

Beauty for Ashes—The Crown— February 27th and March 1st, 2020

Isaiah 61.1-3

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The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me,
because the Lord has anointed me
to proclaim 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 joy
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.

Luke 4.18-19

"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

Read and Discuss

Introduction

Pastor Jacob began a new series for the season of Lent. Lent is a season of 40 days (not including Sundays) that leads us to Easter Sunday. The season started on Ash Wednesday. On that night, hundreds of us gathered at Providence to prepare through repentance and recognition of our need for God. We put ashes on our head as a sign of that. In the message this weekend, we heard about a Messiah (Jesus) who came to give us a crown of beauty in exchange for our ashes.

Engage the Scripture

- Read Isaiah 61.1-3. What do you think of when you read the words "anointed one"? Look up these other references to the same term. Who is being referred to in each verse? What does it mean for them to be identified in this way?

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- 1 Chronicles 16.22
- Psalm 45.7
- Acts 10.38
- We often hear this passage and immediately think of Jesus. Imagine hearing this passage as one who lived in a time hundreds of years before Jesus was born. How might this passage sound to you? Have you ever put hope in an unknown savior and been disappointed? God's people waited hundreds of years for these words to be fulfilled.
- Read Luke 4.18-19. When Jesus announced his identity and purpose he read Isaiah 61 from a scroll. He was reading meaning "out of" the scripture (as opposed to reading meaning "into" scripture). The distinction is important. John 1 affirms that the Son of God was present at creation and through him all things were made. So when Isaiah was written, Jesus WAS. How does this impact the way you hear these words from Jesus now?
- The original recipients of Isaiah's words didn't know Jesus, but they hoped for him. Has your hope in Jesus ever helped you through seasons of doubt? Describe.
- Who in your life needs to hear words of anointing from you? Who needs to receive a crown of beauty for their ashes?

Pray

God, some of us know very well what it's like to wear the ashes of grief, or sin, or simply a feeling of being disconnected from you. In some moments, it is like we are walking around in a cloud of dust. In this season of Lent, let us see the ashes for what they are— signs of our need for you. And let us not allow these ashes to become our new normal. You have sent the Messiah, our Rescuer who exchanges beauty for these ashes. Every day of this season, let us feel you place a crown of beauty on our heads.