminary, the running joke among the inmates, they told us, was that all the inmates were innocent. It's part sarcasm, part of getting through prison. Everyone talks as if everyone else is innocent.

In truth, it is the same for sinners. Many sinners, even some who call themselves Christian, act as if bad things happen to us, but we really aren't all that responsible. In reality, we suffer the consequences of sin because we are sinners. If we wish to downplay that fact, if we pretend we haven't been all that bad, then the good news really isn't for us. If we aren't broken down and in need of repair, what good can Jesus be for us?

- **"If you see yourself as a little sinner, you will inevitably see Jesus as a little savior,"** said Martin Luther.
- Jesus tells us, "*Blessed is he who does not fall away on account of Me,*" in other words, "*Blessed is he who takes no offense at me*" (Matt. 11:6).

How can the Gospel be regarded as important? How can it be treated as a great blessing when they are angry about it and hostile to it?

For those who know their hurts and desire healing, there is the Christ.

In that moment when we acknowledge our sin before God and confess our sins, the very next thing God wants us to hear is forgiveness. The very next thing God wants us to know is absolution. God does not want us to hear more law, more threats, or more burdens in that moment. Instead, God intends His Anointed One to bind up the broken-hearted.

If you haven't found heaven in God's Word, then you haven't found heaven. When God opens his mouth, he says everything we need to hear:

1. binding broken hearts, proclaim freedom for captives, and opening up of blind eyes
2. a **crown of beauty** instead of ashes
3. **the oil of gladness** instead of mourning
4. a **garment of praise** instead of a spirit of despair
5. His perfection instead of our imperfection
6. His love instead of our hate
7. His strength instead of our weakness
8. His cross instead of our death
9. His heaven instead of sin's punishment
10. God's Gospel instead of God's Law

I thought about the church's community again.

1. What if they think they are innocent in the first place?
2. What if they don't know they are in prison?
3. What if they think they are going to heaven but they don't know why?
4. What if they pretend they are bandaged and comforted and free

They are really in grave danger. They need the Law. But as soon as they feel the terror of their sins, the Gospel is for them, too; just as it is for me and you.

Amen.