

The Message of Christmas brings Joy

Isaiah 61:1-11

Sometimes we experience a letdown after Christmas. Our family members weren't as happy about our gifts as we expected them to be. We second guess how much we spent on gifts and food when the credit card bills come due. We ate too many Christmas cookies and gained more weight than we thought. We begin to wonder, how can we avoid the letdown and experience the joy of Christmas year-round?

Isaiah 61 is a passage that Jesus read from when he spoke in the synagogue in Nazareth at the beginning of his ministry (Luke 4:16-21). It reminds us that *we can be joyful because of the good news of Christmas.*

We can experience the joy of Christmas because ...

- Jesus brings a message of good news from God (1a).

God anointed Jesus with the Holy Spirit and sent him to earth with a message of hope.

- Jesus mends the broken hearted (1b).

Jesus can heal the hearts of those so broken by life that they despair.

- Jesus liberates the captives (1c).

Jesus brings freedom to those so enslaved that they cannot break free.

- Jesus brings the favor and blessing of God (2a).

The year of God's favor is associated with salvation.

- Jesus brings judgment on the wicked (2b).

A prolonged time of blessing is followed by a short time of punishment for oppressors.

- Jesus comforts those who mourn (2c).

Good news of salvation is a comfort for those who think their sins have doomed them.

- Jesus replaces mourning with honor (3a).

In place of the ashes of mourning we will wear a crown of honor.

- Jesus blesses people with stability and growth (3b).

God's righteousness will make us strong and durable like an oak tree.

- Jesus rebuilds broken lives and replaces shame with honor (4).

God gives back everything that sin has ruined.

- Jesus gives us the privilege of serving as his priests to tell others about God (6).

We have the privilege and opportunity of introducing others to God.

- Jesus gives us a double portion of blessing (7).

In place of shame, we can enjoy God's overflowing, abundant blessings.

- Jesus gives us the trustworthy promises of God (8).

We can confidently trust God's promises because he loves justice and hates evil.

- All who see God's blessing will know that we belong to God (9).

We will serve as witnesses of God's grace and blessing.

- We can rejoice because God will clothe us like a bride and groom on their wedding day (10).

God will clothe us in righteousness and cause us to rejoice.

- We can praise God for his harvest of righteousness (11).

In the same way that a garden blooms and grows, so God will cause his righteousness to grow in us.

***We can be joyful because of the good news of Christmas.
Celebrate the Son all year long!***