The Planting of the Lord  
Isaiah 61:1-4

After His baptism in the Jordan River and the 40 day fast and temptation in the wilderness, Jesus went to his own hometown and entered His synagogue. And as was the custom of the Jews, He was called upon to read from the scripture. Nothing out of the ordinary so far! The scripture He chose to read was the one we will look into as our text this morning – Isaiah 61.

Luke 4:14–20 (NKJV) Then Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and news of Him went out through all the surrounding region. 15 And He taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all. 16 So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read. 17 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: 18 “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; 19 To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD.” 20 Then He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on Him.

Great words, well-known words and words which all who heard them no doubt enjoyed. Having finished the reading he sat down. Again... nothing out of the ordinary so far. Yet there was something in the way that Jesus read these words that made all who were there sit with their eyes transfixed on Him even after He had finished and sat down then He said to them...

Luke 4:21–22 (NKJV) ... “Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.” 22 So all bore witness to Him, and marveled at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth. And they said, “Is this not Joseph’s son?”

That statement was definitely out of the ordinary! The members of the synagogue thought they were going along to a normal Saturday meeting... but they got so much more! (There was a radical Jesus in the house!) Jesus said ‘today this scripture has been fulfilled.’ It was the prophecy given by Isaiah that has remained unfulfilled for the previous 700 years. But that morning, in that moment, it was fulfilled.

Jesus wasn’t just quoting Isaiah. He was quoting what Isaiah had heard from Him, and said about Him, 700 years prior. Jesus was saying ‘I am the one He was speaking about. I am the anointed one, the one who has been sent to heal the broken-hearted and set the captives free.’ The people couldn’t believe what they were hearing! Can’t you imagine what was racing through their minds? – ‘Wait a minute, isn’t this Joseph’s son? Isn’t this the carpenter? “Hey Avraham, didn’t Jesus do that remodeling at your house and build that table and chairs?” “Zachias, didn’t this guy build that cart for you?” “He can’t be the Messiah, we all know His Momma & Daddy?” “And yet, they said, no one has spoken like this before. How gracious are His words!”

This is the beginning of Jesus’ public ministry and the prophecy of Isaiah was being fulfilled before their eyes. So let’s look at how the Lord God Himself is revealed in this passage and also see who we have been called to become. He is …

I. A GOD OF GRACE

Isaiah 61:1–2 (NKJV) “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; 2 To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, And the day of vengeance of our God; To comfort all who mourn,

Before Jesus came, there had been 400 years of silence since Malachi with no recognized prophet declaring the will of God. You can imagine what these chosen people must have thought. Has God forsaken us, does He hate us? When will He come and deliver us? Doesn’t He care about what we go through down here on earth?

Then, the Son of God became the Son of man, so the Sons of men could know Him, and be known by Him. Through His incarnation all men could learn what He was like really like and God could learn firsthand what it means to be human. Isaiah 53 tells us:

- He became poor, so He could He could preach good tidings to the poor...
- He was afflicted so He could reach the distressed.
- He has born our grief and carried sorrows so He could mend the broken-hearted...
- He was wounded for our transgression and bruised for our iniquities so those held captive by sin could be made free.
- He suffered rejection, mockery and death so He could conqueror death, hell and the grave and open the prison doors and set them free.

The Spirit of Lord was upon Jesus and He became the perfect sacrifice for our sins. Through giving Himself to the cross, He made a way for us to triumph, being free to become righteous In Him. When you considered the incarnation, the crucifixion and the power of His resurrection you can begin understand the Apostle Paul’s jubilant adoration and praise of this God of grace in...

**Ephesians 1:6–7 (NKJV)** …to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved. 7 In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace

Sometimes we lose our focus and all we can see are our failures and our sins. That’s when we must remember, He is a God of mercy and grace and the Son of God become the Son of man so we could become the Sons of God. When we learn to focus on who God is rather that what we are not, all things become possible in His name! He is a God of grace! He is also …

**II. A GOD OF COMFORT**

**Isaiah 61:2** To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, And the day of vengeance of our God; To comfort all who mourn,

**Isaiah 61:2** (ESV) to proclaim the year of the LORD’s favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn;

When Jesus read from this passage in the synagogue He stopped mid sentence, after the “acceptable year of the Lord,” or the “year of the Lord’s favor”. But He wasn’t trying to avoid anything; He was showing us His work would be divided into two advents; His First and Second Coming.

When Jesus quoted this passage in the synagogue, He stopped and didn’t mention the day of vengeance. Why? Because the day of God’s vengeance had not yet come. The signs of the Lord’s return are all around us today but the day of vengeance and judgment has not come and we are still living in the acceptable year of the Lord’s favor. (Note that it mentions ‘a year of the Lord’s favor’ and only ‘a day of vengeance’.)
We are still living in the year of the Lord’s favor. Any who call upon the Lord can still be saved and that is cause for great comfort.

2 Corinthians 6:2 (NKJV) For He says: “In an acceptable time I have heard you, And in the day of salvation I have helped you.” Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.

Isaiah 55:6–7 (NKJV) Seek the L ORD while He may be found, Call upon Him while He is near. 7 Let the wicked forsake his way, And the unrighteous man his thoughts; Let him return to the L ORD, And He will have mercy on him; And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon.

It is the last phrase of verse two we find another amazing attribute of God’s character revealed which leads in to the next verse. He comforts those who mourn! We think of comfort as an old man patting a young boy on the head saying ‘there, there, there... you’ll be ok.’ Or Mom giving us a big hug, but it is far more than that.

Our English word "comfort" is from two Latin roots, “con,” to be with, and “fortis,” strong. It literally means "to strengthen by companionship." (H.A Ironside)

He is a God of comfort and Jesus encouraged us and promised He would not abandon us to our selves: John 14:15–18 (KJV) If ye love me, keep my commandments. 16 And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; 17 Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it sees him not, neither knows him: but ye know him; for he dwells with you, and shall be in you. 18 I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.

God comes along side. He is with us. His presence and companionship strengthens us and He will never leave is or forsake us!

III. THE GOD OF THE GREAT EXCHANGE

Isaiah 61:3a (NKJV) To console those who mourn in Zion, To give them beauty for ashes, The oil of joy for mourning, The garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness;

The gospel is the good news and it’s all about the great exchange. It’s not about self-improvement, trying to pull yourself together, trying to measure up, or just trying to be good boys and girls for Jesus. It is about exchanging what God is, for what we are not. The greatest of all exchanges is given in the verse:

2 Corinthians 5:21 (NKJV) For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Isaiah mentions three exchanges that speak to our spiritual, emotional and mental wellbeing: Beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.

The contrast being made is really interesting; it is between a funeral and a wedding. At a funeral service Jews put on sackcloth and throw ashes upon their heads. There is loud, passionate, mourning and sorrowful lament over the loss and separation from a loved one.

At a Jewish wedding, the most beautiful garments and decorations are made, bridal wreaths, garlands of flowers and the bride clothes herself in the wedding gown. There is singing, dancing, a literal “putting on” of the garments of praise in celebration of the couples coming union.
In traditional Jewish literature marriage is actually called *kiddushin*, which translates as "sanctification" or "dedication." "Sanctification," indicates that what is happening is not just a social arrangement or contractual agreement, but a spiritual bonding and the fulfillment of a *mitzvah*, a Divine precept. "Dedication," indicates the couple now have an exclusive relationship, demanding total dedication of the bride and groom to each other, to the extent of them becoming, "one soul in two bodies."

This is the greatest exchange, our sin for His salvation, our filthy rags for His righteousness, our ashes for His beauty, our sorrow for His joy and the heaviness and despair of our poverty for the riches of His grace. Isaiah now continues and completes this prophetic metaphor of the marriage and the great exchange...

**Isaiah 61:10–11 (NKJV)** *I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, My soul shall be joyful in my God; For He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness, As a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments, And as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. 11 For as the earth brings forth its bud, As the garden causes the things that are sown in it to spring forth, So the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations.*

The church is the Bride of Christ, and we are now as His adopted sons, we are joint-heirs with Christ, who have been grafted into Him. When the Father sees us, He sees Jesus. What greater cause could there be for singing, let’s put on the garment of praise right now and bless His name for His great love! Let’s ask God for a new song, a song of praise that will resound throughout all of Hill County to His glory and draw many to His salvation.

Which brings us to the last phrase in this verse which

**IV. THE PLANTING OF THE LORD**

**Isaiah 61:3b (NKJV)** *To console those who mourn in Zion, To give them beauty for ashes, The oil of joy for mourning, The garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; That they may be called trees of righteousness, The planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified."

This latter part of verse three is what started this entire study. I just couldn’t get past the thought of you and I, as the redeemed of the Lord, ransomed from death, clothed with His righteousness and being prepared as the Bride of Christ and being compared to trees. And that He has planted us.

“…That they may be called trees of righteousness, The planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified.”

I thought about what this could possibly mean to us as believers and this house; to COTH in 2015 here in Hill County and I believe it has great significance.

We have been redeemed, set free, covered with His righteousness and anointed with His Spirit and planted. Think about it, God could have placed you anywhere else in the world but He has planted us right here for this time and at this season to accomplish His purpose in and through you and me.

We have been planted here to bring the knowledge of His kingdom, of His righteousness, and the power of His transforming love to this city and all of our communities. The Marriage supper of the Lamb is being prepared, the Lord will soon return but until He does we are to be established, firmly rooted and abundantly fruitful in this place.
Psalm 92:12–14 (NKJV) The righteous shall flourish like a palm tree, He shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. 13 Those who are planted in the house of the LORD Shall flourish in the courts of our God. 14 They shall still bear fruit in old age; They shall be fresh and flourishing,

Did you get that? Those who are planted, not potted! (those who occasionally attend.) And where are they to be planted? In the house of the Lord! God has called us to blessing and to be a blessing but those with shallow roots will never experience the fullness of all He has prepared and desired for them to have.

Our world is spinning our of control and all around us people are giving into fear and losing hope. But those who are deeply rooted in the house of the Lord will flourish and never cease being fruitful even in the season of drought.

Jeremiah 17:7–8 (NKJV) “Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, And whose hope is the Lord. 8 For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters, Which spreads out its roots by the river, And will not fear when heat comes; But its leaf will be green, And will not be anxious in the year of drought, Nor will cease from yielding fruit.

V. THE PURPOSE OF THE PLANTING

So what is the purpose of our planting? It is clearly revealed to is in the next verse and also in the word given to us as a body years ago by Martin Sarvis.

Isaiah 58:12 (NKJV) Those from among you Shall build the old waste places; You shall raise up the foundations of many generations; And you shall be called the Repairer of the Breach, The Restorer of Streets to Dwell In.

Isaiah 61:4 (NKJV) And they shall rebuild the old ruins, They shall raise up the former desolations, And they shall repair the ruined cities, The desolations of many generations.

Again, the immediate context of this verse is the restoration of Israel when Jesus returns which we understand but it also has a relevant current and local context for us as well.

In Matthew 19:28 Jesus spoke of a “regeneration” which would take place when He returns and sits upon His throne. He used the word “palingenesia” which comes from two Greek words – palin – meaning once more or again, and “genesia” which is Genesis. Literally meaning “Genesis once more,” or a “New Genesis.”

That is what this thing called Christianity is all about, a new beginning! Christ came bringing redemption so there could be a world made new by the power of His Spirit and the presence of His glory. He came to seek and save that which was lost, to reveal His love in us and through us, and to bring about a “re-creation and restoration” of all things through the transforming power of His love.

2 Corinthians 5:17 (NKJV) Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

Lets stop right now and lift our hands to thank God because He is a God who still saves, still restores what we have ruined, still restores what sin has destroyed. There is no darkness so deep that He is not deeper still!
But I want you to notice who God plans to use to do the restoration, rebuilding and repair? Those who are planted in the house of the Lord… “And they shall rebuild the old ruins, They shall raise up the former desolations, And they shall repair the ruined cities, The desolations of many generations.”

God’s method has always been and will always be a man. A man/woman who has made the decision to live only in Christ, live only for Christ and live always for glory of Christ. Men and women who determine to discipline their lives and live for the greater purpose of His glory not their own selfish gain.

When we become planted in the house, growing deep roots into the things of His Spirit choosing to live only for His glory and the good of others, we will begin to know the true prosperity of living as blessed men & women.

**Isaiah 61:6–7** (NKJV) But you shall be named the priests of the LORD, They shall call you the servants of our God. You shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, And in their glory you shall boast. 7 Instead of your shame you shall have double honor, And instead of confusion they shall rejoice in their portion. Therefore in their land they shall possess double; Everlasting joy shall be theirs.

Again, the context here is the coming kingdom, but this passage is germane and relevant to us in the here and now.

Our world is literally dying for a reason to hope again. Those who are planted in the house of the Lord, who grow into the trees of righteousness, whose roots go deep into the waters of life, will bear the fruit of Christ’s love which will be for the healing of the nations.

That is why we are here and what we are called to do; to be planted, to grow and to bear the fruit of His righteousness for the healing of this community.