

Prepare for Joy

Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11

Introduction

This third Sunday in Advent is Gaudete Sunday, a Latin word that means “rejoice.” Advent, like Lent is a season of preparation. So, the mood is a somber one as we prepare by mourning our sins. That’s why, originally, the color for Advent was purple, as it is for Lent. Most churches now use blue to represent the sky, as we look to the heavens, preparing for His coming. Getting closer to the Nativity, we can’t help but feel the anticipation and excitement grow. On this third Sunday, the mood shifts, and the theme is Joy. The pink (or rose) candle represents this. The first two weeks we sang songs like “Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus” and “Comfort, Comfort Ye My People.” Today, we sing “Joy to the World” and “O Bride of Christ, Rejoice” to emphasize the difference, the shift in mood.

The Mission of Jesus (v. 1-3)

We get a glimpse of the Son of God in our Old Testament reading. Jesus reads and applies **verses 1-2** of *Isaiah 61* to Himself **in Luke 4:17-21**. *The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me*. The Spirit came upon Jesus at His Baptism and anointed Him for His ministry. **Verses 1-3** of our text tell us about the ministry of the Messiah. This is His mission.

To Heal the Hurting (v. 1, 2b-3)

Good news to the poor, soothing the brokenhearted, liberty to captives and prisoners, and comfort to the mourners. That’s quite a program. Those are all good things, and we would be glad to have them in our world. However, it goes even deeper. Theodoret of Cyr said this: *Isaiah calls “poor” those who have lost heavenly riches, “broken-hearted” those who have corrupted their reason, ... [and] “prisoner” those brought into the enemy’s camp and who have lost their original freedom* (**Commentary on Isaiah 19.61.1-3**). Christ’s mission was much more than just to help people out in this life. God cares about the whole person, both body and soul. And the soul is eternal.

To Proclaim Salvation (v. 2a)

There is a spoken aspect of His mission, to proclaim the *year of the Lord’s favor*, and the *day of vengeance of our God* (v. 2). The year of the Lord’s favor was Christ’s first coming. Jesus came to heal and help. He came to seek and to save. He came to die for our sins. The day of vengeance will be His second coming, when He will come *with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God* (**1 Thessalonians 4:16**). The kingdom of Satan, which seems so powerful now, will be wiped out before His wrath. Put His first and second comings together and you have a complete picture of the proclamation of salvation.

Exulting in God (v. 10)

We hear Isaiah speaking in **verse 10**. He is taking all the blessings talked about earlier and presenting us with their essence. Here, we have the reason for rejoicing. This is the source of our joy.

Garments of Salvation

Cyril of Alexandria says that this *garment of salvation* is Christ. (read **Romans 13:11-14**). Paul calls this putting on the armor of light. It is an image of putting on Christ. Being clothed in Christ gives us comfort, as clothing shields us from the cold and elements. It gives us safety, as clothing (especially armor) protects us from injury. And it gives us security, as clothing hides our shame.

Robe of Righteousness

Another image of putting on Christ is the *robe of righteousness* (read **Revelation 7:9, 13-14**). We are clothed in Christ's righteousness because our righteousness is *as filthy rags* (**Isaiah 64:6**). When Christ became sin for us on the cross, He exchanged our sinfulness for His righteousness (**2 Corinthians 5:21**). His righteousness gives us right standing before God. Our salvation is in Christ's righteousness; we are saved for His sake.

Means of Grace

This is our reason for joy as we get closer to the Nativity. We find our salvation in Jesus Christ. And that salvation comes through the **WORD** and **SACRAMENT**. We put on Christ at **BAPTISM**. He gives us faith and forgives sin through His **WORD**, written, spoken, and visible. Here is joy. Receive it today.

*And the peace of God,
Which passes all understanding,
Will keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*
