

ISAIAH

Chapter 61

The Year of the Lord's Favor

The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; 2 to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; 3 to grant to those who mourn in Zion— to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit; that they may be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he may be glorified. 4 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. 5 Strangers shall stand and tend your flocks; foreigners shall be your plowmen and vinedressers; 6 but you shall be called the priests of the LORD; they shall speak of you as the ministers of our God; you shall eat the wealth of the nations, and in their glory you shall boast. 7 Instead of your shame there shall be a double portion; instead of dishonor they shall rejoice in their lot; therefore in their land they shall possess a double portion; they shall have everlasting joy. 8 For I the LORD love justice; I hate robbery and wrong; I will faithfully give them their recompense, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them. 9 Their offspring shall be known among the nations, and their descendants in the midst of the peoples; all who see them shall acknowledge them, that they are an offspring the LORD has blessed. 10 I will greatly rejoice in the LORD; my soul shall exult in my God, for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation; he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself like a priest with a beautiful headdress, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. 11 For as the earth brings forth its sprouts, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to sprout up, so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise to sprout up before all the nations.

Chs 61–62 Aglow with images of light, abundance, gardens, brilliant jewels, and costly garments. The section begins with the Servant/Messiah's announcement of His role (61:1–3) and concludes with a call for the people to enter into the Lord's salvation (62:10–12). Three major segments are united by divine promises regarding Zion and the nations: Zion will eat the wealth of the nations (61:4–11), God will show the nations that Zion is not forsaken (62:1–5), and the nations will not devour Zion's wealth (62:6–9). (TLSB)

61:1–3, 10–11 Isaiah represents the Old Testament institution of prophecy as well as any of the ancient seers. He preaches boldly and without compromise the severity of God's law and fierceness of God's judgment. He brings a message of warning and denunciation against Judah for their idolatry and ungodly living. Yet Isaiah is also named the Evangelist of the Old Testament. While all the prophets proclaim God's love and grace, Isaiah does so with unsurpassed clarity and intensity. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

The people rejected the prophet's preaching of the law and turned a deaf ear to his pleas for repentance and reform. Isaiah then foresees a future scourge of his people by powerful nations who are instruments of Yahweh's chastisement. Nevertheless, God is still gracious. When the people will languish as exiles in captivity, God shall hear their cry, rescue them, and deliver

them. They shall be free to return to their homeland as God's chosen covenant people. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

Isaiah 60 portrays the future glory and return to Zion. Our text, Isaiah 61, portrays the great Servant who shall effect Israel's liberation and restoration. The Servant was previously described in the four Suffering Servant Songs (Is 42:1–9; 49:1–7; 50:4–11; 52:13–53:12). While some of Isaiah's contemporaries were described as servants of God, the New Testament makes clear that the fulfillment of these prophecies came in the person of Jesus Christ, the Messiah who earned salvation from the tyranny of sin and death for all the world's people. This futuristic reference of Isaiah's words is confirmed by our Lord's frequent descriptions of himself as the Servant who "did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). Jesus specifically claimed to be the Servant described in our text when he read it in the synagogue at Nazareth (Luke 4:16–21). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

61:1-3 The speaker in vv 1–3, the great Servant, not only announces the imparting of gifts, but also dispenses these gifts of God for the liberation of his people. He is uniquely qualified because the Lord has anointed him with his Spirit (v 1). Elsewhere in the OT, the Spirit equipped kings, prophets, and priests with gifts for their respective offices, but the Spirit is given without measure to the Messiah (John 1:33–34; 3:34). The Messiah receives all the gifts of the Spirit in preparation for fulfilling the duties of his office (Is 11:2–5). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

61:1–2 Jesus applied these verses to himself in the synagogue at Nazareth (see Lk 4:16–21; cf. Mt 11:5). (CSB)

A succession of phrases in vv 1–2 describes the Messiah's deliverance. To the poor, to the afflicted in heart, he gives the sure prospect of deliverance. This good news comes on the authority of God, for the speaker is sent by God. The terms "captives" and "prisoners" may refer in part to the outward condition of the exiles, but the "brokenhearted" are those in every age who are bound to sin and the shackles of a deep sense of guilt before God. Deliverance from that spiritual dungeon of darkness will be like gaining new sight for the eyes. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

61:1 *Spirit ... is upon me.* † The Messianic servant is meant. (CSB)

Me. The Lord's Servant (42:1–7; 49:1–7; 50:4–9; 52:13–53:12). (TLSB)

Jesus is not coming by his own impulse, nor by any other human catalyst, but by the Holy Spirit.

This Spirit then is the strong taproot of the life and being of the one who speaks. (Leupold)

Matthew 3:16 "As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him."

anointed me. These are grand words. First He says that He was anointed, indicating that He was made King and Priest. He is the Messiah. Here we have the verb *משח*, that is, "He anointed," and from this we get "Messiah." (Luther)

good news. A messenger announces the glory to be revealed in the messianic age. The Messiah not only has prophetic authority to speak for God, but He Himself made the promise come true (cf Ac 4:27; 10:38; Heb 1:9). In Is, the Spirit is esp associated with the power to bring

justice and righteousness on the earth, often through the spoken Word (cf 59:21). “According to [Christ’s] divinity, He is of one essence with the Holy Spirit” (FC SD VIII 72). Luther: “Christ is the person sent by God and filled with the Holy Spirit to be the Preacher and Evangelist to the poor, that is, the afflicted. This was not done for Christ’s sake but for our sake.... Note this especially, that we must be content with the God of majesty when we consider His hidden but grand and terrifying offices. When we fall into this labyrinth, we become involved in speculations about divinity, and we want to become investigators of His majesty at our peril. As for you, be content with the God incarnate. Then you will remain in peace and safety, and you will know God. Cast off speculations about divine glory, as the pope and Mohammed speculate. You stay with Christ crucified, whom Paul and others preach” (AE 17:330–31). (TLSB)

poor. Cf. 11:4; 29:19. (CSB)

In the Scriptures the afflicted are the poor and the distressed. So Matt. 11:5 reads: “The poor have good news preached to them.” And in Exodus Moses was the meekest and most afflicted man. Here Christ is sent and called to preach to the afflicted and the wretched. This is very clear in opposition to the Jews, who are hoping for a Christ who will reign and rule over a worldly empire, when in reality it is the proper office of this King to preach the Gospel, to proclaim good news. (Luther)

bind up the brokenhearted. They are all mankind who are stung by the Law because of their sin and the death that will follow. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 11, Part 1)

This can include all that are deeply grieved over their sins as well as those that have been all but crushed by life’s adversities. (Leupold)

1 Corinthians 15:56 “The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.”

liberty to the captives. Freedom is used of the Year of Jubilee in Lev 25:10. Release from sin has as its background release from Babylon. (CSB)

61:2 *year of the LORD’s favor.*† Corresponds to the “day of salvation” in 49:8 and the “year of my redemption” in 63:4. Christ ended his quotation at this point (Lk 4:19–20), because the “day of vengeance” will not occur until his second coming. (CSB)

Note that the Lord’s favor is a *year* and in contrast the day of vengeance is only a *day*. God is known for his mercy and compassion. But, he is a just God and will judge those who refuse his free mercy.

day of vengeance. Jesus did not include the vengeance mentioned in this prophecy when, in Nazareth, He declared the year of the Lord’s favor (Lk 4:18–19). Final judgment on the wicked and simultaneous vindication of the righteous are to take place when He returns (cf Mt 24:30). (TLSB)

Some of the terms used to describe the year of the Lord’s favor are reminiscent of the Jubilee Year. The new time of God’s grace is also described in Is 40:1–11 and chapters 51, 52, and 60. A time of divine vengeance (*nakam*, v 2) is reserved for those who persist in their evil ways when the day of redemption has been announced. It is significant that Jesus ended his quote of our passage with “the Lord’s favor” and omitted “vengeance,” perhaps to stress the graciousness of his First Advent and because God will not take full vengeance on his enemies until the Second Advent (Luke 4:19). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

Jesus did not include the vengeance mentioned in this prophecy when in Nazareth, He declared the year of the Lord's favor (Lk 4:18-19). Final judgment on the wicked and simultaneous vindication of the righteous are to take place when He returns (cf Mt 24:30). (TLSB)

comfort all who mourn. The Lord's Servant goes on to proclaim comfort to all who mourn (vv 2b-3a). The Servant brings comfort, enabling them to carry their heads high as if wearing a garland. There is a play on the Hebrew words: they receive *pæer*, "a crown of beauty," in place of *aphar* "ashes." There is then a shift to botanical imagery: the righteousness imparted to them by the Servant shall make them as strong and durable as oaks planted by the Lord to demonstrate his grace. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

61:3 beautiful headdress. A "turban" (as the Hebrew for this phrase is translated in Eze 24:17) or headdress. In 3:20 the women of Jerusalem were to lose their beautiful headdresses. (CSB)

oil of gladness. Anointing with olive oil was common on joyous occasions (see Ps 23:5; 45:7; 104:15; 133:1-2; cf. 2Sa 14:2). (CSB)

This is a complete 180 degree turn from what happened at the fall of man and can only be done by a merciful God. This is the miracle Jesus wants to do for everyone.

Mourning. The mourner with ashes on the head, wrapped in sackcloth, and with a spirit crushed with despair, is replaced by one who celebrates with a beautiful headdress, smelling of costly oil, and wearing a garment of praise. (TLSB)

garment of praise. Contrast the "garments of vengeance" in 59:17. (CSB)

The mourner with ashes on the head, wrapped in sackcloth, and with a spirit crushed with despair, is replaced by one who celebrates with a beautiful headdress, smelling of costly oil, and wearing a garment of praise. (TLSB)

oaks of righteousness. Contrast the oaks of 1:30. (CSB)

The redeemed of the Lord, rooted by faith in His promises (cf Ps 1:3). The Servant/Messiah will not simply throw words at the poor. His words impart what they announce (cf 55:10-11). (TLSB)

This is an act by God who plants it and helps it to grow like he does with Christians. It is his intervening action. Oaks are tree of great strength and endurance. They are often a haven for all kinds of wildlife. They were rare in that climate just as Christians are the minority in much of society.

planting ... may be glorified. All the trees of this garden are called righteous. In the world there are also very large trees like the cedars, but they are trees of unrighteousness and iniquity. But in this garden they will be righteous, planted by God. It follows therefore that a Christian does not just come into being, but he is planted and produced by the work of God. Christ is the gardener. Therefore a Christian is a divine work and a planting of God. For through the Word he is uprooted from the world and transplanted into this garden and watered. (Luther)

61:4-7 The work of the Servant/Messiah makes possible the reversal of fortunes for the people. (TLSB)

61:4 *shall build up the ancient ruins ... ruined cities.* The former devastations are the synagogues and the meeting places of the Gentiles, which have long lain deserted, forsaken by the Pharisees and Sadducees, as Christ says in the Gospel (Matt. 9:37), “the laborers are few,” and elsewhere (Matt. 9:36), “harassed like sheep.” Just so this city was deserted before the Gospel came, as is the case with other cities also. (Luther)

61:5–6 The City of the Lord is a spiritual commonwealth (60:14, 18) with citizens from every nation under the sun. Foreigners do the labor, a recurring theme of the Lord’s retribution on those who persecuted His people (14:1–2; 56:3). Having become “fellow citizens with the saints” (Eph 2:19) through faith in Christ, they willingly dedicate their labors and riches to the common good of “the household of faith” (Gal 6:10). Cf Is 60:21; Rm 15:27. (TLSB)

61:5 *strangers... foreigners.* Gentiles will enter into the service of the new Israel because their faith makes them fellow citizens. As children of God they will freely give of the resources in helping the kingdom to grow. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 11, Part 1)

61:6 *priests of the LORD.*† See 66:21. The Israel of the new covenant will be a “kingdom of priests” to the nations.. (CSB)

ministers. Priests. See 1Ki 8:11, where the Hebrew word for “minister” is translated “perform their service.” (CSB)

The mediating service of the tribe of Levi will no longer be needed. All the people of God will be consecrated to offer themselves as living sacrifices (Rm 12:1) and authorized to teach all nations the way of salvation. Cf Mt 28:19-20; 2 Cor 2:15. (TLSB)

wealth of nations. The Gentiles who have been gained are apostles of God to give up everything and leave behind their goods, fame, and wife, and they will serve and promote the Gospel with body and fame. (Luther)

61:7 *shame ... dishonor.* See 45:17; 54:4. (CSB)

double portion. The firstborn son received a double share of the inheritance (see Dt 21:17; Zec 9:12). Contrast the “double” punishment Israel received (40:2). (CSB)

everlasting joy. See 35:10; 51:11; cf. Ps 16:11. (CSB)

61:8 *love justice.* Cf. 30:18; 59:15. (CSB)

everlasting covenant.† The new covenant . (CSB)

The result of the work of the Servant/Messiah (49:8; 54:10; 55:5; Ezk 37:25–26). (TLSB)

61:9 *offspring the LORD has blessed.*† See 44:3; 65:23. The promises to Abraham in Ge 12:1–3 will be fulfilled. (CSB)

God will fulfill His promise to Abraham (Gn 12:3). (TLSB)

61:10-11 In vv 10–11, the speaker is no longer the Servant, but Zion, and by anticipation, the New Testament church. The mood is one of joy because the Lord has adorned his people in garments of salvation and righteousness. The garment of Christ’s righteousness is placed on us in

baptism (Gal 3:27). The church is described using nuptial imagery as in Eph 5:25–27. The groom and bride both anticipate joyfully their coming marriage. The imagery in v 11 then echoes the botanical description at the end of v 3: the Lord will make salvation and righteousness grow throughout the world like a garden, hinting of paradise restored. It is the Lord, both sovereign and gracious, who causes salvation to grow and encompass the nations of the world, foreshadowing the inclusion of gentiles in the church. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

61:10 וְשׂוֹשׂ אֶעְיֹשׂ בִּיהוָה—The Qal infinitive absolute וְשׂוֹשׂ (translated adverbially, “exuberantly”) with the imperfect אֶעְיֹשׂ (“I will rejoice”) intensifies the prophet’s expression of joy. For וְשׂוֹשׂ, see the third textual note on 61:3. While אֶעְיֹשׂ is the regular form of the Qal imperfect (not cohortative in form), the context implies that its mood is cohortative, i.e., a strong volitional declaration of the speaker’s intention to rejoice. See Joüon, § 114 b (1) and the next textual note. (CC)

יִתְגַּלְּ בְּאֵלֶיהָ—The form of יִתְגַּלְּ, “to exult,” is jussive (יִתְגַּלְּ), rather than imperfect (יִתְגַּלְּ). This volitive form (and mood; see Joüon, § 114 g (1)) confirms the volitional (cohortative) mood of אֶעְיֹשׂ in the preceding clause and likewise is a powerful expression of the will (Joüon, § 114 h), thus “indeed exult.” יִתְגַּלְּ is third feminine singular since its subject is נַפְשִׁי, the suffixed feminine singular noun נַפֶּשׁ, “soul.” Compare St. Paul’s terminology for the “inner man” who delights in God’s Law (Rom 7:22), is being renewed daily (2 Cor 4:16), and is strengthened by the power of the Holy Spirit (Eph 3:16), and his terminology for the “new man” created “in the righteousness and the holiness of the truth” (Eph 4:24). (CC)

כִּי הִלְבִּישְׁנִי בְּגָדֵי-יִשְׁעַע מְעִיל צְדָקָה יִעֲטֹנִי—The “garments of skin” Yahweh provided for Adam and Eve (Gen 3:21) were a down payment of glorious attire to come. In the next clauses Isaiah will describe this garb in bridal terms (see the next textual note). Hebrew poetry often alternates between plural and singular forms, as here with בְּגָדֵי-יִשְׁעַע, “garments of salvation,” and then מְעִיל צְדָקָה, “a robe of righteousness.” Isaiah and by extension all believers are clothed in this vesture; cf. the Christian’s “breastplate of righteousness” in Eph 6:14 and “crown of righteousness” in 2 Tim 4:8. The terms בְּגָד, “garment,” and מְעִיל, “robe,” also appear together in Is 59:17 to describe the Divine Warrior; and for the Davidic Messiah, “righteousness will be the belt of his waist” (11:5, וְהָיָה צְדָקָה אֲזוּר מִתְּהִי, “righteousness,” are also parallel in 45:8; 51:5, 6, 8; 56:1; 59:17; 62:1. In 52:1 Yahweh commands, לְבַשׂי עֲזָר צִיּוֹן לְבָשִׂי | בְּגָדֵי תִפְאָרְתָּךְ, “put on/clothe yourself with your strength, O Zion; put on garments of your beauty.” Similar expressions are in Ps 132:9, 16. (CC)

Here, instead of Isaiah/the faithful remnant clothing himself/themselves (Qal of לְבַשׂ, as in 49:18; 51:9; 52:1) with a garment provided by Yahweh, the entire action is performed by Yahweh alone. He is the subject of both verbs. This depicts divine monergism in salvation: Yahweh does it all! Both verbs take a double accusative construction: the first accusative is denoted by the first common singular pronominal suffix on each of the verbs (-י, “me,” the person clothed), and the second accusative is the two-word phrase that refers to the garment (בְּגָדֵי-יִשְׁעַע and then מְעִיל צְדָקָה). The first verb, הִלְבִּישְׁנִי, “he clothed me, caused me to be clothed,” is the (causative) Hiphil of לְבַשׂ. The second verb form, יִעֲטֹנִי, is the Qal perfect third masculine singular of יָעַט, to “cover” (BDB, DCH), a hapax legomenon, with a first common singular suffix. Some suggest emending it to a Hiphil imperfect third masculine singular of the related verb עָטָה, “wrap with, cover with” (DCH, עָטָה I, Hiphil), but emendation is unnecessary. (CC)

כְּחַתָּן וְכַדָּוָה—Is 61:10b–11 is connected through four similes, each beginning with the preposition כְּ: “like a bridegroom” and “like a bride” (61:10b) and “as the earth” and “as a garden” (61:11; see also 58:11). The subjects here, the “bridegroom” (חַתָּן) and

“bride” (כַּלְהָה), likewise rejoice in 62:5. This same marital joy is expressed in Jer 33:11. The noun פְּאֵר, “headdress,” appears also in 61:3; see the second textual note there. The פְּאֵר was worn by Israelite priests (Ex 39:28; Ezek 44:18). This and other priestly connections explain the use of the denominative Piel verb (derived from the noun כֹּהֵן, “priest”) כִּכְהֵן, “dress like a priest.” Note the gift of the title כֹּהֲנֵי יְהוָה, “priests of Yahweh,” in 61:6. The investing of the bridegroom with a priestly headdress may be compared to the crowning of the bridegroom on his wedding day in Song 3:11. The parallel verb תִּעְדָּהּ is the third feminine singular Qal imperfect of עָדָה, “adorn/ornament oneself” (see BDB, עָדָה II), although the form itself could be Hiphil (not used in the OT).²² This verb appears in the context of Bridegroom Yahweh adorning his bride Jerusalem in Ezek 16:11, 13. Cf. the cognate noun עֲדָוָה denoting a bride’s “ornaments” in Is 49:18; Jer 2:32; Ezek 16:11. Here in Is 61:10 כְּלֵיָהּ, the suffixed plural of the multivalent noun כֶּלֶךְ, denotes “her ornaments” or “her jewels.” כֶּלֶךְ denotes precious betrothal gifts in Gen 24:53 (cf. Ex 3:22; 11:2). (CC)

Isaiah makes this confession for himself as well as for the remnant community. The first person singular discourse creates an inclusio around chapter 61. In 61:1–3 the Anointed Servant speaks in the first person as he proclaims the gifts he brings, while here Isaiah celebrates those Gospel gifts. Luther rightly comments: “This is a song which the prophet sings as representative of the church.” And just like to Peter, “flesh and blood” did not reveal this to Isaiah (Mt 16:17). It was not human insight or imagination. It was rather Yahweh’s self-disclosure through his Anointed Servant (Is 61:1–3), who let the prophet see the beauty of salvation. (CC)

Envision a woman dressed for a funeral who receives word that a mistake has been made. She is told, “Instead of a funeral there will be a wedding with the love of your life!” What does she do? In breathtaking speed she washes the ashes from her face, dons her wedding garments, and crowns her head with a garland of flowers. It is time to celebrate! In like manner, Zion’s wailing has been turned into celebration; her sackcloth is gone, and she is girded with joy (cf. Ps 30:12 [ET 30:11]). Zion’s beauty comes from Yahweh. And it is everlasting! (CC)

In the OT the process of marriage often begins with the payment of a bride price or gift (e.g., Gen 24:51–53; 34:12; 1 Sam 18:25; cf. Song 1:10–11). Yahweh paid for his bride through the suffering and death of his faithful Servant (Is 52:13–53:12), so the baptized have been bought, “not with gold or silver, but with His [Christ’s] holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death.” God does not pursue his bride because she is lovely; he seeks the one who is unlovely to bestow upon her a perfect righteousness (Hos 2:21 [ET 2:19]; Eph 5:25–28). (CC)

The Anointed Servant gives gifts so that the faithful become “oaks of righteousness” (Is 61:3). Now, speaking for Zion, Isaiah responds with praise to Yahweh for having cloaked his people with righteousness. Justification is not an improvement, an alteration, a change of heart, or a cleaning up of the old Adam. It is an imputed righteous standing, received by faith, for Christ’s sake (Is 53:11; 54:17; Rom 3:24–30; Gal 3:8–14). These garments of salvation and righteousness are similar to the Divine Warrior’s clothes (Is 59:17). We therefore not only receive a righteous standing, but incorporated into Christ, we also become partakers of the divine nature (2 Pet 1:4). Our cups overflow with celebrative elation (Ps 23:5)! (CC)

These garments of salvation are the same clothes John calls white robes washed in the blood of the Lamb (Rev 7:14). Paul maintains that the baptized bride of Christ stands before him “without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless” (Eph 5:27; cf. Gal 3:27; Col 3:9–10). The salvation story is truly one of rags (see Is 64:5 [ET 64:6]) to riches because Christ went from riches to rags (cf. Jn 19:23–24; 2 Cor 8:9). (CC)

I greatly rejoice in the Lord – The speaker seems to be the same as in the first verse of the following chapter, that is, the prophet speaking in the name of Zion’s watchman. Compare 62:6 (Concordia Bible)

The words remind us of the “Song of Mary” when she heard that she would be the mother of the Messiah: “My soul praises the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior” (Luke 1:46, 47). The words recorded here by the prophet Isaiah are the words of a believer who has received the great blessings of God. Great joy fills the heart of such a believer. (PBC)

he has covered me – The speaker is no longer the Servant, but Zion, and by anticipation, the NT church. The mood is one of joy because the Lord has adorned his people in garments of salvation and righteousness. The garment of Christ’s righteousness is placed on us in baptism (Gal 3:27). Many families have a white baptism dress that is worn by each member of the family when they are baptized.

Robe of righteousness. † See v. 3; 52:1. (CSB)

Those whom the Lord wraps in this robe not only experience deliverance from unrighteousness but also power to live out His righteousness. (TLSB)

Because the robe of righteousness covers the deepest stain of human sin, it becomes also a garment of salvation. Humans stand before God dressed in this robe. God sees the believer clothed with the perfection of His own Son and welcomes the believer into His presence. (PBC)

robe of righteousness – All “our righteousness” are loathsome and abominable, but the garment of Christ’s righteousness and salvation, wherewith He clothes His people, is excellent and glorious in the view of all beholders; it fills the hearts of its possessors with “the peace of God which passes understanding” with “joy unspeakable, and full of glory.” (Concordia Bible)

Jesus fashioned this robe from the threads of His perfect life. Then He wove it on the loom of the cross and colored it with His own red blood. God freely gives the cloak of His Son’s perfect life to the sinner, and it covers every sin, rebellion, and deviation from God’s standard. This robe of Christ’s righteousness is long and wide enough to cover every twisted human thought, word, and deed. But this robe comes only from God. No human can erase sin. Left to ourselves, we walk about as Lady Macbeth did. She killed the king, and her sins haunted her conscience and heart. Like Shakespeare’s character, we vainly attempt to wipe our own sinful hands clean. If we are honest, we will conclude as she did: “Here’s the smell of the blood still; all the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand” (Macbeth 5.152-54) (PBC)

head like a priest. Putting on a turban or headband (see note on v. 3). (CSB)

Cf v 3; 3:20 (only other times mentioned in Is). (TLSB)

This is likened to the meticulous care employed by the priest as he equips himself for the performance of his sacred duties. (Leupold)

bride ... with her jewels. The church is described using nuptial imagery as in Eph 5:25-27. The groom and the bride both anticipate joyfully their coming marriage.

61:11 Both 55:10–11 and 61:11 employ nature comparisons to make stunning theological claims. God has designed nature to be fruitful and productive by means of rainfall and soil; how much more fruitful and productive, then, will God be as he accomplishes salvation by the power of his Word (55:10–11) to yield “righteousness” and “praise” (61:11). These texts organize their claims by means of the conjunctions כַּאֲשֶׁר and כֵּן and the adverb כֵּן. In 55:10–11 the sequence is כַּאֲשֶׁר, “just as,” and then כֵּן, “thus.” In 61:11 it is כֵּן twice, on כַּאֲרֶץ, “as the earth,” and כַּגֵּן, “as a garden,” and then כֵּן, “thus.” (CC)

הַתּוֹצֵיאַ צִמְחָה—The feminine noun אֶרֶץ, “earth,” is the subject of תּוֹצֵיאַ, the feminine (causative) Hiphil imperfect of יָצַע, whose direct object is the noun צִמְחָה, a collective singular, “sprouts,” whose feminine suffix (צִמְחָה) refers back to אֶרֶץ, “earth.” Literally, the earth “causes its sprouts to go out,” i.e., to emerge out from the ground, but the verb is rendered as “brings forth.” For similar agricultural instances of the Hiphil of יָצַע, see Gen 1:12, 24; Hag 1:11; Ps 104:14 (BDB, יָצַע, Hiphil, 4 j). (CC)

וְיִרְוּעַיָה תְּצַמְחֵיהֶן—Parallel to the preceding clause, the feminine גֵּן, “garden,” is the subject of תְּצַמְחֵיהֶן, the feminine (causative) Hiphil imperfect of צָמַח, “cause to sprout.” The direct object is the suffixed plural of the noun וְרוּעַיָה, “what is sown.” This passive noun formation is related to וָרֵעַ, “seed, offspring,” and likely alludes to the prominent theme of the Servant’s “offspring”; see the first textual note on 61:9 and the fourth textual note on 53:10. (CC)

Isaiah employs the root צָמַח three times in this verse, once as a noun in the preceding clause (צִמְחָה, “its sprouts”) and twice as a Hiphil verb (תְּצַמְחֵיהֶן here and תְּצַמְחֵיהֶן in the next clause). See the third textual note on 42:9. The verb appears in 58:8 when Yahweh promises that healing will quickly sprout. In 4:2 Yahweh’s צָמַח, “Sprout, Branch,” is messianic, as it is also in Jer 23:5; 33:15; Zech 3:8; 6:12. Additional botanical motifs in Is 61:11 include כַּגֵּן, “as a garden,” and וְרוּעַיָה, “what has been sown in it.” (CC)

“Garden” (גֵּן here; גֵּן in 51:3; 58:11) retrospectively alludes to Eden (Genesis 2; see Is 51:3) and prospectively to paradise restored (Is 58:11; Lk 23:43; Rev 2:7; 22:1–2, 14, 19). During the present era, the apostates pollute the “garden” by their idolatrous practices (e.g., Is 65:3; 66:17), but God intends it to be the place where bride and groom meet (וָרֵעַ or גֵּן in Song 4:12–5:1; 6:2, 11; 8:13) to celebrate the love that is “the flame of Yah” (Song 8:6). Thus the garden motif in Is 61:11 relates to the bridal motif in 61:10; 62:5. Eden was the site of the first wedding (Gen 2:24), and the eschatological “wedding” of the divine Bridegroom and his beautifully adorned bride, the church (Rev 19:7–8; 21:2), is celebrated in the greater Eden (Rev 22:1–2). (CC)

כֵּן | אֲדַגֵּי יְהוָה יְצַמְחֵיהֶן וְתִהְיֶה גֵּן—The adverb כֵּן, “thus, so,” introduces the soteriological point of the preceding creation comparisons. Instead of the “garden,” now it is אֲדַגֵּי, “the Lord Yahweh” (see the first textual note on 61:1), who “will cause to sprout up” (יְצַמְחֵיהֶן, Hiphil of יָצַע, as in the preceding textual note). Moreover, the object here is not vegetation; the compound direct object is וְתִהְיֶה גֵּן, “righteousness and praise,” and in that order, because justification by grace alone is the basis for rendering praise to God (e.g., Ex 15:2; Deut 10:21; Ps 7:18 [ET 7:17]; Is 25:1; 45:25; 60:18; Phil 1:11). Zion’s inhabitants will be צַדִּיקִים, “righteous” (60:21), and אֵילֵי הַצְּדָקָה, “oaks of righteousness” (61:3). “Righteousness” (צְדָקָה) is parallel with יִשׁוּעַ, “salvation” (61:10). Because “Salvation” (יְשׁוּעָה) is the name of the new Zion’s walls, “Praise” (תְּהִלָּה) is the name of her gates (60:18). Jerusalem will become the cause of “praise [תְּהִלָּה] in the earth [בְּאֶרֶץ]” (62:7). (CC)

Characteristically, praise begins with Isaiah and the remnant he speaks for (Is 61:10) and then expands to include all the nations (Is 61:11). The same development appears in Psalm 22. David announces, “I will recount your name to my brothers” (Ps 22:23 [ET 22:22]). This is followed by “you who fear Yahweh, praise him” (Ps 22:24 [ET 22:23]). Finally David sings, “All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to Yahweh” (Ps 22:28 [ET 22:27]). (CC)

Isaiah frequently employs creation to make a point. Just as he likens the efficacy of God’s Word to rain and snow that bring forth food (Is 55:10–11), so in Is 61:11 he links the gift of righteousness with the earth’s ability to bring forth plant life. In both cases, the prophet is reflecting upon Gen 1:11–12; 2:9; 8:22. “In this way God’s activity in nature is the image and the guarantee of his activity in history.” (CC)

This confirms the pledge in Is 60:21 when Isaiah says that the remnant will possess the land forever and become a branch of Yahweh’s planting. This branch, though the smallest and least, will grow into a mighty nation (Is 60:22; cf. Mk 4:30–32). God’s people will be called “oaks of righteousness” and “a planting of Yahweh” (Is 61:3; cf. Jn 15:1–9). The gift of righteousness extends to coming generations (Is 61:9; cf. Mt 19:14; Acts 2:39; 2 Tim 3:15), and Yahweh is the foundation for this transformation (Is 61:8). It is his initiative and covenant faithfulness that makes new life happen. In the place of devastation the land will be restored and renewed, as will the persecuted remnant. (CC)

The righteousness that the Israelites were unable to attain for themselves (e.g., 48:1; 64:5 [ET 64:6]) will now spring up, blossom, and grow! “If nature is reliable, how much more so is the Creator of nature!” Yahweh asserts similar promises connecting righteousness to the Creator’s faithfulness in, e.g., Is 45:8; Psalms 72 and 85. Paul makes the message clearer. Quoting from Hab 2:4 the apostle writes: “For [the] righteousness of God is being revealed in it from faith[fulness] into faith, just as it stands written: ‘But the righteous person will live from faith’ ” (Rom 1:17). In subsequent chapters Paul makes the revelation of a righteous standing before the Father crystal clear (e.g., Rom 3:22–24; 4:25; 5:1). The climactic revelation of righteousness comes through the death and resurrection of Jesus: “The one not knowing sin, he made sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in him” (2 Cor 5:21). “Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness My beauty are, my glorious dress.” (CC)

The vision of a renewed garden appears in, e.g., Is 51:3; 58:11; Jer 31:12. The way into the eternal garden paradise (Rev 2:7; 22:1–2) is opened by Jesus. “Now in the place where he was crucified was a garden, and in the garden, a new tomb in which no one yet had been placed” (Jn 19:41). Wright adds:

The Spirit who brooded over the waters of creation at the beginning broods now over God’s world, ready to bring it bursting to springtime life. Mary goes to the tomb while it’s still dark and in the morning light meets Jesus in the garden. She thinks he is the gardener, as in one important sense he indeed is. This is the new creation. This is the new Genesis. (CC)

sprous. Cf. 55:10. (CSB)

a garden – The imagery in this verse echoes the botanical description at the end of verse 3, the Lord will make salvation and righteousness grow throughout the world like a garden, hinting of paradise restored. It is the Lord, both sovereign and gracious, who causes salvation to grow and encompass the nations of the world, foreshadowing the inclusion of gentiles in the church.

righteousness and praise sprout up. Joy is guaranteed just as the earth is guaranteed to cause seeds sown in it to sprout. If nature is reliable, how much more so is God? (TLSB)

The last verse of the chapter assured God's OT readers that this would all come to pass. Just as the soil brings forth green grass and beautiful flowers, so surely will the "Sovereign Lord" make "righteousness and praise spring up before all nations." The soil may look barren and lifeless, but after a time the seed sprouts and grows. For the Jews of Isaiah's day, Jerusalem would be destroyed and God's people led away captive. But, in God's good time, they would return. Beyond that return, further into the future, the Messiah would come and proclaim the good news of the gospel. All the words of this chapter, as well as all the other prophecies, would then bloom into fulfillment. (PBC)

Ch 61 The Servant/Messiah will come, bringing good news and everlasting joy to the redeemed of Israel. As brokenhearted souls, we must confess the sinful cause of our poverty and brokenness. Our dire straits are due to our sinful condition—a condition from which we cannot free ourselves. Jesus brings liberty for all held captive by sin and death. By His death and resurrection, He has delivered us from the shame of our sin, clothed us in His own righteousness, and made us to be His holy priests. • Lord God, teach us not to rely on the tattered fabric of our own works and accomplishments. Lead us to be comforted each day in Your robe of righteousness. Amen. (TLSB)