

## Isaiah 61 – The Change Agent

---

We have a love/hate relationship with change. For example when we are young we want to be old and when we are old we want to be young again. I had a birthday through the week and I was reminded that getting old means change. I now know that when you go to get a haircut the hairdresser starts cutting hair not just from the top of your head but other parts as well. So I now get my eyebrows cut as well. This week we have had Census. No doubt what will be discovered is how things have changed. Many of us have changed houses or jobs. Life is about change.

God is the god of change. Change is the character of the Christian life. God has often raised up change agents throughout history. His change agent par excellence is Jesus. We see him described so clearly around 800 years beforehand in Isaiah 61.

In Isaiah 56-66 we learn how to live as we wait for Christ's return. God's people have the promises of God. They had the start of the promises but not the fulfilment. So for us we have the promises of Jesus and we live in the last days as wait for the fulfilment of those promises when Jesus returns.

Let's have a look at Isaiah 61 and what it says about how to live.

### 1. The Change Agent

#### Read: 1

[1a] He is someone of extraordinary importance. The Sovereign Lord of the whole universe especially empowers him, filling him with his Spirit. [1b] He is anointed and sent by God, himself.

The language here reminds us of other important figures in Isaiah – the King [11:1-2] and the Servant [42:1]. IN Isaiah 59 & 63 saw this person as the Conquering King . The reality is that the Servant and the King are one person.

He comes to bring change by preaching. To bring good news. News of restoration and deliverance.

This person is Jesus. Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit; baptised in the Spirit; the Spirit descends on him at his own baptism; he is filled with the Spirit; the Spirit sends him into the desert; he returns to Galilee in the power of the Spirit; and he stands up in the synagogue and reads Isaiah 61.

Read Luke 4:14-22

What a climax! "This is me – the Servant, the King – the Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me. I am the one promised in Isaiah."

*When Siena was born there was a complication and soon after she was born Belinda was rushed off. I was left holding the baby. It seemed like the longest time I had ever waited for anything waiting for her to come out. It was such good when the person came and told me everything was ok.*

*We love when people bring good news.*

Jesus brings good news that is better than we can ever imagine. Let's have a look at what it will involve.

### 2. The Changes for His people

God's people had been oppressed and suffering and the Servant announces change.

#### Read: 3-6

Those who are poor in spirit, broken hearted because they crave God's blessing, and captive within their spirits – these people will know freedom. [2] The year of jubilee stands behind this picture of all debts being cancelled and the people experiencing God's liberating forgiveness. The key word seems to be 'instead' [3,7] as their spirits are lifted to experience hope, light, refreshment and joy. The city will be rebuilt [4] and the nations will

serve God's people [5]. God's people will serve the world as they serve him [6]. God is keeping his covenant promises to bless. And notice all this is for God's glory [3b].

If try to make ourselves mighty we burn ourselves up but if we admit we are helpless and doomed God gives us beauty. We are made to be mirrors; when his beauty is reflected in us, we become beautiful.

We are reading about God's people being brought out of exile but also something far greater. All of these physical images translate for us into 'spiritual blessings.' Ephesians 1:3 says we have every spiritual blessing in Christ.

When Jesus came he started the day of the Lord's favour. A time to turn to him. He shows the physical side of things in glimpses as he healed and restored. But he also showed there was a deeper problem as he preached to restore people to God.

The 1996 Buyback took 600,000 newly illegal sporting firearms and the 2003 handgun buyback compensated the confiscation of about 50,000 newly illegal pistols. They were both times of amnesty.

South Africa's Truth & Reconciliation Commission was the first truth commission to offer amnesty to individuals who fully disclosed in public their involvement in politically motivated crimes. It is said that it was almost certainly the most extensive investigation into past injustices the world has known. What was being offered to people was a *complete and full pardon, removing any legal memory of any action that has taken during the years of apartheid.*

We are still in the time of amnesty. Jesus started the time to turn to him. One day he will come again and that will be the day of vengeance. We are to make sure we get ready while there is still time.

See v.4. We still live in a world where people are hurting desperately. We must offer medical and educational help, social work and advocacy, to campaign for social justice or political liberation. This to offer a taste of the new creation.

Read v.6 The core thing for Jesus was restoring relationship with God. He was hated for it and suffered because of it – and we will too. Remember the difference between treating the symptoms and the cause, between band-aids and cures – and be committed to the cure. People's hearts can be mended forever. We can experience freedom from sin, Satan and death itself.

### **3. The Praise for Change**

#### **Read: 10-11**

Isaiah sings a song of praise. It is like he represents all God's people. Praise and thanks are the natural response to grace.

What is he giving thanks for? What GOD has done and will do. The same things we saw earlier in the passage are summarised. We can be clothed in salvation. Robed in righteousness.

This is not just for him. He knows that God who has set him right will one day set the whole world right. v.11.

Romans 1:16-17 says: "*I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. <sup>17</sup> For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed.*"

2 Corinthians 5:21 says: "*God made him who had no sin to be sin<sup>[a]</sup> for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*" Jesus takes our sin and gives us his righteousness.

Isaiah 61:10-11 is the theme song of the redeemed for all time.

There is a famous photo of a man dancing in the street at the end of WWII. It captures the response of people to the news that the War was over. After years of war this is the natural response to hearing good news. The natural response to knowing you will now live in peace.

What is on your heart and mind at the moment? It is most likely that you won't even have to think about it. It is already there. It could be a personal issue because of sickness or a relationship. It could be because what is going on in the world.

Know this: Things will not go on as they are for ever. One day will bring them to a sudden end. The intervening time, is a time of opportunity. It is not to be taken lightly, for judgment awaits for those who carelessly let it pass.