

THE YEAR OF THE LORD'S FAVOR

Scripture: Isaiah 61:1-4

November 29, 2020

Message: **The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to proclaim 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, and to comfort all who mourn...**

Isaiah 61:1-2

As the Civil War was coming to an end, Abraham Lincoln challenged a broken and divided nation ... "With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation's wounds." With today's divisions, loss of civility, and seeming rise in hatred, we can relate to Lincoln's call. We live in a broken world where we often feel trapped. Guilt, depression, financial burdens, fear, bitterness, loneliness, grief, racism, addiction ... there are so many prisons we find ourselves trapped within. Darkness may seem to engulf us. And yet ...

The prophet Isaiah foretells of a messiah, Jesus, who will bind up the brokenhearted (v. 1), proclaim freedom for those held captive (v. 1), and comfort all who mourn (v. 2).

As we prepare our hearts during this Advent season, the voice of a Savior and Redeemer calls out to us. Jesus has broken the chains that bind us. He has conquered sin and overcome for us what we could not overcome on our own. He not only came into some past age, but continues to come into our hearts right here, right now – proclaiming freedom from whatever holds us captive. Jesus binds up the broken parts of our hearts, replacing that hurt with peace, joy, and love beyond our comprehension. "A broken and contrite heart the Lord will not despise." (Psalm 51:17). Jesus heals our broken lives. The presence of the Holy Spirit enables us not only to be comforted but empowers us to bring comfort to others in a hurting world. Just as the birth of the Savior brought light to a dark world, Christ born in our hearts causes a rebirth of our own broken hearts. We are raised from darkness and bathed in the light of a never-ending and never-failing love that brings healing to our lives and transforms us into light-bearers within the world. We experience the Lord's favor both here and now and for all eternity! Praise the Lord!

Prayer: Our Heavenly Father, thank you for healing our broken hearts, freeing us from the chains that bind us, and showering us with your favor. Give us grace to comfort those who mourn, to bind up brokenhearted, and to grow into mighty oaks of righteousness so we can lead others into experiencing your light and love in their lives. Amen.

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