

ESF, Lord 's Day service message
12/11/2016

The Year of the Lord's Favor

Isaiah 61:1-7

¹ 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. ⁵ Aliens will shepherd your flocks; foreigners will work your fields and vineyards. ⁶ And you will be called priests of the LORD, you will be named ministers of our God. You will feed on the wealth of nations, and in their riches you will boast. ⁷ Instead of their shame my people will receive a double portion, and instead of disgrace they will rejoice in their inheritance; and so they will inherit a double portion in their land, and everlasting joy will be theirs.

We have three weeks to **the end of** this year. It is time for us to think about making **New Year's** resolutions. Usually when we think about **New Year's** resolutions we **start** thinking about what we will have to do.

But to make our lives **for** the **New Year** blessed, we need **something** more. Because as we experience every year, there are **problems** we cannot predict in our resolutions. So, we need more than **just** our own resolutions. We need **something that** can help us overcome unpredictable obstacles and troubles.

It is God's favor. God's favor will enable us to overcome all obstacles and troubles. Today's text teaches us how God blesses our lives when we live under His favor.

When the people of Judah were taken captive by the Babylonians it was a very traumatic event. They lost their homes, their loved ones, their beloved city and temple. They lost everything! They were taunted and humiliated. In suffering, they longed for freedom and restoration.

Then one day, through the prophet Isaiah, God gave them a message of hope. He promised that He would send them His servant to heal their broken hearts, set them free from **captivity**, and restore their ruined lives. **It** was good news to be favored by God.

In Luke 4:16-21 Jesus read this segment of Isaiah and concluded by saying – *“Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”*

To live blessed lives in the coming New Year, we need the favor of God who can heal our broken lives, set us free from bondage, and restore honor and joy in our lives.

The anointing of the Spirit

The year of the Lord's favor comes through the anointing of the Holy Spirit. The word in verse 1 says, *The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor.*

In the beginning of Jesus' public ministry, God anointed Jesus with His Spirit (Matthew 3:13-17). Then with the power and gifts of the Holy Spirit, Jesus started His ministry.

Before Jesus died on the cross, and after He rose again from the dead, He promised His disciples that they would be anointed by the

Holy Spirit (John 14:15-26; Acts 1:7-8). As He promised the Lord anointed them with the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. Then they were equipped to start a powerful and gracious ministry (Acts 2:1-13).

The first thing God does to give us the year of His favor is to anoint us with the Holy Spirit.

To be anointed by His Spirit, there are two key things we have to prepare **for**. And these must be our **New Year's** resolutions.

First, we must be cleansed from our sins.

The Spirit of God is a "Holy" Spirit. So the Spirit of God can fill us when we humbly confess our sins and are cleansed.

When Jesus entered the temple where the people should **have been** filled with the Spirit of God, He saw people filling themselves with the love of money rather than **the** love of the Holy Spirit. At that time, the first thing He did was to cleanse the temple: *So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple area, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. To those who sold doves he said, "Get these out of here! How dare you turn my Father's house into a market!"* (John 2:15-16).

The first step to being anointed by the Spirit is to clean out **your** temple. Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19). To be anointed by the Holy Spirit, you need to cleanse **your** temple, not only your physical body, but also everything in it- your thoughts, feelings, desires, and will. God's anointing of His Spirit works through a clean body and soul.

We can't cleanse our own sins. Only the blood of Jesus can cleanse our sins. What we need to do is just repenting of our sins and accept the cleansing grace of Jesus' blood. So if you want to

receive God's favor through being anointed with the Holy Spirit, keep repenting of your sins and keep accepting the cleansing grace in Jesus' blood day by day. Make a resolution that in the new year you will seek the blood of Jesus every day. With the blood of Jesus cleanse your sins and make you holy and **ready** to receive the Holy Spirit.

Second, we must pray.

Jesus was anointed after He spent 40 days in the desert fasting and praying. Jesus encourages us to pray to be anointed by the Spirit, Luke 11:11-13, *"Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead. Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion. If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"*

When the Holy Spirit anointed the disciples, they were praying together (Acts 1:14, 2:1-4). If we want to live our lives with the Lord's favor in the coming New Year, we must keep praying individually and together.

A missionary on furlough told this true story while visiting his home church in Michigan, "While serving at a small field hospital in Africa, every two weeks I traveled by bicycle through the jungle to a nearby city for supplies. It was a journey of two days and required camping overnight at the halfway point. On one of these journeys, I arrived in the city where I planned to collect money from a bank, purchase medicine and supplies, and begin my two day journey back to the hospital. Upon arriving at the city, two men were fighting, and one was seriously injured. I treated his injuries and told him about Jesus Christ. I then traveled two days, camped overnight, and arrived back home without incident. Two weeks later I repeated my journey. When I arrived back at the city, I was approached by the young man I had treated. He told me he knew I carried money and medicines. He said "Some friends and I followed you into the jungle, knowing you would camp overnight. We planned to kill you and take your money and drugs. But just as

we were about to jump your camp, we saw that you were surrounded by 26 armed guards!"

At this I laughed and said that I certainly was all alone out in that jungle campsite. But the young man pressed the point, saying, "No Sir, I was not the only person to see the guards. My five friends also saw them, and we all counted them. It was because of those 26 armed guards that we were afraid and left you alone."

At this point in his message, a man in the audience jumped to his feet and interrupted the missionary and asked the exact day that incident happened. The missionary told him - and the man excitedly told THIS story - "On the night of your incident in Africa, it was morning here, and I was preparing to play golf. I was about to tee off when I felt the urge to pray for you. In fact, the urging of the Holy Spirit was SO STRONG, I called men to meet me here to pray for you. "If you were here with me that day to pray please stand up?" The men who met together to pray stood up. The missionary wasn't really concerned with who they were - but he wept as he counted their number - You guessed it - there were 26!

Make a resolution that you will take **time** to pray more regularly, and more fervently.

The blessed ministries

By anointing Jesus with the Holy Spirit, God dispenses **blessings** to deliver people from all kinds of suffering and renew their lives.

God blesses them not because **of** who they are or what they do, but **because** He **simply** wants to **bless** them through Jesus. He blesses them by His unconditional favor.

While you make **your New Years'** resolution, don't worry about your **weaknesses or failures**. Even if you are weak and fail, God will take care of you with His favor. **When you feel weak and fail your New Year's resolutions** always remember God's unconditional favor for you.

Let's see **the blessings** Jesus is doing for us in God's favor.

Preaching good news to the poor

The poor are people who are poor in spirit. They are the people who see themselves as hopeless sinners and humbly come to God and ask **for** His forgiveness and mercy.

In Matthew 9:12-13, we see Jesus eating with sinners. When some people were surprised at that, He said that He came to preach good news to sinners: *...Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."*

The poor are those who recognize that they are hopeless sinners. They are people who humbly seek the mercy of God and His forgiveness. Do you want to receive God's favor in Jesus? Humble yourself before God and seek His forgiveness. Make a resolution for the **New Year**: "I will keep acknowledging that I am a hopeless sinner and I will keep seeking God's forgiveness."

Binding up the brokenhearted

As the anointed servant, Jesus binds up the brokenhearted. With the anointing of the Holy Spirit, Jesus heals us. His healing is not only physical, but also emotional, mental and spiritual.

Do you know what the number one killer of all time is? It is emotional distress. In his book, *None of These Diseases*, Dr. S.I. McMillan says, "Medical science recognizes that emotions such as fear, sorrow, envy, resentment and hatred are responsible for the majority of our sicknesses. "

The anointed servant Jesus has come to heal us completely. When Jesus heals there is no scar whatsoever.

In the coming **New Year**, you will live in **a world** which will make you sick in many different ways. When you are sick emotionally, physically or spiritually, never forget that you are held in the arms of the One who knew tears and suffering. He is not a distant God who doesn't know your needs and fears. He knows pain. He knows what loss means. He knows suffering and betrayal, hunger and thirst. This is the Lord who will be with you and help you and turn your sorrow into joy. Make **your New Year's** resolution like this: "I will give Jesus my broken heart, sick body and spirit every day. I will let Jesus bind up all of my sickness."

Proclaiming freedom for the captives

The anointed servant proclaims freedom for the captives and releases the prisoners from darkness.

Before that event happened, God had already established an institution of freedom called "*the Year of Jubilee*" (Leviticus 25:8–55). Every fiftieth year Israel was to take the whole year off, cancel all debts, return to its original owners all family property that had been sold, and generally be kind and generous to everyone. "*Proclaim liberty throughout the land*" (Leviticus 25:10)—that was everyone's job for a whole year.

In today's text, Isaiah is saying that the anointed servant, Christ brings that liberation to its fullest realization. The cross of Christ cancels all our debts. God says we're free to leave the past behind and move on with joyful relief. That is the ministry of Jesus in your life. To start a new year with fresh spirit and hope, you need to hold on to this liberation.

There is a true story of an Indian Chief named Maskepetoon. He was a very violent young man who thought the purpose of life was to steal horses and scalp his enemies. Deep down in his heart was a hatred for his father's murderer. However, Maskepetoon met Jesus

and asked Him to be Lord over His life. With that came a change in the purpose of his life. After years he made peace with the enemy tribe of his father's killer. **As** he was finalizing this peace, he saw this old warrior - his father's killer, approach with the others. He ordered his best horse saddled and brought to the tent, then ordered the culprit to stand before him. The murderer expected to be killed. Instead he was asked to be seated. The Chief handed him his best, richly decorated **outfit**. Then Maskepetoon spoke, "You killed my father. There was a time when I would have cherished the drinking of your blood, but that time is past. You need not fear. You must now become a father to me. Wear my clothes, ride my horse. Tell your people that this is the way Maskepetoon takes revenge." "You have killed me, my son!" cried the old murderer. "Never in the history of my people has such a thing as this been known. My people and all men will say, 'The young Chief is brave and strong and good. He stands alone.'" What freed Maskepetoon of his hatred? Who gave Him new purpose in life? Jesus and Jesus alone!

Here is good news! There is no pit so deep that Jesus' hand cannot reach into and save. There is no chain so strong that Jesus cannot break. He is God's anointed – it is His purpose to set you free.

There was an eagle that had been living in a cage a long time. One day a man bought that eagle and set him free. However, he refused to fly out of the open door of his cage – he chose to stay in that limited space. Yes, it will survive there but it will never know the freedom of the open skies and the joy of being an eagle destined for the heights!

Jesus has purchased your life from the devil's snare and set you free. You have the freedom already. Do not let the devil deceive you with all kinds of accusations that you are still bound by curses. Claim the freedom and enjoy the freedom. Make a **New Year's**

resolution **to** enjoy the freedom and proclaim the freedom to many who do not have **this** freedom.