

Life Group Questions

October 9th, 2022

The Treasure of God's Compassion - Pastor John Best & Allison Alley – [Luke 4:18-21](#), [Isaiah 61:1-3](#)

To the Life Group leader: thank you for your ministry leading this Life Group. **Take time to review the questions, selecting those you believe will be most helpful for your group study.** You will not have time to use all the questions. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you as you lead, as you select questions, and as you guide the discussion.

Reconnect

Come together with these preliminary questions:

- How has God gifted you to serve Him?
- How will you serve Him this fall at Willingdon Church?
- Where has God placed you in the city? What is your role there?

Open in Prayer

Ask the Holy Spirit to speak to you through the text, the questions, and each other.

Message Recap Questions

Review the message using these questions

1. What stood out to you most in this week's message?
2. What was the most meaningful thing you heard in the message? Why?
3. What questions are still lingering?

Questions

1. If you were to ask God to make things right in the world, what would be the 3 issues the world is facing now that you would ask God to make right and why?
2. If God is good, then why is there still poverty in the world today?
3. Where is Isaiah 61:1-2 quoted in the New Testament? Who is this prophecy referring to? List the things that He is prophesied to do.
4. What would He do for those who mourn? Explain the imagery/symbols used.
5. Compare Isaiah 61:1-3 to Isaiah 11:2 and 48:16. How is the subject in question described?
6. According to Isaiah 61:3, how will he bring healing and restoration?
7. What will mourners in Zion be called? For what purpose?

8. How should we be praying for the “poor”?

Choose Your Next Step

What next step will you commit to for the upcoming week (and beyond)?

Closing Prayer

A closing prayer is an effective way to point people back to our Loving Father as they seek to apply their new learnings throughout the week. Ask group members to share what they sense God calling them to. Pray for each other and commit to continue to do so during the week as people step out in obedience to God’s leading.

Commentary

1. If you were to ask God to make things right in the world, what would be the 3 issues the world is facing now that you would ask God to make right and why?
2. If God is good, then why is there still poverty in the world today?
3. Where is Isaiah 61:1-2 quoted in the New Testament? Who is this prophecy referring to? List the things that He is prophesied to do.

The coming of the Spirit is repeatedly connected to significant changes on the earth and God's establishment of his Kingdom (11:2; 32:15; 42:1; 44:3; 48:16; 59:21), but the "me" who receives the Spirit in this verse is not immediately identified by name. God's anointing of a person is often connected to the reception of the Spirit (1 Sam 10:1, 9–10; 16:13; 2 Sam 23:1–2; 1 Kgs 19:16), but the key factor to be noted is that it is God who empowers and directs this person through the Spirit. Thus the Anointed One is doing tasks assigned by God (he was sent by God), and the power of the Spirit will guarantee that he will successfully accomplish the will of God. Although this paragraph is not structured like other call narratives (Isaiah 6; Jeremiah 1; Ezekiel 1–3), it does give a detailed description of the tasks God has assigned to this Anointed One. Essentially, his responsibilities overlap with and echo several of the tasks assigned to the Servant (42:7; 49:9–10; 50:4), although the emphasis in this paragraph is focused much more on the proclamation and comfort provided through words rather than through acts of bringing forth justice (42:1–4) or restoring Israel and the nations (42:6; 49:6, 8–9).

The general assignment is to preach the good news. The content of the good news is a message of hope proclaimed to people in Zion (61:3a) who are presently "afflicted, poor," "broken-hearted," "captives," or "prisoners" (61:1). Isaiah 61:3 indicates that some in the audience "mourn" or "grieve," but these negative characteristics are so general that it is very difficult to tie them down to any specific historical setting. C. Westermann does not believe these terms refer to the deliverance of people in exile but relates this condition to the need for relief from the economic debts mentioned in 58:6. Nevertheless, none of these clauses ever reveal why the audience is presently in this difficult condition, and they do not appear to describe the people who returned to Jerusalem after the exile. Therefore, it is just as possible for one to suggest that these heartbroken people who are mistreated refers to the same righteous group of people who were mistreated in 57:1–2 and the contrite and lowly people of 57:15. This would indicate that the author makes a clear distinction between the righteous who suffer and the oppressors who afflict the righteous.³⁵⁵

The audience is made up of the "afflicted" ('ānāwîm), a term that can refer to anyone who is oppressed by others or humble before God. The broken-hearted are despondent in spirit and discouraged, probably the people in 57:15 that God will revive. The reason why they are broken-hearted is unknown, but physical, social, or spiritual problems might cause this condition. "Captives" (from šēbî) could refer to those taken as prisoners in a time of war or those bound for economic or spiritual reasons. "Those bound" ('āsûrîm, NIV "prisoners") could hypothetically relate to the "release" (dērôr) of slaves in the Sabbatical year or the year of Jubilee (Lev 25:10; Deut 15:12; Jer 34:8, 15, 17), but this is questionable for there is limited evidence that the

Hebrews followed this practice throughout their history. The picture of these individuals in 61:1–3 is quite imprecise and their condition does not point to a specific identifiable situation in the history of the nation. The overall content of chap. 61 suggests that it refers to a time shortly before the establishment of the kingdom of God.

The specific tasks assigned to this Anointed One who was sent by God are outlined in a series of infinitive construct clauses. First, this Anointed One is “to proclaim good news” (the infinitive construct *lěbaššēr*) by telling people that their past situations will change and that a new period of history is about to begin. This idea of sharing the “good news” of what God will do is found at several points in the book of Isaiah. In the eschatological setting of 40:9, God encourages “those who bring good news” (*mebaššeret*) from Jerusalem to lift up their voices and proclaim that God is here and graciously reigns over his people with peace and salvation (41:27; 52:7; 60:6). If one can connect the proclamation of good news in 61:1 with the good news in 40:9 and 52:7, then the essential point of this good news is that “God reigns” and his eschatological kingdom is going to begin. This means that the problems associated with righteous people living in a sinful world will end when God’s reign is fully established.

Second, this person was sent by God “to bind up” or heal (Ps 147:3) the hurts of his people. This seems to be related to 30:18–26, which describes God’s salvation as arriving and transforming this world. There will be no more adversity when the righteous see God with their own eyes, for he will defeat their enemies, bless their land, “bind up” the bruises, and heal the wounds that he inflicted on them. It is unclear how this will happen. Will spoken words miraculously bring this healing and bind up these wounds, or will there be some other method of accomplishing this task? Third, this Anointed One is “to proclaim” (*liqrō*) liberty, a term that is used in Jer 34:8, 15, 17 to refer to the release of slaves, which should happen every six years (Exod 21:2–3; Lev 25:12; Deut 15:12–15). It would be somewhat dangerous to read all this background of releasing slaves into the use of this term in 61:1 and thereby limit the use of this term solely to the release of slaves from bondage. At minimum, this could involve the proclamation of a metaphorical release from any past social or spiritual enslavement the people were under. In addition, one wonders if this task only involves proclaiming something to be so, or whether this person will do something to accomplish this release.

4. What would He do for those who mourn? Explain the imagery/symbols used.

The fifth role for this person is to comfort all those who were mourning and sorrowing. Isaiah 60:20 suggests that all mourning will end in God’s everlasting kingdom. Isaiah 57:18–19 provides more detail about God’s comforting of these mourners when it describes this comforting as healing the lowly and contrite, guiding them, bringing peace, and causing them to praise God. This will bring healing and peace to all. Again one wonders if this “Anointed One” will only proclaim what God will do, which is as far as this verse goes, or if he will play a central part by doing something (as in the Servant passages) in order to make this day of comfort possible.

The sixth responsibility of this “Anointed One” is “to provide” (*lāsûm*, NIV “and provide”) for those grieving in Zion “by giving” them something new and “beautiful, glorious” (*pě’ēr*) for their head. This will replace their past use of “ashes” (*’ēper*, a word play on *pě’ēr*), a sign of mourning. In addition, in order to emphasize the stark contrast with the past, the author compares this transformation of life to having oil (Pss 23:5; 45:8, which contrasts with the times of mourning),

a festive headdress (3:20; Ezek 44:18), or an opulent garment that is worn in a time of praise instead of ashes at a time of fainting and mourning. This metaphorical way of describing the outward transformation of a person's clothes and behavior betrays a deep transformation of this person's situation as well as their psychological reaction (by their "spirit" *rûah*) to the changes God will introduce at this time (60:20, "the days of mourning will be completed"). The point is that mourning, which was so often a part of the nation's history, will end and praise will begin. The head ornament (a positive symbol) will be used "instead of" the ashes (a negative symbol) because a new era of salvation has arrived.

5. Compare Isaiah 61:1-3 to Isaiah 11:2 and 48:16. How is the subject in question described?
6. According to Isaiah 61:3, how will he bring healing and restoration?

Provide ... bestow: in verse 2c the hurt was soothed, but now every possibility of further hurt is removed by a divine replacement therapy. The first verb points to a decision of God and the second to an act of God: he wills our comfort and then gives that which brings and perpetuates comfort. Note the downward movement of the transformation: from the crown (lit. 'head-dress'; 3:20; cf. 61:10; Exod. 39:28), to the head (oil), to the clothing (garment). (Cf. the running down of Ps. 133:2-3, significant of heavenly outpouring.) Note also the inward movement of ashes, the visible evidence of grief (58:5; 2 Sam. 13:19), to mourning, grief in the heart, to the inner spirit of despair. The Lord thus acts to pierce progressively to the innermost need. Oil of gladness: in Psalm 45:7 the 'oil of joy' explains the distinctive character of the king. Thus the Anointed One replaces mourning with new life. Garment: more properly 'a wrap', overall cover. Just as (see 59:17) donning garments symbolizes character and commitment, so the gift of an all-covering garment symbolizes the gift of a new nature leading to a new life. Despair (*kēhā*): used in 42:3 of the dimly burning wick, what is dull, listless, expiring. They will be called: the infinitives that express the aims of the Anointed One give way to a statement of achievement; literally 'It will be called to them', stressing the objective reality of the gift of a new name, i.e. a new nature with new potencies (Gen. 17:5-6). Oaks: used in 1:29 and 57:5 in connection with false religion, but here they have been recovered for the Lord and given an established place in his garden. Righteousness: their status and acceptance before God are entirely of his doing (as in 53:11; 54:17): they are a planting of the LORD.

7. What will mourners in Zion be called? For what purpose?

The final part of 61:3 identifies the new people of Zion, after the "Anointed One" accomplishes all his work, as "oaks of righteousness" and as the "plantings of the LORD." The second metaphorical designation is connected to this same imagery in 60:21b. These "plantings" (his people) are God's vines planted in his vineyard (5:1-7; 27:2-6), and at this time they will produce the fruit of righteousness instead of bad fruit. The symbolism of being like oaks may communicate how strong, well-rooted, and glorious these righteous people will be. These are the people that God planted "to bring glory to himself" (60:21b) for all the marvelous things that he has done. This purpose clause indicates that one of the main goals of mankind will be to fulfill this joyful responsibility of glorifying God forever. Those who receive God's good news, freedom, comfort, and experience this transformation will have many reasons to loudly praise and glorify God's name[1]

8. How should we be praying for the "poor"?