

What's In a Name: Messiah | 2nd Wednesday in Advent | Isaiah 61:1-9

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God has anointed King Jesus by the Holy Spirit to bring the Good News of salvation to a world inundated with the bad news of sin and evil.

Me →

Why does it always seem that we are inundated with bad news? I don't just mean through the media, I just mean in life in general. Every way we turn, even if there is good news it's always overshadowed by the bad.

Friends are moving away

A friend's job didn't work out and they're having to move

A child is born with life-threatening heart defects

A family member overdoses

A natural disaster devastates a community

We →

Every way we look, there is an abundance of bad news crowding out that good news which longs to see the light of day. We long for that Good News, don't we? We crave that uplifting story to momentarily distract us from all the bad.

This certainly isn't just a 21st century problem. Sure, we can find more bad news more quickly than any other generation previously. But bad news has always abound. It was surely no different for a group of First Century Jews gathered together in their synagogue in Nazareth. A sick child. A natural disaster. A death in the family. Oppression at the hands of an occupying Roman army.

God →

And so it's into this world of bad news, this world filled to the brim with darkness and evil, into this world that desperately needed a dose of good news, that Jesus comes. He enters into the world and, in his very first sermon at that synagogue in Nazareth, he picks up the scroll of Isaiah the prophet, turns to the very passage we read this evening, and reads it to all the people gathered there that day and after reading the first few verses, he turns to them and...do you remember what he says?

"Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing"

In the Old Testament to be the Anointed of the Lord, that is, the Messiah, meant to be the king of Israel chosen by God himself. Indeed, Scripture identifies King Saul as the Anointed of the Lord, as well as David. But Scripture also promises that there will be a ruler, a king, who sits on David's throne and rules forever. But as the kingdom of Judah went into exile and then re-inhabited the promised land, they did so without a king. Without a leader who would deliver them from the bonds of those who oppressed them.

And so when Jesus reads our text for this evening and turns to his hearers and says “today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing”, right then and there Jesus actually identifies himself with this Anointed One which Isaiah spoke about so long ago. Jesus identifies himself as the promised davidic king who had come as a righteous ruler over the people. Jesus identifies himself as the long-awaited Messiah.

As the Mashiah YHWH, the Messiah of the Lord, He is the one who will bring liberty, and salvation, and comfort. He is the one who will rule over God’s people in righteousness and establish His justice on the earth. King Jesus, God’s Messiah, indeed had come to bring the good news of salvation into a world so desperate for something other than *bad* news.

But as Jesus comes into the world, as God’s Anointed, as the long-awaited King, and as we watch him carry out his ministry when reading through the Gospel, it’s apparent that He’s not the kind of king his first hearers were expecting. And perhaps, as we move along in the life of Jesus, it became apparent that Jesus isn’t the kind of King we’d prefer either.

Because to be God’s Anointed, to be the Messiah, Jesus reigns not through power and might but through suffering. He has no earthly palace and no throne. Rather He rules from the cross. Jesus has been anointed to bring freedom and justice *from the cross*. And from the cross Jesus conquers not other nations but sin and death itself. Our Messiah comes to destroy evil once and for all.

You →

Certainly bad news abounds in our world. But the Messiah Jesus has entered into our flesh to bring Good News that brings hope and peace to an otherwise chaotic and hopeless life and world. In this busy season of life, a season which for many is not one of joy, into this world we await the coming Messiah. And He brings us good news. Good news that evil has not won. Good news that death is not the final answer. Good news that freedom will prevail over oppression. Good news that forgiveness found in His death and resurrection because God’s forgiveness is greater than our sin and guilt and shame.

Conclusion

Tonight we ask again, “What’s in a name?” What’s in the name, “Messiah”. In this name, which means the Anointed One, we recognize the purpose for which God sent His Son - to be king for His people. A king who reigns through suffering, a king who frees us from our sin, and a king who comforts us in our time of mourning. A King who shows us, in no uncertain terms, that we have a God who is not against us but rather that God is *for us*. For Jesus, our Messiah, God’s Anointed One, comes to bring us this good news. Amen.