

Ten Looks at Jesus
Isaiah 61:1–9 | 12.31.2017 | Isaiah Christmas

Well, you've made it. . . . Day 365. . . . The last day on the calendar, 2017.

And I suspect . . . many of you have already begun to make plans for 2018 . . .

To be sure, December 31 is a great time to review the last year . . . to go before the Lord and consider the good, the bad, and the ugly.

ATST, with the dawn of a new year . . . we have . . . if the Lord allows . . . a chance to make changes and take steps toward him in 2018.

Yet, for all the goodness and wisdom of year-end reviews . . . there is also a danger.

The danger is that in looking back on YOUR life in 2017 and planning YOUR life in 2018 . . . there is too much YOU in YOUR eyes.

Sure . . . there's a sense in which we can and must discipline our lives for godliness

But God's Word also tells us: **Our hearts are deceitful above all things . . . and desperately wicked.**

And if we're not careful . . . we can in the name of wisdom, planning, improvement . . . actually lose sight of our Lord . . . as we tailor our lives.

For that reason, Robert Murray McCheyne's words still ring true.

McCheyne was a Scottish pastor who died before he turned 30. Yet in his short life, he lived with such zeal for the Lord . . . that the light of his life still shines today.

Writing to a friend in 1840 . . . he wrote these memorable words.

Learn much of your own heart; and when you have learned all you can, remember you have seen but a few yards into a pit that is unfathomable. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? (Jer. 17:9). Learn much of the Lord Jesus. **For every look at yourself, take ten looks at Christ.**

For every look at yourself, take ten looks at Christ.

This morning . . . as internal ambitions and external forces tell us to make plans for 2018 . . .

We set our eyes on Jesus . . . so that when we do look at our lives . . .

We are set our gaze on him, and see ourselves in his light!

Indeed, there is nothing more important in creation than God himself.

God created us for his glory . . .

And yet . . . we habitually turn our eyes from him . . . to ourselves, our lives, our wants.

So . . . we need the clarifying and captivating Word of God to set us free from ourselves.

And to do that . . . we turn to Isaiah 61 to fix our eyes on Christ.

As you may know . . . we've spent the last two weeks looking at Isaiah.

First, we saw in Isaiah 59 . . . that God promised to rectify personal sin and public injustice by coming into the world himself.

Isaiah 59 tells us that God clothed himself in armor . . . and came to redeem his people.

Indeed, this is what we celebrated in the coming of Jesus Christ – the Divine Warrior who clothed himself in humble righteousness in order to save repentant sinners.

Then last week in **Isaiah 60**, we saw the impact of Christ's birth.

Instead of demolishing the nations and restoring Israel's glory ABOVE the nations, the coming of God's light to Zion . . . meant that the nations came to worship Israel's king.

This was fulfilled in the worship of Christ by the Magi . . . and continues today as the gospel makes disciples of all nations.

Now in **Isaiah 61**, the focus returns to the Spirit-anointed messenger, the one who will come announcing good news to the poor, saving people from their sins.

In fact, as we read in **Luke 4** . . . this was fulfilled when Christ came preaching the gospel of the kingdom to cities of the Galilee.

Jesus read **Isaiah 61:1–2** . . . stopping short of the word of judgment, because in Jesus' first coming . . . he did not come to judge . . . but to comfort and claim his people.

In this way, Jesus used Isaiah 61 to explain his gracious mission.

And he teaches us how to read Isaiah 61 as a reference to him.

Therefore, it is appropriate for us to read these verses in relation to Christ . . . and to set our eyes on him . . . and the good news he has brought.

Indeed, this morning . . . in Isaiah 61 . . . we aim to take ten looks at Jesus, before taking one look at ourselves . . . so that by the end of 2018 . . . we will look more like Christ, and less like our sinful selves.

Ten Looks at Christ

1. Jesus is the Son of God.

I start here not because this truth is seen in the immediate context of Isaiah, but light of the New Testament . . . we can't miss this fundamental reality.

Isaiah 16 is not simply about a spiritual man . . . it is about the God-man, Jesus Christ.

As Jesus applies this passage to himself, he reveals its testimony to the Father, Son, HS

That is to say . . . God the Father anointed the Son with the Holy Spirit, thus all that Jesus did in his ministry was in obedience to the Father and in the power of the Spirit.

To be sure . . . this passage doesn't declare Jesus to be God. But in concert with other passages that do, this passage attests to God as trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Thus, when we read it, we learn how God the Father anointed Jesus with the Spirit . . .

In this . . . we have good reason to believe this happened at Jesus baptism . . . where the Spirit descended upon Jesus and the Father said, quoting from Psalm 2 and Isaiah 42: **“This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased.”**

In college . . . I had a professor who told me this baptism is where man became God.

He believed in the heresy called **adoptionism** ... where God adopted Jesus to be his Son

Now . . . to be sure . . . this baptismal event is curious. What does it mean that Jesus who received the Spirit?

Well, the answer is that the Father is **anointing** Jesus with his Spirit for ministry.

Just like the kings and priests of the OT received an anointing for their service, now Jesus is anointed by the Spirit to perform his ministry.

Importantly, Luke's Gospel places the baptism at the beginning of Jesus ministry, where Jesus of Nazareth is identified as God's beloved Son . . . sent to bring good news.

Only then . . . does Luke record how the Spirit led Jesus into the desert to be tempted by the devil . . . who questioned his identity as God's Son.

And when he returned in the power of the Spirit, Luke tells of the synagogue experience, where Jesus read **Isaiah 61** . . . and said this is fulfilled in your midst.

So who is Jesus?

Eternally, he is God the Son. And in his Incarnation, he is the Son of God . . . the one anointed by the Father with the Spirit . . . which means the Son of God is also the anointed One.

2. Jesus is the Anointed One of God . . . which is to say . . . he is God's Messiah.

In the OT anointed is the word *mashah* . . . and it is where we get the word **Messiah**.

In some sense . . . every priest was a messiah, because every priest was anointed. Likewise, every king was an anointed figure. Even some prophets were anointed.

So throughout the OT . . . there were lots of anointed ones . . . which means this passage would not have immediately brought to mind the Divine Son, as we know it.

In fact, in Isaiah . . . there are three figures who are said to be anointed with the Spirit.

In Isaiah 11 . . . a future king is presented. Verses 1 and 2 read,

There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.
And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.

Then in Isaiah 42 . . . the Servant of the Lord is said to have the Spirit.

Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights;
I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations.

This passage is one of two that the Father applied to the Son at his baptism.

Then Isaiah 61:1 picks up the same . . . saying of the messenger of God: "**The Spirit of the LORD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me.**"

Now . . . it's possible that in Isaiah's prophecy these are three different figures . . . and that Isaiah and his first audience . . . saw them as distinct Spirit-anointed mediators.

But in the fullness of time, they clearly all refer to Jesus. He is the substance, these figures in Isaiah are the shadows.

And like shadows often do . . . they give the shape but not the full picture.

The substance is always greater than the shadow.

Christ is the full substance. He is the anointed one of God.

He is the Spirit-empowered Son of David . . . the long-promised king.

He is the Spirit-led suffering servant who will die in the place of his people.

AND He is the Spirit-anointed messenger . . . who proclaimed good news on earth . . . and is himself the good news of which Isaiah spoke.

3. Jesus is the Message and Messenger of Good News

After v. 1 explains where the Spirit came from . . .

It gives the first purpose clause . . . **“to bring good news to the poor.”**

This is the first in a series of infinitives . . . that explain what Jesus will come to do.

And in v. 1, **“bringing good news to the poor”** is emphatic. We know this because of its placement and its verbal form.

Whereas the other infinitives are general in their verbal form, “to bring good news” is in emphatic.

To say it differently, “bringing good news” is the big idea . . . it encapsulates binding up the brokenhearted . . . proclaiming liberty to captive . . . proclaiming the year of the Lord.

This is the good news which Jesus brought when he came . . . and which centers on his own person and work.

As we will see . . . the later infinitives that follow are NOT something the gospel has YET granted . . .

Yes . . . there is comfort in the gospel . . . ABSOLUTELY !!! . . . but the kind of comfort promised in verse 2 and 3 goes beyond our present experience.

What is promised NOW . . . is the person and work of Jesus Christ.

He is the good news . . . He is more than just another messenger, he’s the message.

And knowing him is what binds our hearts . . . frees us from sin . . . makes us glad.

Which is what verses 1 and 2 go on to say . . .

4. Jesus Binds Up the Brokenhearted

At the end of v. 1 . . . Isaiah say . . . God has sent his Son to bind up the brokenhearted.

Notice the internal promise found here.

Whereas opening the prison to those who are bound is an external reality, this is internal.

Indeed, Jesus is far more than an effective activist. He knows how to heal the heart.

Q: As you look back at 2017 . . . does your heart need healing?

Friend, Jesus knows how to heal!

He is the Balm in Gilead,
the Wonderful Counselor,
the friend that sticks closer than a brother,
the sympathetic high priest.

There is no pain he doesn't understand, no sorrow he cannot comfort.

He is the one who lifts up the downcast . . . and strengthens the weary.

And especially . . . those who are weary with sin . . . he comes to bring relief!

But know this . . . as a messenger of the gospel . . . **he comforts with his Word.**

If you want to know the healing power of his presence, it will come in his word.

This is the fifth look at Christ.

5. Jesus Sets Captives Free . . . by his Word

Don't miss this . . . the good news sets captives free . . . but the key again . . . is the Word

The promise of liberty . . . the opening of the prison for those who are bound is a Word.

Jesus was sent to **proclaim** liberty to captives . . . to **proclaim** the opening of the prison . . . to **proclaim** the year of the Lord's favor.

When Luke 4 quotes Isaiah 61, the first word "bring" is change to the word "preach the gospel" – **euangelizō**.

This is what Jesus did in his earthly life . . . he walked around the Galilee proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom . . . leading people to believe in him.

Yes, he healed the sick and raised the dead.

But all of this . . . was to confirm the message of the Gospel.

And what does that message say: **Believe on Christ and you will be saved from sin.**

Indeed, this is what the year of the Lord's favor means.

For those in Jerusalem familiar with Leviticus . . . this would call attention to the Jubilee.

For us who are less familiar with Leviticus . . . we have to go and look up Leviticus 25.

And simply put . . . Leviticus 25 teaches Jubilee was the once in a lifetime event where all the slaves in Israel were set free.

So . . . when Jesus came making this announcement to the people of Galilee, they heard him as saying the LORD had sent him to free them from the captivity of the Romans.

However, Jesus came to announce a deeper captivity . . . a slavery to sin that ensnares all people, in all nations, and in all conditions.

Thus . . . the message of the gospel at its core . . . deals with the sin that separates us from God . . . that divides us from one another . . . and that enslaves us the creation.

Again . . . when you look ahead into 2018 . . .

Are you walking in liberty . . . or are you enslaved to a relationship, a substance, a hobby, a job, something else? If any of these things are your saviors . . . **Jesus offers freedom!**

Jesus promises freedom. So cry out to him. You can't save yourself, but he can save you

Do not fear his reproach. He has come to bring the year of the **Lord's favor.**

He has not come to destroy you . . . he's come to free you from sin and to bring you into the life of the Lord.

Remember . . . in Luke 4 . . . this word of favor is where Jesus left off.

He did not go on to say anything about the day of vengeance, which teaches us something else about Jesus.

6. Jesus is the Already and the Not Yet

When Jesus came . . . he did not bring God's wrath.

He came to experience God's wrath!

In this way . . . Jesus is the already savior . . . and the not yet ruler of heaven and earth.

Put more precisely . . . before his resurrection . . . Jesus was the Son of God who came to proclaim a message of salvation.

Today . . . all authority has been given to him. Heaven and earth are his . . . only now he has sent his gospel through his Spirit and his church . . . to save sinners.

In this way . . . his kingdom has come. We are a people who bow the knee to king Jesus. We gather in his name, and his Spirit dwells in our midst. In this way, his kingdom is here.

ATST, his kingdom is NOT yet here. His rule is not everywhere seen. God's people still mourn . . . wicked men still rule.

Therefore, we learn that what flows together in Isaiah 61 . . . is separated by centuries.

Today is the day of salvation . . . where God offers you a way of redemption.

But a day is coming soon . . . when Christ will return and when he does . . . vengeance will replace judgement.

And when that happens . . .

7. Jesus Will Wipe Out the Wicked . . . this is the seventh look at Jesus.

Because of his perfect obedience to God, Jesus has earned the right to judge the living and the dead . . . and when he returns,

He will remove all sin and unrepentant sinners from the earth.

This is what Isaiah means when he says . . . **he will proclaim the day of vengeance**

When he returns, the sword of his mouth will destroy all those who have refused to worship him.

Thankfully, today is a day of salvation, not judgment . . . but make no mistake, this future reality is just as real . . . as today's offer of salvation.

Isaiah 61 lists one other thing that will happen when Christ returns . . .

8. Jesus Will Comfort Those who Mourn in Zion

Look at what **verse 3** says . . . READ

What a sobering and comforting promise this is . . .

It is **sobering** . . . because even after Christ work on Calvary brings nations to Zion . . . God's new covenant people still mourn.

This is one of those verses that exposes the prosperity gospel as a lie . . .

In the NT . . . material blessing is not always a present reality . . . but it is a future reality.

And that's the promise of verse 3 – **those who mourn in faith . . . will be comforted.**

Those who abide in Zion by the Spirit. . . will experience God's blessing.

Friends, these are the first two beatitudes:

**Blessed are the poor in Spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.**

And here that beatitude is given concrete imagery . . .

For those who mourn in sack cloth and ashes (a customary way for Jews to express sorrow) . . . they will be given a beautiful crown.

For those who mourn . . . they will receive the oil of gladness – a symbol of joy.

For those who are faint . . . they will receive garments of praise.

And the reason for this is . . .

That those who the Lord has planted . . . will become oaks of righteousness.

Just like large trees grow tall and strong through heavy winds and dangerous storms . . .

. . . So the people of God's planting will be strengthened through adversity.

. . . The same events that produce mourning now . . . are preparing God's children for the everlasting kingdom.

At present . . . we haven't seen that kingdom.

But make no mistake . . . the same Christ who comforts us with his Spirit, is preparing us for the kingdom he will bring when he returns.

In this way, we have full assurance of comfort ahead.
Indeed, Isaiah 61 is like one of those large green signs on the highway . . .

It says . . . Calvary 800 miles . . . and Glory 8,000 miles.

From the 8th Cent. BC . . . Isaiah prophesied the coming of Christ 800 years later.

But it also tells us of the rugged cross we must carry on our way to glory!

And thus . . . since Pentecost . . . Christ has been creating a church . . . calling his followers to suffer now . . . with the hope of eternal glory ahead.

The truth is . . . everyone in this fallen world will suffer.

The only question is whether you have Christ as your comforter . . . or not.

For those in Christ . . . you have his Holy Spirit as a comforter here and now.

. . . And even more . . . you have the certainty that he will comfort you in glory!

Every tear you shed . . . he keeps and collects in a bottle.

Every loss you grieve . . . he will recover.

There is nothing you suffer . . . that he ignores or forgets!

By contrast . . . if Christ is foreign to you . . . you have misery now . . . more misery later.

Oh friend . . . it doesn't have to be that way. Look to Christ and find comfort in him!

Stop living for your glory here and now . . . rather, live for his glory by trusting in him.

/// Indeed . . . this is our last look.

9. Jesus is glorious . . . AND 10. He leads his people into glory.

Verse 3 finishes with this simple but sublime purpose . . . **That he may be glorified.**

Why did Christ come to earth? Why did he go to the cross? Why was he raised?

So that he would be glorified . . .

AND . . . so that you who trust in him will share in the glory he is bringing to earth.

God's glory is the animating motivation of all that God does –

God is radically and wonderfully committed to his glory . . . and ultimately every good gift he gives comes from the stream of his glory.

And here . . . in v. 3 we see . . . **That God is glorified through the work of his Son.**

But amazingly, we also see . . . **That he shares this glory, by clothing us with his glory.**

If you keep reading in chapters 61–66 . . . you will see this over and over

Those who love the glory of God . . . will begin to reflect the glory of God.

Now . . . we don't share in God's DIVINE glory . . . we don't become little gods.

But in beholding the glory of the Son, we will be changed from one degree of human glory to another. . .

And so . . . this is why we fix our eyes on him . . .

B/C in beholding him, we will become like him

And in taking ten looks at him, we are ready to look at ourselves IN HIM.

In fact, . . . we don't even have to look away from Christ to look at ourselves.

Rather . . . as we look to him . . . we should see ourselves in him – in his light, his love . . . his sacrifice for our sin . . . his reign in our lives.

This is what it means to be a baptized believer in Jesus Christ – our past, present, and future are all found in him.

Our past sins . . . are covered by his blood.

Our present pains . . . are comforted by his Spirit.

Our future plans . . . are secured by his rule.

In this way . . . we can experience daily grace and peace in Christ.

Do you know this Christ?

Does this Christ know you?

This is what Isaiah 61 promises to us . . . God sent his Son into the world, so that we who were born as God's enemies . . . might come to know God through Christ.

There is no better way to spend your life . . . than in knowing him, making him known

But to do that . . . we must keep our eyes fixed on Christ . . . and see ourselves in him.

As 2017 closes and 2018 begins. . . Christ is our hope . . . and the one we must continue to look to . . . for only in him . . . can we find eternal life . . . and daily grace.

May God give us such grace in the new year!