

## Preach Good News to the Poor

☆ **Christ is our Jubilee (vv.1-3)**

☆ **Christ is our Heavenly Bridegroom (vv.10,11)**

In the name of Jesus, the LORD's Messiah, God's Anointed Choice, dear Bride of Christ:

Remember Mary Poppins singing, "Just a Spoonful of Sugar Helps the Medicine Go Down"? What is it about most anything good for us that makes it hard to swallow? Exercise comes easy to children as long as parents don't let them "veg-out" on the computer or TV. But then comes middle age and many need a personal trainer or some major medical problem like a heart attack to instill the need for more exercise. "No pain – no gain," we like to say as much as we hate the fact. But this is all about bodies we can see and feel. What about that which we cannot see? What about our immortal soul? How many times have you when trying to help someone, been slammed with, "Don't preach to me!" It may be a problem with pride in the hearer. But could it also be the need for a "spoonful of sugar" to help "the medicine go down"? One daughter of mine always responded best when I kept talking softly while gently holding her head in my hands. Kids look at candy the way our souls look at God's kindness. And the LORD's Christ is just the One to dish up a loving spoonful to **Preach Good News to the Poor**.

☆ **Christ is our Jubilee (vv.1-3)**

Imagine how different our news reports would be if this were legally the seventh year when God commanded every farmer to take a vacation. The land would have to lie fallow and all debts would be cancelled. Your house, your car, your credit cards would all be free and clear. And if it were the seventh of those seventh years, perhaps twice in your lifetime the trumpets would sound throughout the land. While slaves shouted with joy for their new freedom, every family would head back to the homestead where they all grew up. Life would be special with so much to anticipate.

Those of you who accepted God's invitation to Bible Class a few weeks ago will remember this as the law of the Sabbath Year and the seven-sevens of the Year of Jubilee. God commanded Moses that this was to be the law of the land – fallow, with cancelled debts on the sevens, returned to families with slaves set free at the fifties. And all this was meant to foreshadow the LORD's Christ and His heaven.

Maybe the children could not understand all the details. But they would whoop and holler when their parents were so happy. God designed a great way for everyone to appreciate our human need for **Jubilee**. We're all in debtors' prison with God because of our debt for evil thoughts and words, deeds and feelings from cradle to the grave. Unable to pay down here, we could only sink lower into the eternal prison with the evil angels as tormentors. Try as we might, we would keep breaking each other's hearts, especially those we consider near and dear. We imprison our families in resentment and fear and then seek vengeance as if we can blame someone else. Most people only look forward to a life of frustration, followed by grief when all is lost in death. Stealing pleasure now and then only makes more guilt.

From His vantage point in eternity God could see all this coming. He concluded that we, His creatures, could never help ourselves. That's why He promised through His prophets with increasing detail a year of **Jubilee** like none other when His own Son would take our troubles by the horns and blow them all away forever. **Christ is our Jubilee**. And He wants us to know what He has in mind for us.

Do you finally realize how truly "*poor in spirit*" you are before God. As Martin Luther said, "We are beggars all." The LORD's "Anointed One," the Christ / Messiah, has come "*to preach good news to the poor.*" He gives the riches of His righteousness to faith for free. Are you "*brokenhearted.*" He will "*bind up*" and bandage your broken heart with His loving hands. Are you "*captive*" to sinful lusts and

appetites too strong for you to control? The One on whom God's Spirit rests proclaims "***freedom for the captives and release from darkness***" of sin and unbelief and all those powerful, addictive forces around and in us. When you come blinking into the sunlight, He gives sight to the blind. He comes to "***proclaim the year of the LORD's favor and the day of vengeance of our God***" for all the enemies of our bodies and souls in this sinful world, from hell itself, and that traitor inside us. Are you mourning the lose of love, or of a loved one? Christ comes "***to comfort***" you with His kind understanding and promises of blessings yet to be. Do you "***grieve***" for what is happening in the church today and the way people and pastors blaspheme rather than to praise? The LORD's Christ is ready to make a trade for our tears and the ashes of our lives. He keeps coming through Word and sacrament "***to comfort all who mourn, 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.***"

Talk about "extreme makeover!" God does not just give you a credit card and send you stumbling through racks of clothes hoping you'll buy the right ones. He provides the "***crown of beauty,***" the cologne that rejoices the heart of kings, and robes that make you feel good and ready for heaven from head to toe. It's all in His Word of forgiveness from the One who came to live and die for you, and keeps coming to give you life in His Name. His "extreme makeover" reaches down deep where trouble starts in our lives. When He says, ***They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the LORD for the display of his splendor,*** He's talking about trees whose roots grow as deep as the tree is tall. He's talking about a life that will not blow over in storms now or ever. He's talking as the Christ of God. And we rejoice because Jesus **Christ is our Jubilee**. But He has one more picture to please:

#### ✧ **Christ is our Heavenly Bridegroom (vv.10,11)**

One of our Christmas cards from a friend this year has the mother of two grown boys telling how sweet it is that when she got a daughter-in-law, she also got a friend. She's obviously happy to see the joy of her older son in his God-fearing, faithful, beautiful, bubbly wife who thinks the world of him and he of her. "Oh, to be young and in love!" says the mother who lost her husband a few years ago. How is it that she can be truly happy for her son when she so much misses his father? How can Christians smile through the tears, not pasted on smiles, but genuine joy beneath the grief?

Here as sweetly as ever: "***I delight greatly in the LORD; my soul rejoices in my God.***" Christ may still talking, but just as He found joy as God in His heavenly Father, so we find true, overflowing joy in Jesus as our God and LORD. Once we realized our nakedness because of sin, each of us could rejoice to at the **Good News** that, "***He has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness.***" God gives the uniform I need to step up to heaven's gate as the heavenly Father throws the door wide open with a shout. While the angels cheer, He wraps His arms around me with the love He has for His holy Son. So kindly and securely He adopted me into His family by Baptism.

But before He's finished with us this evening, our precious Lord wants to take us to the jewelry store like lovers picking out the most expensive gems. He has clothed you so kindly in His love it's "***as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. 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.***" God continues to do so among us in this nation and through us to "***nations***" far beyond our borders. Dirt ground in the garden turns green when spring comes with sunshine and rain. Your heart bursts with praises that get into your hands and feet whenever you see someone in need at Christmas or throughout the year. You don't want just a little of the LORD; you want all of Him. And dear, precious soul, He won't settle for any less than all of you. **Christ is our Heavenly Bridegroom** is also **our Jubilee**. And this non-fattening, calories-be-gone, sugar is just the medicine we need. He comes to **Preach Good News to the Poor**. Anyone grieving by you these days? "Just a Spoonful of Sugar Helps the Medicine Go Down" – healthy, happy in Christ. Amen.