

Sermon Title: “Call Day”

December 13th, 2020 – 3rd Sunday in Advent

Text: Isaiah 61

Theme:

What’s in it for me?

Sermon Text:

Grace and Peace to you from our Lord, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Today is an historic day in the life of our congregation. In about an hour, we will begin our voter’s meeting to elect our church council for the next year. We will also vote to issue a Divine Call to a Pastor. This is a monumental day in the life of our congregation, and I suppose that it’s fitting that our Old Testament Text for today is the familiar Isaiah 61.

This is a text that we should all be familiar with. This is the text that Jesus reads from the Synagogue in Capernaum telling everyone there that this prophecy has been fulfilled in their presence, so we know that this text is ultimately fulfilled in Jesus. I know, shocking, right to learn that the Old Testament is about Jesus. Isaiah is often called “The Fifth Gospel,” because of the many prophecies about Jesus and this is no different. “Messiah,” and “Christ,” literally translate as “the anointed one,” so the speaker of the passage is Jesus. Isaiah’s original audience knew this but did not have as clear of a picture as we do now. So, what does Isaiah tell us about Jesus? What does it have to do with us?

Through Isaiah, Jesus tells us that Yahweh’s Spirit is upon Him. Wait, is that a Trinitarian statement? In the Old Testament? Bingo. Jesus then tells us His anointed purpose, namely bringing the Good News (“*Euangelium*” or Gospel) to the poor, comfort the broken hearted, free captives from their imprisonment (we later know this to be Jesus freeing us from our sin), and to “proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” Now in Capernaum, that’s where Jesus stops, but here He continues on promising vengeance and comfort to all who mourn, but why does Jesus stop short in Capernaum?

To answer that question, we need to understand when this gets fulfilled and what is the “year of the Lord’s Favor?” So, let’s break it down a little. A Year is a limited period of time. It’s



longer than an hour, minute, or second, but is shorter than a lifetime. Since this is the Lord's lifetime (which is eternal), this a limited period of time, not just 365 days. It represents the time period God is allowing for repentance and He offers forgiveness of sins. The day of God's vengeance comes when Jesus returns. This is why He stops reading the passage in Capernaum at that time, because Jesus wanted to stress that not only that He was the Messiah, but that the period of God's Grace and forgiveness had begun.

This is all wonderful but keep reading. Jesus promises "oaks of righteousness." This is His Church. Jesus is telling us the things that the Church is going to do. Build up, preserve, and repair ancient ruins, "Check." Many Holy sites have been preserved by faithful Christians throughout the centuries and as a result, many of the faithful have had their faith strengthened by their pilgrimages. The Church has been at the forefront of many causes of justice throughout the centuries. The Church spoke up for unwanted children, orphans, the sick, the lonely, worked to abolish slavery, to ensure that the equality of peoples that God promises comes to fruition (Yes, I know we are still working on that, and we always will this side of Heaven.) Verse 5 tells us that salvation will be open to both Jew and Gentile. Verse 5 also mentions that Christians will be a royal priesthood long before Peter mentions it in his first epistle.

In Verses 7 and 8, Jesus promises justice for His Church. We saw this fulfilled when Constantine legalized Christianity, ending nearly 300 years of persecution. God saw to it that His Church triumphed over the Roman Empire. Notice how the Roman Empire is in the History Books, but we are still going strong. God promises that He will make everything right in the end. He has a track record of doing just that, so we can relax when we encounter difficulties in our lives. They won't last, but Jesus does.

So, our text today tells us that Jesus is anointed by God to bring salvation to His people. Jesus accomplishes that today through His Church. Today you will be an active participant in that process. Today by the command of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in His stead, we will issue a Divine Call to Pastor Tom Park, Arthur Rickmann, or Greg Strand to be our next under-shepherd. Reflect on that awesome responsibility, but we are not alone. Just like Jesus, the Holy Spirit is with us too to guide us in this decision.

Today we announce our call, but calling a Pastor isn't the only call we will be doing. We will also be electing Church Council members and Elders. I give thanks to God, so many of you have answered the call to serve God and your brothers and sisters in Christ in one of these positions. Ministry happens because of these faithful brothers and sisters, but I can't help

noticing that there are many positions that are unfilled. Between now and the meeting, I ask that you pray about what God may be anointing you to do this next year for His glory. I promise you that you will not be serving alone.

When Isaiah proclaimed Jesus' message of mission, it was a promise that would be fulfilled in the future. Jesus then blessed some frontier people by announcing that this prophecy has been fulfilled in their presence. Unfortunately, at that time they didn't understand what a blessing it would be, but today this text will be fulfilled in our presence yet again. Jesus not only promises us the Holy Spirit, but He promises that when we are gathered together in His name, He is with us, too. So congratulations, you too are anointed into God's house and mission through the blood of Jesus Christ. With your brothers and sisters and our new under shepherd, we will continue the mission of sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ, caring for the broken-hearted, lonely, sick, and those who mourn. We will continue work for justice for all, knowing that God's final justice will come about when Jesus returns. We will continue to be faithful, trusting God that it will all be ok in the end, so enjoy this day. God is with us.

In Jesus name,

Amen.

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Quotations from Scripture come from:

Various Authors. *The Lutheran Study Bible*. Concordia Publishing House. Kindle Edition.