

## The Cross of Christ is the Power: Part One

Isaiah 61:1-3

July 14, 2024

Rev Joe Sanders

First Baptist Church Coshocton, Ohio

The cross of Jesus Christ is the power. I believed it has been the power even before I knew Jesus. It is the power that is unchangeable. It is the power that is eternal. It is the power to save. Lots of people like to wear crosses. But not many know its power.

For me the cross is not just the place of death, but it is the beginning of a new life. As I consider my own life, I am nothing without the cross of Jesus. As I look at Jesus, everything He did as God's Messiah is empty without the cross. Meeting the needs of the poor is insufficient without the cross. Ministering to the brokenhearted will not last without the cross. Setting prisoners free will only result in captivity without the cross.

I need the cross, and the tomb, and the resurrection to make everything fall into place. I am poor, brokenhearted, and imprisoned without Jesus.

***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, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, 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. Isaiah 61:1–3 (NIV)***

**The ultimate fulfillment of these words is found in Jesus.** Jesus quoted these words as He began His ministry. He was making it clear that His earthly ministry was about serving people, by meeting the needs of the most desperate, and making them into firm and strong people who glorify God. He did this throughout His life, even in death, and His resurrection.

When Jesus quoted this passage it was after His baptized and tempted by the devil. He was speaking in the synagogue in His hometown of Nazareth. Many were excited to have Him speak and were amazed. Others refused to believe this prophecy applied to Him since they knew Him all of His life. Then Jesus spoke words of judgment and they attempted to kill Him.

Jesus shared this message to proclaim His mission in life. He wanted His family and friends to believe in Him and join Him. Jesus carried out His mission by bringing Good News; comforting; proclaiming; sharing God's justice. No one can argue about the ministry of Jesus. It is recorded over and over how Jesus did all that this prophecy proclaimed. It is because Jesus did these things that people were amazed and He became famous. As a result of Jesus doing each thing in this prophecy He could not enter towns or cities without crowds gathering around Him.

Jesus' message was to the poor, the brokenhearted, the prisoner, and the grieving. They were filled with riches, their hearts were healed, their prison cells were opened and they were comforted.

The poor represents those who are living impoverished lives. The word also speaks to those who are spiritually empty, and weakened. The brokenhearted are those who have believed and loved, been

faithful only to see tragedy and disappointment. They had put their trust in kings, religious leaders and God did not answer as they wanted.

The captive, the prisoners, are those who are in a jail cell. They are also those trapped by false beliefs, unable to see a way to be set free. Those who mourn have suffered a great loss. They have lost loved ones. They have lost cherished things. They have lost hope.

Jesus ministered to all of them while He walked this earth. We minister to all of them in His name as we walk this earth.

***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, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. Isaiah 61:1-2 (NIV)***

**We see our poverty, our despair, our prison, and we forget that there is hope.** We have trusted in people. Throughout our lives we have put our trust in people. Then people do what people do, they make mistakes. Which leaves us disappointed.

Isaiah shared these words in response to his prophecies about God's coming judgment. Three hundred years earlier King David and his son King Solomon died. Then the nation of Israel was divided. One king took the northern portion of the nation and kept the name Israel. Another king took the southern portion of the nation, a smaller portion that included Jerusalem and the temple. This nation was called Judah or the Southern Kingdom.

The Northern Kingdom had one evil, idol worshiping king after another. The people lived as their king lived. God sent one prophet after another calling the kings and the people from their sin. Eventually, after their failure to repent, the Northern Kingdom was destroyed by a foreign army, and the people were made slaves.

The Southern Kingdom or Judah was witness to an ever changing landscape of kings who followed the Lord, and others who worshiped idols. Isaiah was one of God's prophets that lived through those years with faithful kings and evil kings. Isaiah's prophecies consisted of condemning the evil kings of Judah and other nations.

He also spoke the promises of God's protection and restoration of the people who remained faithful. This message is one of those promises of God's restoration of His people. Isaiah's message was applied to the people of His day and also to the future. We know that Jesus claimed this as a message about Himself.

We are not much different today than the people living when Isaiah was a prophet. We are living in a time when people of every level of society fail to follow God, but follow their own desires. We are living in a time when the people worship pleasure, personal desires, and things.

In our time the poor are growing in numbers, the brokenhearted are grasping at anything in order to find hope. In our time people are held captive without walls. We are living in time where mourning has turned to anger. We are living in a time when violence and hate are seen as the answers.

Isaiah speaks a word of hope, God had seen their situation. Isaiah's words promise deliverance and a new life offered only through faith in God.

When people fail us and they will, Jesus will not. His promises are true. His power overcomes. His love endures. The cross makes our hope real.

We have put our faith in things. The ancient people of Judah from time to time followed a king that worshiped idols. Isaiah, God's prophet, spoke against this idol worship. Some times the people repented. There were always those who trusted the Lord. They rejected the things that pretended to be gods. They stood firm in their faith in the Lord and His promises.

Things will never satisfy us. As much as we trust in houses, cars, money, and all sorts of things, they are all temporary. Jesus is alive. His death on the cross and resurrection from the tomb make it clear that His power is real, that His promises are true.

No matter what false idea we have adopted, Jesus has come to us in our poverty with the truth. He has seen our broken hearts and He can heal us. He knows our prison and He will set us free. He mourns with us bringing hope and peace. He will raise us up like strong trees that cannot be shaken.

***the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, 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.*** Isaiah 61:2-3 NIV

**These promises point us to a new and inspired life.** Jesus identified His earthly ministry with the first half of this prophecy. He will fulfill the second half of this prophecy when He returns. Then there will be judgement, God's vengeance on sin and evil.

When Jesus returns there will be a new life. For all those who believe Jesus has fulfilled these promises, they are living this new life right now. No one can get to the second half of the prophecy without Jesus. Every poor, pathetic, impoverished, brokenhearted, and imprisoned person must hear the Good News, have their hearts mended, be set free from their sin, and experience the favor of the Lord.

I think about how the Holy Spirit is upon me, living in me and through me. I ask myself, how does this passage apply to me? Those who are poor - physically, emotionally, and spiritually – need good news. People whose hearts are broken need comfort. Prisoners trapped by their sin need to be released. Those who are unjustly held captive need to be set free. When we mourn we need to experience the favor of the Lord.

Can you or I do all of this? What can I do with such a great need? To focus in on one means another gets left out. Just one seems too big for anyone person.

When we join Jesus in His ministry we are revealing His promises. As we encounter those who have nothing, we will be generous. When we are with the brokenhearted, we will have words of comfort. We will give the keys of the Kingdom to those who are bound and imprisoned. People will be blessed with riches from God's hand. They will see through their grief to eternity. They will be released from the destructive powers of sin and evil.

When we join Jesus in His ministry people are able to see and experience the power of the cross in their lives. The cross is more than two beams of wood. It is the place where Jesus became our sin. It is the place where He demonstrated that His life has been lived for us. It is the place where apparent defeat was turned into victory. The cross is the beginning of the end of death and the start of new life. The cross of Jesus is the power.

***They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendor. Isaiah 61:3 (NIV)***

**There is an unspoken invitation in these words: Join Jesus in His ministry.** The poor, brokenhearted, imprisoned, and grief-stricken may end up in hell unless they have Jesus.

Jesus knew this and died so that no one would need to be in hell. That includes you and me. Jesus died and rose from the dead for the most desperate of people. Too many people don't know they're desperate for Jesus. Jesus knows them.

We know them. No matter how small your circle of friends and strangers there is someone who is poor, brokenhearted, imprisoned, and grief-stricken. Your circle can be one person, you, and it is filled with someone who needs Jesus. Someone who is desperate.

It doesn't take long to find someone who needs Jesus. They may not even know that they need Jesus. They may not understand that Jesus can meet their needs. But, that doesn't mean they don't need Jesus. It's easy for us to proclaim that a person is spiritually poor. We can see the people who have been let down, betrayed, or forgotten. We know when someone is being held captive by their sin. We recognize grief when we see it.

Jesus can minister to them. Jesus can save all of them from their sins. We need to join Jesus in this ministry.

You and I have the power of the cross of Jesus in your lives. We have been spiritually impoverished, but now we have been made rich. Our hearts of have been broken, but now we now we are filled with hope and joy. Our chains have been removed, we have been set free from the power of sin. Our grief has been real and devastating, but we have the hope of eternal life.

As we join Jesus in His ministry by giving ourselves to Him, we will attend to the spiritually poor. We will encourage the brokenhearted. We will bring the keys that open prison doors. We will comfort the grieving.

Giving yourself to Jesus begins by proclaiming that you need Him. Regardless of your status in life, you need Jesus. Every experience in your life demonstrates that Jesus needs to enter your life. You can pretend, you can worship false ideas, things, and even your own desires. Every action, every word, every thought is pointing toward your need for Jesus.

Giving yourself to Jesus is allowing Him to forgive you. Jesus wants to take away your sins. Jesus wants to fill you with hope. Jesus wants change your life and give you life in heaven for eternity.

Now is your moment to give your life to Jesus. Now is your moment to join Jesus in His ministry. Speak the name of Jesus. Call Jesus into your life.