

# LifeWay Bible Studies for Life Series for December 5: Change the world

November 22, 2010

The first three verses in Isaiah 61 obviously are talking about the work of Christ which we see in Luke's Gospel, chapter 4 verses 18-19, when Jesus has returned to Galilee and to the temple there.

He is reading from this very passage from the prophet Isaiah, chapter 61, and after reading it he says, "Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." And, unfortunately, after impressing the people and being very popular one minute, the crowd turns on him and they want to throw him off the local cliff because he has offended them with truth.

But isn't this true today as well? When people are the most offended, isn't it because they are being shown the truth, and they simply don't like it? It certainly doesn't change the truth; the only thing that should change would be an attitude of anger to one of repentance and humility.

Let's take these verses into our current context. As a Christian, you have been anointed, not with oil, but with something, rather someone, much much more valuable—God's Holy Spirit. This word "anoint" in Hebrew is the word *mashach* and it means to smear or spread a liquid; consecrate.

We see this numerous times in the Old Testament, particularly when God was setting apart an individual for special service. The prophet of the day would take oil and spread it on the head of the one chosen by God. Today, as his children, his chosen, God the Father anoints you with his Spirit.

Another great difference from Old Testament times to the current New

Testament times is that in the past, this setting apart was to put the individual on a mission; you would still be the same person but chosen and sent as God's representative or agent.

Okay, here's the kicker for us today in this complete anointing, God doesn't just send you out, he changes you. You are no longer what you were, you are a new creation. Something brand new, remade. Isn't that exciting? Not just to be given the mission but to be recreated in order to fulfill the mission God has set you apart for.

Notice to the pattern in verses 1-3: to preach, to proclaim, to proclaim (again), to comfort, to bestow. The second part of verse 1 is interesting and applicable for us today just as it was back in Jesus' day. It says we are anointed to proclaim freedom for the captives, and while it may not be speaking specifically to the physically imprisoned, what about the spiritually imprisoned?

So many in the world around us are spiritually bound and remain under the condemnation of what sin has done, and is doing, in their lives. And yet, there's hope! You see, there also are those people in the world who are not only free themselves but who hold the key to freedom for others. This is a set apart and chosen group that has been changed from what they were to who they were intended to be all along.

Starting to get the idea? So now the question for you, and for me, is how long will I withhold the key to freedom in the lives of those who are desperately in need of it? It's one thing for me to tell of the great freedom in Christ and they reject it and quite another thing for them to want it and me not tell them about it.

Verse 4 speaks of rebuilding what has been laid to waste. In Isaiah's time your city was part of what gave you bragging rights about who you were as a people (read Nehemiah and see his reaction when told of his city laid to

waste and what he does about it). If an enemy came in and destroyed your city and walls you would be devastated partly because this enemy would have destroyed part of who you were as a people. Nations chose to build massive structures in order to bring glory and honor to themselves. The goal and desire was to not only protect your people but to be the envy of the land and nations around you.

Now fast forward to today and think for a moment about how our world continues to build massive structures. Does this impress God? Of course not, he gave those builders the ability to do all that. As Christians, we are the structures, the temples of God's Holy Spirit, who lives in each one of us. And even during this time is God not continuing to build us and renew us even though we ourselves have been devastated for generations?

Part of this building and renewing is seen in verse 10 when Isaiah writes that we have been clothed with garments of salvation and arrayed in robes of righteousness as a bridegroom. It's a beautiful picture of a wedding day and it's unmistakable who the bride and bridegroom are because they are dressed finer than anyone else who is there. Perhaps it's time for us to start seeing ourselves for who we truly are in Christ. Maybe when we start seeing ourselves this way we will begin to act like the people of God.