

The Job Description of the Messiah

What the Messiah will Do
What it will Mean for You

*61 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, [a]
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.*

*10 I delight greatly in the LORD;
my soul rejoices in my God.
For he has clothed me with garments of salvation
and arrayed me in a robe of his righteousness,
as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest,
and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.
11 For as the soil makes the sprout come up
and a garden causes seeds to grow,
so the Sovereign LORD will make righteousness
and praise spring up before all nations.*

I see that we have a lot of people here today who have not reached the golden age of retirement, people who are still out in the workforce. So, my question to you is this. Do you have a job description for what you do at your place of work? Has anyone put down on paper what is expected of you in your particular role in the organization? Raise your hand if you are an

employee with a written (or even unwritten) job description.

Over the past year, Mount Olive has been working on updating the job descriptions for a number of positions here at church, including the position of pastors. I think it's been a worthwhile process, for a number of reasons. First, it helps us define what each of us is supposed to be doing. For example, exactly what is the role of a school pastor? And how is it different than what is expected of the pastor working with the board of member ministry? Job descriptions not only help us know what we're supposed to do, but also what we're not supposed to do. For example, when I started out in the ministry, one of my jobs was to type up, run off, and then fold by hand every single worship bulletin. (Granted, sometimes my wife would help me. She was good at that, because her father, who was also a pastor, taught her how to do it.) Today, that's not in my job description. Today we have a whole team of volunteers who come in to collate the bulletins each week. And I'm very thankful for that. But there's another purpose for a job description. Job descriptions help people see the value that a particular position brings to the organization. For example, a few years ago there was a bit of debate over whether Mount Olive really needed an operations manager. I mean, couldn't the pastors just do all that stuff? And then we put down on paper what all of that "stuff" really entails. Management of personnel, financial oversight, building maintenance, tax compliance and a host of other responsibilities—and suddenly we realized, "Man, this position is incredibly valuable. The entire congregation is going to benefit from the work that our ops manager is doing, according to his job description."

Well, if it's true that there is value in knowing exactly what your job is and how your job benefits the rest of the organization, no matter whether you are a pastor or a principal or the assistant to the school cook, well then, wouldn't it also be true regarding the most important job in the world? What's the most important job in the world? Head coach of the Green Bay packers?

President of the United States? Secretary-general of the United Nations? No, the most important job in the history of mankind is the one described for us right here in the book of Isaiah, chapter 61. Here the prophet Isaiah puts down in writing what we might call:

The Job Description of the Messiah

(that is, the Savior of the world)

And like any good job description, this job description will tell us: First, What the Messiah would do.

And secondly, How his Job will Benefit the Rest of us.

Now before we look at the specifics of what the Messiah would do, maybe we need to ask a pair of preliminary questions. First, how do we know that this is the job description of the Messiah? Well, notice how Isaiah begins. *The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me.* In Hebrew language, that word, anointed, is Mesha. It's what gives us the English word Messiah, Messiah means the anointed one. In the New Testament, the word is Christ. Both mean the Anointed One, the one upon whom God has poured out not oil, but rather the Holy Spirit.

The question is, who is this Messiah, who is this Anointed One? Well, Isaiah says, *The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor.* Kind of sounds like Isaiah is saying that he's the Messiah, doesn't it? But that's not the case. How do we know that? Because of something that Jesus once said. Do you remember the account of Jesus returning to his hometown of Nazareth? I think it's one of the most dramatic scenes in all of Scripture. Early in his earthly ministry, Jesus visits the synagogue in Nazareth. And everyone is wondering, "Who is this guy? Isn't this the carpenter's kid? Why does he have all these people following him?" In effect, they said, "Jesus, who do you think you are?" Jesus

answered by unrolling the scroll of Isaiah and then reading these very words. *“The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me because he is 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.”* And then Jesus rolled up the scroll and said what? *“Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”* (Luke 4:21) In other words, Jesus is saying, “That anointed one that Isaiah was talking about? I’m that Messiah.”

So now we know that Isaiah offers the job description of the Messiah. We know that Jesus is that Messiah. The question is, what does Isaiah say that the Messiah would do? Actually, that's a critical question, because down through the centuries, there have been a whole lot of people, who totally misread the Messiah’s job description—from the Jews in Jesus’ day who thought that the Messiah was going to throw off a Roman rule, to people today who think that Christians are going to reign with Christ here on earth for a thousand years. So, to counter that kind of misguided thinking, it's important to review exactly what God did say the Messiah would do. Isaiah starts by telling us four things that the Messiah would do. The Messiah would be anointed: 1. to proclaim good news to the poor, 2. to bind up the brokenhearted, 3. to proclaim freedom for the captives, 2. and release from darkness for the prisoners.

Now just for a moment, I want you to focus the four groups of people that the Messiah will serve, namely, the poor, the brokenhearted, the captives and the prisoners. Who are those people? Some take these words of Isaiah literally. They say that Isaiah is talking about people who have no money, or who are in prison somewhere, or who are being held hostage—which, of course would mean that these words really don't apply to you and me. I mean, compared to people in so many other parts of the world, we are not financially poor. And we are not sitting in some concentration camp.

But what if Isaiah is not talking in physical terms but rather in spiritual terms? What if he's not talking about people who have no money, but rather, people who have no value in and of themselves. People who by nature are worthless, people who (as Isaiah will say a little later) whose righteous deeds are like filthy rags. People whose sins have left them absolutely empty-handed before a just and holy God. Then who is he talking about? Who are the people who are brokenhearted. The people who feel the weight of their sins bearing down on their hearts. Or the people who are held captive? The people who feel like they're being controlled by the evil inside of them. They feel like they're prisoners of their own sinful nature. The good that they want to do they don't do and the evil they don't want to do they keep on doing. Tell me, who are these people? Could it be that the people that Isaiah describes here are, in fact, you and me? Aren't we the ones who keep falling back into the same sins again and again. We're the ones who are tormented by the temptations that never seem to go away. We maybe lie awake at night reliving the stupid things we did or said, the people we hurt, the times we failed. All these sins weigh on our heart. They leave us wondering how a God in heaven who knows everything we've ever said or thought or done, a God who by nature hates sin and must punish it, how that God could ever have anything good to say to us, or why that God would ever do anything good for us?

But you see, that's why God tells us what the job description of the Messiah is. God tells us exactly what the Messiah would come to do. How he would address the problems we face, whether it's the feeling of worthlessness or hopelessness or being held captive by sin. The Messiah tells us, *The LORD has anointed me, first of all, to proclaim good news to the poor.* Really, everything that Jesus says that he will do is good news for people who know that they are poor. People who know that by nature they have nothing that makes them worthy before God. But the Messiah doesn't stop there. He says that he will come *to bind up the broken hearted.*

Isn't that a comfort? When our hearts have been broken by the stern proclamation of God's law, when our consciences have torn our hearts in two, Jesus applies the balm of his love and forgiveness to restore our hearts and put us at peace with God again. Jesus says, "As far as the east is from the west, so far have I removed your transgressions from you." Thirdly, the Messiah says he comes *to proclaim freedom for the captives*. When we feel like we are slaves of our sinful nature, when we feel like screaming with the Apostle Paul, "*Who will rescue me from this body of death?*" We can also say with that same Apostle, "*Thanks be to God who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!*" (Romans 7:25). Jesus brings freedom for the captives. And finally, Jesus promises that *he will proclaim release from darkness for the prisoners*. You think about how back in the day prisoners were thrown into dungeons with absolutely no light. They couldn't see their hand in front of their face. But when they were released, when they were brought into the light, that blindness was turned to sight. They could see again. So also, when Jesus sets people free from spiritual darkness of unbelief, they are no longer walking in darkness. How did Jesus put it? "*Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have a light of life.*" (John 8:12).

But the Messiah's job description doesn't stop there. He goes on to say that he will: *proclaim the year of the LORD's favor*. Actually, that's a reference to something which, in the Old Testament, was called the Year of Jubilee. From the time that Israel entered the promised land, every 50th year was the year when all property reverted to its original owner, all debts were forgiven, and all those who were enslaved for their debts were set free. That Year of Jubilee was simply a foreshadowing of the spiritual freedom that Jesus would bring to a world full of sinners by his death and resurrection from the grave.

In fact, the prophet goes on to paint one more picture of what the Messiah would do for

fallen man. He says that (he will) *comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion* (that is, in Jerusalem), *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.*

Can you picture the scene? Isaiah is describing a funeral procession, where everyone is dressed in sackcloth and ashes. They are in mourning. They are grieving the loss of a loved one. And then, suddenly, the funeral procession turns into a wedding parade. Instead of ashes, the people are wearing perfume. Instead of wearing the spirit of despair, they're wearing garments of praise. You realize, that's what Jesus has done for us! We live in a world corrupted by sin. All around us there is death and decay. We see the effects of sin in our lives and in the lives of others. And yet, in the middle of all this brokenness, Jesus comes to us and tells us that he's made us his bride. He has washed us clean. He's dressed as in his robe of righteousness and now he's made us part of a wedding procession that will culminate with a wedding banquet in the mansions of glory.

My friends, that's the exchange that the Messiah has made with us. He took off our sins, our grief, our shame and in exchange, he's given us his holiness, his joy, his glory forever. That's what changes our attitude about life. Even when we are surrounded by trouble and heartache of living in a world corrupted by sin, we can rejoice in the forgiveness that Jesus has won for us, the new life that he's given us, and the eternal glory that awaits us in heaven. Because Jesus has perfectly carried out the job description his Father gave him to do, now you and I can do the job that God has given us to do, and that's to live our lives in joy and gratitude as the beautiful people that Jesus has made us to be in the eyes of his Father. You and I can now say with a prophet of old, *I delight greatly in the LORD; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of his righteousness, as a bridegroom*

adorns his head like a priest and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

My friends, that's the good news that God sent his Son to carry out and to proclaim, for our good and his glory, now and forever and ever. Amen.