

SENT TO SAVE

ISAIAH 61:1-2 , LUKE 4:16-27

“The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because the Lord has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God...”

It seems that everybody today has *a screen name...*

Your **proper name** is a gift from your parents - *or perhaps a curse, if you don't like your name...*

Nicknames are coined by other people...

But a **screen name** is your own personal creation. It's an opportunity for self-expression. An online screen name is a reflection of who you perceive yourself to be, and how you want to be recognized by your peers...

My youngest son was an outstanding baseball player. He was a middle infielder who could vacuum up ground balls... So his screen name was [macthevac](#).

My second son was a soccer player - and a punter and place kicker for his HS football team - the South Gwinnett Comets. His screen name was [cometkicker](#).

Screen names are self-revelations.

And I loved my daughter's screen name. She called herself, [Godzgirl](#)... One look at that screen name and you know something about her life and her priorities.

Well, here's an interesting question, if Jesus had lived in our computer age, and if He had chosen for Himself a screen name, what do you think it would've been?

I think I know... How about **Isaiah61**.

That's the ID Jesus logs on with in Luke 4.

Luke 4 records an episode in Jesus' life where He drew on Isaiah 61:1-2. He saw Himself in a scroll written some 700 years earlier. When Jesus read the passage it was like looking in a mirror. He saw Himself and His mission in the portrait painted by the Prophet.

This AM we'll study this pivotal occasion in Luke 4. You've heard the expression, "**You never get a second chance to make a first**

impression." Here Jesus sets a precedent that carries over for the rest of His ministry.

We begin in 4:16, "So (Jesus) came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day."

Understand the setting... Jesus had been rolling through the cities of Galilee - healing the sick - casting out demons - speaking of the Kingdom of God.

And Jesus was creating quite a stir. Everyone had been asking, "*Who is this Man? Where does He come from? What is He up to? What are His intentions?*"

In fact, the speculation surrounding Jesus had reached a fevered pitch... was he **a rabbi** with a new interpretation of Scripture? Or **a political militant** out to break the Roman

shackles? Or **a prophet** sent from God with some special message? Or just **a magician**, skilled in the slight-of-hand and the arts of deception?

*Or was He... could He really be... was this man the long-awaited, promised deliverer... **the Messiah**?*

That's the kind of speculation swirling around Jesus when He came to His hometown of Nazareth, and entered the local synagogue on the Sabbath day.

Understand, Nazareth was the hub of several trade routes. It was like a truck stop - packed with caravans.

Since Jewish law limited travel on the Sabbath Day, most Saturdays saw the town crawling with visitors.

When word got out that Jesus was in town on that particular Sabbath - *and since everyone knew it was His habit to go to the*

synagogue - all the curious came out hoping to unravel the mystery surrounding Jesus.

Verse 16 tells us Jesus entered the synagogue, “and stood up to read.” It was customary for a visiting dignitary to read a passage from the Old Testament.

Verse 17 tells us, “And He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written...”

Jesus unrolled the scroll to the verses we read earlier - *what we call Isaiah 61* - a prophecy that explained in specific detail the mission of the Messiah.

Jesus read, “The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent

Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD."

That's when verse 20 tells us, "Then He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant and sat down."

That was the signal Jesus was ready to teach.

Today, pastors usually *stand up* to teach. In the first century synagogue the rabbis would sit down to teach.

Jesus is about to explain what He had read!

That's why we're told, "And the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on Him." Everyone inched up on the edge of their seat. Every eye was fixed on Jesus. They all knew Isaiah 61 was a picture of Messiah's ministry - and they were wondering if Jesus would claim this as *His* mission, or apply it to *another*...

And they didn't have to wait long for an answer. He speaks clearly in verse 21, "And He began to say to them, "Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

In other words, *"look no further. I am the One and today is the day! I am God's deliverer and what I've just read is My mission."* Jesus logs on with the screen name - **Isaiah61**. Here is what Jesus intends to do...

And it's vital that you and I understand the intentions of Jesus. He calls on us to give Him our all - to love Him with our whole heart, mind, soul, and strength.

Jesus expects us to pledge to Him our very lives.

Our Lord is bold. He's not a puppet king, or a figurehead. He wants to command our lives, and sit on the throne of our hearts. He expects to call the shots.

But here's the million dollar question, **“How can I give my life to Jesus if I'm unsure of His motives?”**

You've probably been in a country store, and seen the sign over the cash register, **“In God we trust - all others pay cash.”** Or perhaps you've heard the old adage, **“Trust everybody, but always cut the cards.”**

Who can we really trust?

It seems the older we get the harder it is for us to trust people. Once you've been let down a time or two it's difficult to rely on others. Life's disappointments and betrayals cause us to get hardhearted and cynical.

We're unwilling to trust in general. It's even difficult to trust Jesus if we're not confident of His intentions.

Imagine, you just purchased a new Ferrari Enzo - 660 hp, a V12, 6-speed - the list price is \$643,330. It gets 8 miles per gallon, but who cares! You're loaded.

But what if I asked you if I could borrow your car for a few hours. I don't care how nice a guy you happen to be - or how much you *might* trust me - before you hand over the keys you're going to inquire of my intentions...

And what if I told you I was going to do a little off-road exploring, *go mudding*, you'd tell me I was nuts...

But if I told you I need your new Ferrari to drive my ailing neighbor to the doc... *well, you'd also probably tell me "I'm nuts," but maybe you'd pray about it...*

Here's my point... my intentions will dictate the level of trust you place in me... The same is true with Jesus!

I need to be certain of the Master's motive if I'm really going to turn the keys of my life over to Him, and trust Him with my whole heart... This is what was going on in the synagogue that Sabbath Day in Nazareth....

Here Jesus spells out His intentions once and for all.

He wants no confusion - no misunderstandings.

Jesus wants you and I to know exactly what to expect if we give our lives to Him. That's why in Luke 4:18-19 Jesus quotes Isaiah

61 and describes what He intends to *do in you* once you *belong to Him...*

First, our Lord Jesus was anointed *or empowered* by the Spirit of God **“to preach the gospel to the poor.”**

The poor are often the neglected people - society's cast-offs and rejects. The world we live in tends to define a person's value by the balance in their bank account. When people talk about their *“net worth”* they're not talking about the value God places on their lives. They're talking about their financial assets.

Jesus identified not with the rich and wealthy, but with the poor. He was born to peasants, and lived among paupers. He died without a penny to His name.

Jesus knew what it meant to be poor, and His goal was to bring the *“gospel,”* or **good news,** to the poor.

A lot of people think Jesus' number one goal is to give *money* to the poor. In fact, some churches teach that God wants to make all Christians rich and wealthy.

But why would God give financial wealth when they can *add* to our misery as easily as they can *relieve* it.

There is a young man I coached in Little League basketball who several years ago won the lottery. He won \$9 million - bought a Hummer. I haven't talked to him since his windfall. I keep hoping to get a check in the mail thanking me for teaching him to dribble...

But I often think of him, and I wonder if he's any happier now than he was before he won the lottery?

A few years ago a study was done on people who had won their state's lottery, and for most people their winnings had made their lives worse rather than better.

Rosa Grayson, won the lottery in Washington, but today she lives in hiding. She's developed a case of nerves. She's a target for every con artist around.

A New York man won a million dollars and split it with his two sons. A year later the boys were no longer speaking to their dad - his wife was accusing him of hiding the money. All three were in state court for the nonpayment of income tax. The wife commented on her husband's winnings, "It's the devil's own money."

Here's what Jesus brings to the poor... *not money, but good news*. Jesus teaches us that with or without money He can give our lives worth and purpose.

Whether you wear designer clothes, or own a house with a swimming pool, or drive a luxury car, or travel to exotic destinations - don't let that define who you are.

Money doesn't equal happiness. Jesus brings joy!

There are lots of ways to be poor... To be poor is to be without... *money, sure...* but I've met lots of *poor rich people*. Folks *with money* - but without love, and without friends, and without joy, and without peace of mind, and without a good reason to get out of bed...

Jesus loves those without... He tells us real joy isn't found in *material treasures*, but in *spiritual blessings*.

Movie star Brad Pitt recently commented, “I’m the guy who’s got everything... But I’m telling you, once you get everything, then you’re just left with yourself.

I’ve said it before and I’ll say it again: It doesn’t help you sleep any better, and you don’t wake up any better because of it. Now, no one’s going to want to hear that. I understand it. I’m sorry I’m the guy who’s got to say it. But I’m telling you.” Brad Pitt is giving you the bad news - all the world’s riches won’t produce happiness.

But Jesus brings us good news! Whether you’re rich or poor, live with Jesus and life will be richer, fuller, more rewarding. Jesus brings good news to the poor!

Second, Jesus **“heals the brokenhearted.”**

I read recently that the number one ailment in America is back pain. But trust me, the *broken hearts* far outnumber the *sore backs*. The brokenhearted have tasted of life's injustices. They've looked for love and walked away disappointed. The brokenhearted are the innocent victims - *the used, and abused, and refused*.

And Jesus loves the broken hearted - *for He is one of them!* He was rejected by those He came to save, and He was betrayed by those who knew Him best.

Often people ask why does God allow the innocent to suffer?... *And I admit, there are no easy answers.*

But one truth stands out. God doesn't dish out what He hasn't experience Himself. Jesus literally died of a broken heart. In Isaiah 61 the Hebrew word translated "**broken**" means "**to burst.**"

Most crucifixion victims died of asphyxiation, but those who've studied the crucifixion of Jesus believe His overworked heart exploded in His chest. Jesus died of a ruptured heart.

And in so doing, He found a way to bring us healing.

Perhaps you've been betrayed or taken advantage of by someone who was supposed to be loyal. Your heart has been broken. It aches, and bleeds, and cries...

Realize, Jesus wants to heal your broken heart.

But here's how the healing of Jesus works...

He's like a balm, or a poultice. Today's doctors like to perform surgery. They cut you open and yank out the problem. But in Jesus' day surgeries were rarely tried.

The doctor understood that the body healed itself and his job was to accentuate the healing process.

The doctor would take a cloth lubricated with aloes and neutralizing herbs. He would lay it over the wound.

The compress *soaked into the skin, and sucked out the deadly poisons*. Rather than a procedure, healing was a process that over time worked by absorption.

And this is the healing Jesus performs.

Often we want Jesus to cut us open and immediately fix the problem - remove the struggle altogether - but that's not always how He works. The love of Jesus is a balm that over time sucks out the poison and the pain.

As Jeremiah said to Israel, "Is there no balm in Gilead, Is there no physician there? Why then is there no recovery for the health of... My people?" Gilead was home to a tree which produced a gummy substance.

Rags were coated with this resin, and placed on the wound. They sucked out the toxins and the infection.

And the "Balm of Gilead" became a title for the Messiah. Jesus is a poultice that goes over the broken heart. As we get to know Him, His virtue is absorbed.

As we experience His love, and feel His forgiveness, and begin to see ourselves in Christ... healing occurs.

This is what the NT calls, "abiding in Christ."

It's learning to live under the poultice of God's grace. Gradually, hurts are pulled to the surface and dissipate. Once festering soars dry up. Jesus is our healing!

I read an American Medical Association report that said the average wait for an appointment with a doctor is 20 minutes - for a family physician its half-an-hour.

But Jesus is ready to see you right now!

It's His intention to heal your brokenness. It's been said, "God can do wonders with a broken heart, if you give Him all the pieces." Begin to learn of Jesus. Show Him where it hurts! Let the poultice begin its healing.

Third, Jesus **“proclaims liberty to the captives.”**

According to the Justice Department 1 out of every 200 people will be jailed at some point in their life.

That's an alarming statistic! That means a couple of folks here this morning will one day end up in jail!

But here's an even worse statistic... *One out of every one person experiences the prison called sin.* John 8:34 tells us, "Whoever commits sin is a slave to sin." The worse aspect of sin is its habitual nature...

Sometimes you'll hear a person say, "This one time won't hurt." And it might not, if he could stop with once.

But sin and Lays potato chips have this in common, "You can't eat just one!" Sin establishes a pattern.

Continual sin carves a rut in your mind from which it's difficult to escape. It's said, "Sin takes us farther than we wanted to go,

costs more than we wanted to pay, and keeps us longer than we wanted to stay.”

But here's good news - *Jesus specializes in jail breaks!* He has power to bust sin's addictive hold.

Jesus is strong enough to snap the chains of sin.

He can lift you out of sin's rut and set you free. Jesus is able to deliver captives who were controlled by sin.

Always remember, Jesus didn't say He would take away our temptation. I know people who keep waiting on Jesus to do what He never promised to do...

Nowhere does Jesus say He'll remove the tempting situation - but if we look to Him, and trust in Him, He promises to deliver us out of the temptation situation.

We sin not because we *give out* of strength to resist temptation. God is sufficient to supply us His power.

We sin because we *give up* - and we *give in*.

We lose confidence and hope in God. We give in to our urges rather than battle them with God's power.

If you've failed God in the past - if you're drowning in a sea of guilt and buried under a blanket of shame - *if you're still battling the monster...* remember Jesus is able to deliver the captives. It's His intention for you.

I once saw a documentary about the famed football coach at Grambling University, Eddie Robinson...

Every morning before daybreak Coach Robinson would walk through the athletic dormitory and wake his players with a

cowbell. He'd walk the halls talking about the opportunities awaiting his men. *"You get to go to class... There's practice today... Today is the day you begin to prepare yourself for the rest of your life..."*

By filling their minds with today's possibilities, *not yesterday's failures*, he helped his players forge a new start, and become the men he knew they could be.

And this is what Jesus does. He opened the prison doors on the cross of Calvary. His power is available. Now He proclaims it to the captives until they believe!

Then Jesus brings **"recovery of sight to the blind."**

Once a busy psychiatrist was warned by his receptionist, *"We've got a weird guy out in the lobby. He believes he's invisible."*

Without thinking, the doctor told her, “Please, tell him I can’t see him right now.”

Did you know that two out of every three Americans will wear eyeglasses at some point in their lives?

There are lots of people who can’t see. And this is not only true *physically*, but *more so spiritually*. There are many people who live in a fog to the things of God.

Once, a husband who was driving home from work.

His wife was watching the evening news, and called him on his cell phone. “Honey, I just saw on the news there’s a car driving the wrong way on 285. I know that’s your route home. I just wanted to warn you.”

The husband replied, “Thanks, but it’s not just one car. It’s hundreds of them!” Obviously, he didn’t realize he was the wrong-

way driver... And the same can be true of us. Until we see life from God's perspective we too are in danger of self-deception - wrong-way living.

Proverb 14:12 tells us, "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death." We desperately need for God to open our eyes to His truth.

Once, a scientist discovered a beautiful, but tiny flower that grew in the highlands of Scotland. He was in the fields - on his knees - bending over in the grass - uprooting a few of the microscopic flowers.

An old shepherd approached the scientist, and asked him what he was doing. The scientist took him back to his truck. He put a flower under a microscope.

He then invited the old man to take a look... The shepherd groaned, “What a gorgeous flower, and imagine, I’ve been trampling them my whole life.”

This is the problem with a lot of us. God is at work all around us. He loves us in a million ways. God opens doors, and works miracles, and reveals Himself - but often we don’t see. We’re trudging through life trampling on the things He’s planted along our path.

And it’s interesting, just going to church - or prayer - or reading your Bible can’t cure a spiritual blindness.

You don't cure a blind man by turning up the light.

It takes a more radical procedure. A doc has to treat us and work on us. And Jesus is the Great Physician - the only physician - who can open spiritual eyes.

Imagine blind Bartimaeus. He'd never seen a sunrise, or a baby smile, or a red rose; yet when Jesus touched his eyes all those sights and more, came into focus.

Before we know Christ we see the world in shades of gray. Things are blurred at best. But when He touches our eyes, we're made aware of God's presence.

We see His glory and greatness and grace. His ways and will are understandable. A new world opens up to us. Jesus wants to bring recovery of sight to the blind.

Fifth, Jesus **“sets at liberty those who are oppressed.”** Literally, **“oppressed”** means **“bruised.”**

This phrase could be translated, **“Jesus brings freedom to those who've been bruised emotionally.”**

A bruise is a sign of bleeding under the skin. And this is also the cause of emotional or spiritual bruising. The person Jesus is thinking of is hemorrhaging spiritually.

The oppressed aren't hard to pick out of a crowd...

The emotionally bruised is the young lady bent on destructive behavior - her rebellion masks her pain...

Or it's the angry man - the bully - who's tough on the outside to hide the hurt he feels on the inside... Or it's the calloused adult who protects themselves from disappointments by pretending they no longer care...

The bruised are like the brokenhearted. They've also been letdown by life - **but the bruised have given up.**

They're no longer open to the possibility of healing.

They've sealed off their hearts. They've withdrawn and turned bitter. They're bleeding spiritually - dying on the inside - and they refuse to let anybody know.

And understand the cure for bitterness is not *healing*, it's "**liberty.**" A *broken heart* needs to be healed, but a *bitter spirit* - a hard, tough, prideful, never-wrong kind of attitude needs to be repented of and forsaken.

It might have been someone else's fault that your heart was broken, but if you allow yourself to be bitter it's now your responsibility. You need to admit your sin.

You've got to open your heart to Jesus for help.

Imagine breaking your arm, yet never going to the doctor to get the bone reset. Your arm could heal crooked. You could end up with a dysfunctional arm.

Well, this is the problem with many a person's psyche - *the broken hearted can heal crooked.*

If you didn't take your broken heart to Jesus, now in addition to the break, you've got other complications.

This is why people develop phobias, and suffer from depression, and guilt complexes, and inhibitions, and bitterness, and a critical spirit, and the inability to trust.

Only Jesus can realign a broken spirit. He alone can free us from lingering inner bleeding. He has a cure - Jesus has a serum for bitterness... It's called "love."

Jesus loves us in a way that it makes us want to love again... He forgives in a way that allows us to forgive ourselves and others... He revives hope in me, so I'll believe there's hope for you... His love casts out fear!

Our Lord Jesus can reset the *bitter* and relieve the *bruised* - and free them both from their oppression.

Here's the Messiah's motive... Jesus intends to bring good news to those who are without - to heal broken hearts - to break the captive's chains - to recover our spiritual sight - to love the oppressed until they're free...

And lastly, Jesus comes to **“preach the acceptable year of the Lord.”** Or as one commentator interprets it, **“To announce, this is God's year to act!”** He's saying, this all isn't just wishful thinking. God will do this today!

What Jesus has described, He'll make a reality.

I heard of a restaurant in Florida that continues to have a sign in front that reads, “Free lunch tomorrow!”

This sign gets a lot of attention, but it's been up over a decade, and not a single free lunch has ever been served. *Free anything tomorrow is a hollow promise.*

That's why Jesus is saying He's ready to act right now! Jesus isn't just promising us changed lives tomorrow. He intends to do this work in us today!

Bear Bryant use to tell a funny story from his days as coach of the Kentucky Wildcats. In a game against Tennessee a runner fumbled the ball out of bounds.

In the chaotic scramble that ensued, someone on the sideline kicked over a box - *spilling eight more footballs onto the field...* Players from both teams fought to recover nine different footballs. And nobody knew which ball was the original - neither players or referees.

Bryant recalls that since Tennessee scooped up five footballs - and Kentucky recovered only four footballs - the officials awarded the possession to Tennessee.

But the moral of the story is clear... **when opportunity bounces your direction make sure you pounce on it!**

And this should've been the attitude of the Jews who had heard Jesus' sermon in the synagogue. What an opportunity! But sadly, they refused to get on the ball.

At first, they were so close to believing Jesus' intentions... Verse 22, "So all bore witness to Him, and marveled at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth." They were on the very verge of faith.

But that's when some loud mouth in the back of the room piped up and said, "Is this not Joseph's son?"

In other words, *we know this Guy*. We went to kindergarten with Him. We were on the same Little League team. *That's just Joseph's kid*. We use to see Him playing in the back of the carpenter's shop...

He's no different than the rest of us. Immediately, their hope were doused with a bucket of cold cynicism.

Jesus responds to the scoffers in verse 23, "You will surely say this proverb to Me, 'Physician, heal yourself!'"

Whatever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in Your country." Then He said, "Assuredly, I say to you, no prophet is accepted in his own country."

In other words, the locals couldn't believe that one of their own could actually be the Messiah. As the old saying, "Familiarity breeds contempt." But that's putting it too mildly. They were too stubborn to admit that God had been in their midst, and they'd missed Him. The folks in the synagogue stumbled over *simple pride*.

But this wasn't the first time the pride of God's people had robbed them of a blessing. Jesus tells the two stories of how Israel had missed out on a visitation from God. And in both cases the problem was pride.

Jesus says in verse 25, “But I tell you truly, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, and there was a great famine throughout all the land; but to none of them was Elijah sent except to Zarephath, in the region of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow.”

There were plenty of hungry widows in Israel, but it took a woman from outside God’s family to humble herself - to trust God enough to bring her need to Him.

Then Jesus tells a second story with the same morale, “And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian.” Again, the territory of Israel was full of lepers, but it took a Syrian, a foreigner, to admit his need, and ask God for healing.

In both cases humility is the star, and pride is the villain. Pride is the hurdle between *our need* and *the intentions of Jesus*. Don't pretend you don't need Him!

Jesus intends to bring good news to those that are without, *if we stop acting like we've got it all together...*

He wants to heal the broken hearted, *but the broken have to bring all the pieces of their heart to Jesus...*

Jesus promises to deliver you from the prison of sin, *but you've got to own the mess you've made...*

He'll open blind eyes, *if you really want to see...*

Jesus heals bruises, *if you give up your bitterness...*

And this isn't just pie-in-the-sky, fanciful, wishful thinking - He'll do it all today, *if you and I will swallow our pride and come to Jesus on His terms.*

A lifeguard is trained to approach a drowning person cautiously. Often he'll wait until the person burns up all his energy - they're just about to go under for the last time - before he swims out to attempt a rescue.

For if he jumps in too early the drowning person can pull him under too. It's only after a person has given up trying to save themselves, that they can truly be saved.

And the same is true with us. Jesus has wonderful intentions for our lives... but He waits until we're willing to acknowledge our need and lean on Him for help...

Here's the really good news...

What Isaiah predicted of the Messiah - His heart and His mission - was as true that day in Nazareth as it was the day

Isaiah 61 was first written. 700 years had done nothing to dim or diminish the determination of Jesus to fulfill His intentions toward His people.

And likewise, nothing has changed from that day in Nazareth until today. The intentions of Jesus are the same now as they were 2000 years ago... The Bible declares, “**Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.**” The intentions of Jesus never change!...

He wants to meet the needs we're living without...

He wants to heal the hearts this world has broken...

He wants to free those who are enslaved to sin...

He wants to provide spiritual sight to us all...

He wants to love us so deeply we'll love again...

And He wants to do it today... IF you and I will step over our sinful, stubborn pride... and lean on Jesus.