

C Narrative 14
Advent 3
December 11, 2016
Poulsbo
Pastor Alison Shane

Isaiah 61:1-11

Beloved of God, grace to you and peace from God our father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

“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 brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn.”

Do you hear the good news in this?

Think how it would have been heard by the Israelites Isaiah proclaimed these words to. Israel had been in exile in Babylon, but then they had been allowed to go home. So some of them went home, but it wasn’t really the same. Some of them had stayed in Babylon because, truth be told, life was good there, but that left a feeling of incompleteness for those who left. And some of the ones who went back to Israel had been born in Babylon and had no idea what “going home” was supposed to mean. And for those who knew what to expect, those who had been longing to go home, those whose families had carried on the old ways, returning was less than the victorious homecoming they had imagined. The home they had been taken from was inhabited by others. The land was no longer theirs, the nation was no longer a nation, Jerusalem was no longer their city. They were welcome, but they were strangers in their own homeland.

And Isaiah said, “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 brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn.”

Can you hear how that’s good news for Israel? Released from Babylon, God avenging them against their enemies, and the Jubilee year, when all land is returned to its original owner. That was good news for them!

And what about for you? Do you hear in this the good news for you?

Have you known oppression? Have you been brokenhearted? Have you been captive to anything? Prisoner? Have you mourned?

Then Isaiah proclaims this to you: your good news is at hand.

“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 brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn.”

Now while it’s not a good idea to always read Jesus into the Old Testament prophecies, Jesus himself claims this one. In a few weeks, we will hear Jesus stand up in synagogue and read this very passage to the assembly. Then he will say, “Today, this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”

Jesus IS the good news that Isaiah proclaims. God-with-us means hope is here. God walking among us is comfort, is freedom, is healing.

And then Jesus went and DID it, too. His mere presence was the good news, but he also did the good news for the people. He comforted, he healed, he released and freed, he provided.

Jesus is this good news for you. Jesus DID these things to you. He comforted, he healed, he released and freed, he provided for you.

And now Jesus sends you out to bring this good news to all God’s creation. Jesus sends you out to speak these words, to be the prophet. To say, “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 brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the

captives, and release to the prisoners; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn."

The Lord has sent you to proclaim. And, like Jesus, the Lord has sent you to actually DO these things. To lift up the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to liberate to the captives and release the prisoners, to comfort all who mourn. The Lord has sent you to do.

So close your eyes for a moment and picture yourself wherever you are going to be tomorrow. Picture yourself – and imagine what it might mean to those around you tomorrow to hear these words from you: "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 brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn."

Might that be good news to your people tomorrow?

Now picture yourself doing these things for those people you'll see tomorrow; picture yourself lifting up the oppressed...binding the wounds of the brokenhearted...releasing captives from whatever imprisons them...proclaiming God's love and favor...comforting those who mourn.

Now open your eyes and read with me from the back of your bulletin, these first two verses of the text, and emphasize to yourself to word "me."

"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 brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn."

As you go through this week, this is your mission. And in doing this, you will be making Jesus REAL for others. In doing this, you will be giving people an experience of what God-with-us means. You will be showing the God incarnate (in the flesh – your flesh) to the people around you.

Because the spirit of the Lord God is upon you, the Lord has anointed you; he has sent you to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn.

As Christ has done all this for you, in baptism, you are anointed and sent to speak and to work in the love of Christ. Amen