

Isaiah 61:1-8

“The people God chose to hear good news”

(Isaiah 61:1 NIV)

“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, ⁽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 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. ⁽⁴⁾ They will rebuild the ancient ruins and restore the places long devastated; they will renew the ruined cities that have been devastated for generations.



“⁽⁵⁾ Aliens will shepherd your flocks; foreigners will work your fields and vineyards. ⁽⁶⁾ And you will be called priests of the LORD, you will be named ministers of our God. You will feed on the wealth of nations, and in their riches you will boast.

“⁽⁷⁾ Instead of their shame my people will receive a double portion, and instead of disgrace they will rejoice in their inheritance; and so they will inherit a double portion in their land, and everlasting joy will be theirs.

“⁽⁸⁾ For I, the LORD, love justice; I hate robbery and iniquity. In my faithfulness I will reward them and make an everlasting covenant with them.”

We should all identify with this scripture.

Small-town Christians should really appreciate it.

Imagine a terrific young man in your area.

This fellow acts responsibly, respects his parents, works hard, and serves others.

He goes to a big city and gains fame.

He's the talk of the nation

—a household word.

After this renown, the local guy returns home.

On Sunday, he attends his boyhood church.

Worship leaders ask him to read scripture.

He leafs the pulpit Bible to the prophet Isaiah and reads what you just heard:

“The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor.”

Jesus, the local Nazareth boy, left town a while and became famous.

The first time back in Nazareth, he read this Scripture in his home Jewish house of worship.

The name Isaiah and other Bible books sound old-timey to many.

When they hear the names, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, etc., they assume they’ll be forced to hear a boring lecture.

We’ve all yawned, gotten drowsy, and watched-the-clock as a preacher, professor, or teacher drones on and on.

In fact, when Isaiah first presented this text about 700 years before Jesus, folks booed him.

When Jesus read this Scripture in Nazareth 700 years later and said this text applied to him, folks booed again.

Whether you’d like to boo me, only you and the Lord know but you do probably wonder how this text can help you.

Words such as sovereign, anoint, and preach sound old-timey too.

They don’t seize attention like Super Bowl, Election Day, or winning the Powerball.

I’d like to convince you that it’s worth your time to know this text message.

Somewhere I read an old Arab proverb.

”Three things make a house uninhabitable: tak, nak and bak.”¹

Do you know what tak, nak & bak are?

I’ll explain TAK and BAK before I tell you what NAK is.

According to this proverb, the things that make a house uninhabitable are:

Most couples deal with Tak, Nak & Bak.

¹ It’s an explanation for a phrase in Proverbs 19:13



TAK, leakage of rain.

BAK is bugs

NAK is a woman’s nagging.

Too bad all explanations aren’t that simple.

Before you wives take offense, I want to side with some of you about NAK, the nagging part:

You possibly see nagging this way:

“If my guy would turn off the ball game, put down his beer, get off his hiney, fix the roof, and kill the bugs, I wouldn’t need to nag!”

Let’s quickly look at the three terms: *sovereign*, *anoint*, and *preach*.

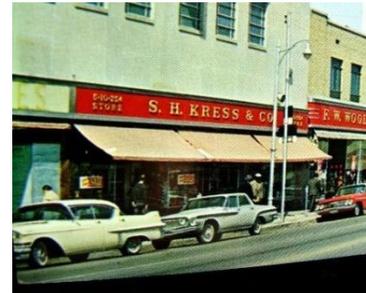
The expression “sovereign Lord” means that God controls the Universe.

Many people boast that they don’t need God.

They’re cheeky and defiant:

**“Who is God to tell me what to do?
It’s my life, I can live the way I want.
God isn’t real, anyhow.”**

For most of my 55/56 college year, I worked as a stock boy at a five and dime store in Bartlesville, Oklahoma.



Outside and in, the store resembled what you see in these photos.

My duties included:

- Unloading boxes of merchandise from trucks. Put them on an elevator and take them to the store’s second floor.
- Opening the boxes and verifying contents with the manifest or order.
- Placing goods in the proper storeroom bins.
- When the sales people in various departments on the main floor needed to restock their shelves, they sent orders up to us for filling.

Merchandise included: knick-knacks, cheap cologne, toys, underclothes, candy, etc.

It was a popular busy store.

For the above, they paid me 58 cents an hour. A co-worker about my age took frequent breaks. One afternoon he was resting comfortably among some boxes—asleep, in fact.

“Aren’t you afraid that Mr. Ward (the manager) will find you?” I asked him.
“I’m not afraid of Mr. Ward,” he said defiantly.

He acted pretty tough
A few days later, I came to work and he was leaning against the storefront.

He wasn’t defiant.
He looked sad, nearly in tears. Mr. Ward must have caught him napping
I never saw the young man again.



Many people refuse to acknowledge that God is in charge.

They’re independent—tough.
They stay defiant until God pulls the plug on their heart or their lungs, or they face some brutal news.

Then many blame God for letting bad things happen.

When people blame God, they’re actually admitting his sovereignty, aren’t they?

They’re bitter even though they haven’t been doing and don’t want to do what the “big guy in charge” wants them to do.

Only when they face disaster, do some

realize that God controls the Universe.
God rules from beginning to end of creation, and everything in between.

Anointed, our second term resembles the word chosen, which he all know.

The folks chosen to be prophets, priests, and kings, the Israelites anointed with olive oil.

In the same way we use various creams and ointments, ancient middle-easterner used olive oil. In that hot dry climate, oil freshened one’s skin. God anointed (chose) Jesus prophet, priest, and king.

God sent Jesus as his chosen-anointed person to do something no one else could do.

We know God is sovereign.

We know that God anointed or chose Jesus.

He also sent Jesus to preach.

Preach is just a fancy word for tell.

Several years ago I was in a local store prior to a big pro football game between the Baltimore Ravens and the San Francisco 49ers.

Several people stood in the check-out line.

**One of the clerks kept loudly saying
“Go Forty-niners!”**

I didn't see or hear anyone supporting the
Baltimore Ravens.

I didn't have a favorite.

But being the troublemaker I am, I
brashly said, **“Go Ravens!”**

In some places, it could have started a riot.

The clerk gave me an annoyed look.

Yet we both proclaimed, which you
understand means more than just small talk.

Preaching means that—to boldly proclaim.

What did God ask Jesus to proclaim?

**Read any newspaper; listen to a news broadcast
on any network, radio or TV, or check on-line,
95 % of what you hear and read is bad news:
Murders, riots, kidnapping, taxes, economy,
Covid19, corruption among political leaders,
nuclear arms expansion—uncertainty.**

Daily news in Isaiah's time stressed the dismal.

Later, in Jesus' day, news remained bleak.

People spoke little good news then, either.

Human news consistently trends negative.

**If you'd like to hear one piece of good news
what would it be?**

- **God has forgiven you for that really dumb thing you did years ago.**
- **The awful rift separating you and a loved one has been healed with no more hard feelings.**
- **You feel purpose and significance to your life.**
- **Your children live happy, responsible, godly lives.**
- **You are completely healed of a disease that's plagued and threatened you.**



What Good News would you like to hear?

Here are important facts about good news.

- Many of us stumble along relying on the advice of friends, so-called experts or talk show hosts.
- Others of us claim to be religious and go to church, but we really don't follow Jesus.
- We often hear overwhelmingly bad news.
We hear preachers talk.

We read Christian literature from time to time.

Yet, we just don’t see how Jesus can help now.

I’ve mentioned before that during my senior high school year and first year of college, I worked at a service station south of Portland that had a World War II B17 bomber over it.

My immediate boss was a fellow named Jack.²

One day as we worked at the station together, a man drove to one of the side entrances.

His car had an official seal on the door.

“Tell him I’m not here,” Jack ordered, as he sneaked out the other side door.

This went on for weeks.

I didn’t know what he was evading, but I thought it related to taxes.

One day the man suddenly appeared again.

This time I didn’t cooperate with Jack’s evasion plan.

Though he was my boss, I was tired of trying to cover for him.



Thinking I’d pay serious consequences, I pointed out Jack to the man.

Then I went outside so they could talk.

After the man left, Jack approached me and said,

“Bob, I wish I had talked to him a long time ago. I don’t owe them anything. They owe me money.”

Many of us keep looking anxiously over our shoulders.

Numerous **things trouble and disturb us.**

We try various remedies, gimmicks, and advice.

But the worries don’t go away.

They only increase with age.

Life gets bleaker.

Sometimes we get really down.

“Hell is the place where one has ceased to hope,”
wrote A.J. Cronin.

It’s hell, isn’t it, when we see no solutions to our problems?

Two truths never change for any man or woman.

1. As long as we try to evade God, we’ll never find joy.
Whether we deny God, run from God, or avoid full commitment to Him, doesn’t matter.

² Not his real name.

Because life originated with God, nothing works long term without a good relationship with God.

2. We must do things God’s way.

We know we should put Him in charge of our lives and do things his way.

Many of us fear that if we commit to God, we’ll lose our friends.

No one likes to be different.

Yet when we try to evade God, we err the same way my friend Jack did with the tax man.

The sooner we put God in full control, the quicker we’ll be at ease.

Running from God increases our anxiety.

Our health suffers.

Our productivity decreases.

Our interpersonal relations weaken. Fearfulness and weakened faith result.

Here’s the good news:

God helps us overcome our worries.

Believing God’s Sovereignty and trusting His promises aids in overcoming anxiety.



Do you want real freedom?

Turn your life fully to Jesus.

- You’ll be free you from your past, because Jesus paid the full price for your mistakes.
- Jesus gives the best advice ever on how to deal with present. We do much better physically when we don’t sit around worrying and thinking about ourselves.
- We grow stronger when we serve others.
- Jesus frees us from anxiety, because he connects us with God the Ultimate force, the beginning and the end of creation.

“The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news.”

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