

This will be our last week memorizing the “**Commission**” of Jesus in Isaiah 61. I have heard from several that this section has been a bit more challenging as far as the flow of the wording and such. I want to share with you that I totally understand! This morning I was celebrating as I successfully said this whole section and here is the reason why. In years past, I have had many opportunities to memorize this passage: when I was teaching Bible in a Christian school, during a Bible study that focused on this passage etc. While I did memorize it for the most part, I must admit that I never got it down as distinctly as I like to. I struggled to get the wording right. And yet, I love this passage, it is so rich with meaning for us.

I thought about something this morning. Perhaps it isn't the wording. Perhaps the message is the real challenge for us. We can't really take in all the Jesus wants to do in our lives, all the reasons that He was sent. Our conditional minds cannot imagine why He would be willing to do this supernatural work in us and yet He does. It is a challenge and blessing. All I know is I am glad I now have it hidden in my heart and I pray God will remind me continually of all that He is doing in me as He reminds me of the Truth found in Isaiah 61:1-3

Isaiah 61:3

All three of these verses are one thought. It is Jesus expressing why He will come. So... verse 3 continues the thought line of verse 2. As we finished looking at verse 2 we saw one of the things Jesus desired to do was to comfort the mourning. I am so thankful He wants to do that. I have many things I mourn in my life, but Jesus comforts me when I find myself in that place of mourning. Verse 3 continues that thought.

Have you ever noticed there are two kinds of friends that surface when a tragedy occurs? There are those that send comfort, offer a hug, say a word of encouragement etc. And then there are those that get involved and provide for the needs, that actually walk with you through the grieving. Both have their place as we can only have but so many people at the front and center of our lives, holding our hand as we grieve. If you have ever been through a real time of grieving, both the comforters and the providers are so important.

I love the double expression here presented in verses 2 and 3. Jesus is not only telling us that He will bring comfort to us, offering words of encouragement, giving us a hopeful expression and a sense of love, but in verse three He tells us He will also be a provider for us. He wants to get involved. In other words, He wants to be front and center in your life when you walk through anything that brings a sense of loss. And that can mean anything, big or little. Well I definitely want Him there in my life, and I can give testimony to the times that He has been and I know that He will continue to be there for me comforting and providing. It is His mission.

So what does He provide? This verse goes on to explain and I find myself caught up in the imagery used here. I love the idea of the trade. Have you sung that song in worship that says,

*I'm trading my sorrows
I'm trading my shame
I'm laying them down for the joy of the Lord.
I'm trading my sickness
I'm trading my pain
I'm laying them down for the joy of the Lord.*

Yes Lord, Yes Lord, Yes, Yes, Lord, Amen.

I love that song. Here in verse 3 Jesus offers us the trade. Sin has brought death and destruction into our lives. Jesus tells us that where there are ashes, He wants to bestow on us a crown of beauty. I have been given many gifts that people wanted me to enjoy. There is difference in the word "bestow". This idea conveys a sense of trust. Jesus is entrusting us with the royalty of His life. You and I can look back at all the ashes of poor choices, wrong lifestyle patterns, and just basic sin junk and realize we have no reason that Jesus should entrust us with His life and yet He does. He is letting us know He is coming to make the trade. We are so blessed.

Then He tells us that where we are sad, He will give us the oil of gladness instead of mourning. Here is another trade for us. He will take our sense of loss and anoint us with gladness. He will pour gladness out on us. He will anoint us with gladness and it will spill down into our lives. It will trickle into the dry and sad places of our life and bring joy that many times we can't even explain. He is letting us know He is coming to make the trade. We are so blessed.

And He isn't done yet, He offers one more trade. Many people in the world wear despair as if it were clothing. Everything is viewed in the negative. I believe Jesus looks at that and it grieves Him. He didn't create us for despair, but for praise. He is basically saying to us, "You give me your garments of despair and I will give you a new garment of praise." When we take His offer and put it on, we are free to be thankful, free to see life from His perspective, free to be glad in knowing God and walking out our days in relationship with Him. It is like taking a cheap piece of worn out clothing to the thrift store and being given a diamond studded silk garment. Jesus is letting us know He is coming to make the trade. We are so blessed.

You know I don't know much about trading in the stock market but I do know that the values are always fluctuating. As I memorize and study the passage I find the best trade ever offered and there is no fluctuating. The offer always stands. Why? God created us to display His greatness. As we take Him up on His trade offers, we begin to live in righteousness, in His ways, loving and enjoying His life. And... He takes us and plants us and we grow strong and tall like an oak tree, displaying His glory. I guess that is why His commission statement concludes with:

"They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of His splendor."

As we conclude this section of the commission we must remember that Jesus did what He said He would do. He did come and He has made the offer. Have you taken Him up on it?

Taking the trade,
Sharon Thomas