



e - Votion

Dear Friends,

Today I am reading Isaiah 61:1-4:

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; to provide for those who mourn in Zion--to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit. They will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, to display his glory, They shall build up the ancient ruins, they shall raise up the former devastations; they shall repair the ruined cities, the devastations of many generations.

An **ambassador**
for **Christ:**
Ministry that points
away from **us**
towards the **One**
we strive to represent

Isaiah announces his calling in this passage-- he says that "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me." Do you think it's presumptuous for someone to say that God has chosen them to fulfill a special role? What Isaiah is really saying is that he has been tapped as God's spokesperson, his representative. He's like an ambassador for God. I've always wondered what the qualifications are for being a prophet. Some special credentials? Does it take a college degree in some special field? Or mastering a foreign language? Isaiah says he was "anointed." This chapter in Isaiah, is considered to have taken place around 527 BC--in Babylon with the Hebrews in exile.

Honestly, for the people of Israel, exile in Babylon was not too bad. It was like the New York City of its day, the center of civilization, the hub of commerce. The exiled people were encouraged to assimilate into Babylonian (Chaldean) culture, to adopt the customs, the politics, the lifestyles, the philosophies and the religion. The best and brightest people were offered free education and given jobs in the royal court. The ONLY thing they could not do was go home.

Jeremiah had already told them, years earlier, not to waste their time crying and whining about their plight. They were NOT to sit around waiting to be rescued. Their stay would last a while, at least two generations. He said, "Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat what they

produce. Take wives and have children. Take wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, that they might have sons and daughters. Multiply and do not decrease. Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare."

It's about 70 years later. And Isaiah thinks enough is enough. God has decided to end their exile and allow them to return home. He begins by offering up his credentials. And he was anointed by God, hand-picked and commissioned for what he does and says.

Isaiah gives his job description: to comfort those who mourn, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, to deliver good news.

And the good news is:

Reconciliation, Restoration, Reconstruction.

God will restore the reconciled people to their homeland, the people are going to reconstruct the ruins. The devastated cities of Judah will be rebuilt, the walls will be reconstructed, the gates will be rehung. The temple which was destroyed will be raised back up on Mt Zion.

And not only will all the buildings and cities be restored, but the broken relationships between the people will be restored as well. That's the BEST part! The covenant between God and God's people will be restored and upgraded to everlasting status. The people's reputation will be restored; those who weren't liked will be respected once more.

THAT's THE GOOD NEWS that is in Isaiah's job description.

It's a wonderful thing to be God's ambassador! You don't have to be perfect; you don't even have to be perfectly qualified. (Just look at me....) God qualifies the called and calls the qualified. Isaiah was just a low-level worker in the palace, just a flunked in the government bureaucracy when he was called to ministry during the king's funeral. But God saw a spark of something God could use for a special purpose. We can tell when people are functioning as God's ambassadors by asking--Do their words mesh with the words of Jesus? Does he/she teach what Jesus taught? IS the message a message of love? Is the ministry a ministry of reconciliation, restoration, and reconstruction? Do they bring peace, hope, and life? The most important question of all is: Does this ambassador of Christ point TO Christ? An authentic ambassador points away from himself/herself and points toward the ONE they represent.

In this season of Advent, of anticipation and expectation, we are all called to that ministry that points away from us and to the one who is coming--the Messiah, who is Christ the Lord.

PRAISES AND PRAYER REQUESTS:

- Please pray for Carl Washam, at Franklin Woods Hospital
- Jane Eddy
- Shirley Palmer
- our church, community, and world
- the unspoken requests that we each hold in our hearts.

CALENDAR:

- The Executive Team of the Wednesday Night Fellowship Committee has been hard at work processing surveys, listening and working to provide for the needs of the church on Wednesday nights. We are BLESSED, that we have found the funds to continue the Wednesday night meal (thank you Finley Cook and all those who are helping with this

project).

- A BIG THANK YOU TO JOHNNY HUMPHREYS FOR HIS LEADERSHIP THIS FALL!
- We have tentatively planned the following:
 - Jan 7, 14, 21 and 28 and February 4 will have special speakers from the church and community. Details to follow once the speakers are confirmed.
 - February 11 we are planning a spaghetti supper fundraiser for the youth mission trip.
 - February 18- Ash Wednesday service and the following Wednesdays until March 25 will be a Lenten study.
- We welcome anyone who wants to come to our Wednesday night fellowship. Our hope is for the church to gather, to welcome newcomers, to have a time of fellowship and learning. We don't want anyone not to come because they cannot pay. At the same time, if you are able to pay a little extra to help offset some of the costs, that would be wonderful. General charges are 6.50 for adults and children 12 or older. \$3 for children.
- The surveys were very informative and we had equal numbers of people request small groups and large groups. If you wish to gather a small group for a special study, please let me know. We will have the general gathering in the Fellowship hall as described above, but small groups can be very vital discipleship opportunities. We have much to offer on Wednesdays and can gather for study in more than one place and more than one way. :)
- We are sliding toward Christmas!
- The Young at Heart will gather tomorrow at Bob and Athena Peebles house.
- This Saturday is the Reindeer Run in the morning and the Children's Shopping day in the Afternoon.
- Sunday at 10:30 is the Choir Cantata.
- Wednesday the 17th is our last Wednesday night gathering this year.
- Thursday Dec 18th, 5:30 is the ELC Christmas Gathering in the Sanctuary. Last year it was standing room only, and lots of fun songs by the children.
- Saturday Dec 20--Food Pantry.
- Sunday Dec 21--NO SUNDAY NIGHT PTJ.
- Wednesday Dec 24-- 4 and 6:30 Christmas Eve Services Family Friendly at 4. Traditional at 6:30.

"Preach the gospel at all times and when necessary use words."

St Francis of Assisi

Blessings,

Jane Taylor
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