**Notes for Next Sunday**

Third Sunday in Advent

OLD TESTAMENT – Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11

**The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners,﻿ ﻿2﻿ to proclaim the year of the LORD’s favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, ﻿3﻿ and provide for those who grieve in Zion— to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the LORD for the display of his splendor. ﻿4﻿ They will rebuild the ancient ruins and restore the places long devastated; they will renew the ruined cities that have been devastated for generations.**

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)

V. 1 *poor…prisoners.* 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)

**8﻿ “For I, the LORD, love justice; I hate robbery and iniquity. In my faithfulness I will reward them and make an everlasting covenant with them. ﻿9﻿ Their descendants will be known among the nations and their offspring among the peoples. All who see them will acknowledge that they are a people the LORD has blessed.” ﻿10﻿ I delight greatly in the LORD; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. ﻿11﻿ For as the soil makes the sprout come up and a garden causes seeds to grow, so the Sovereign LORD will make righteousness and praise spring up before all nations.**

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)

GOSPEL – John 1:6-8, 19-28

**6﻿ There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John. ﻿7﻿ He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe. ﻿8﻿ He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.**

John now turns to the circumstances of the incarnation. A man was sent from God, as were the prophets; from this verb comes the noun “apostle.” He came as a witness so that all might believe. Emphatically and literally, “Not was that one the light” (v 8). He merely points to the light (cf. 1:29). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 1)

**19﻿ Now this was John’s testimony when the Jews of Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him who he was. ﻿20﻿ He did not fail to confess, but confessed freely, “I am not the Christ.” ﻿21﻿ They asked him, “Then who are you? Are you Elijah?” He said, “I am not.” “Are you the Prophet?” He answered, “No.” ﻿22﻿ Finally they said, “Who are you? Give us an answer to take back to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?” ﻿23﻿ John replied in the words of Isaiah the prophet, “I am the voice of one calling in the desert, ‘Make straight the way for the Lord.’”﻿24﻿ Now some Pharisees who had been sent ﻿25﻿ questioned him, “Why then do you baptize if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?” ﻿26﻿ “I baptize with﻿c﻿ water,” John replied, “but among you stands one you do not know. ﻿27﻿ He is the one who comes after me, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie.” ﻿28﻿ This all happened at Bethany on the other side of the Jordan, where John was baptizing.**

V. 20 *I am not.* John disowns at once, both pride and a false sense of humility. He acknowledges that he has an office, and this office is of God. The coming of the Baptist, his mission, his use of God’s Word, were in precise fulfillment of prophecy. Repentant sinners wanted to know what these words from Isaiah meant. They confessed their sins and were baptized. But in this case the delegation made no such inquiry, did not confess their sins, were not baptized. Evidently the Baptist’s testimony left them cold. That still happens today and we should not let it dampen our enthusiasm. (Ylvisaker)

V. 26 *I baptize.* To baptize, meaning to apply water in a ritual washing, was not a totally new idea. Rabbis of that time regularly applied water to symbolize purification. Pupils of a particular rabbi could identify themselves with him and his teaching through the act of washing. However, John’s baptism was unprecedented in that it was “a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins” (Mk 1:4). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 1)

V. 27 *whose sandals I am not worthy to untie.* A menial task, fit for a slave. Compared to the Son of God, John was unworthy of even a slave’s task. (TLSB)