

Title: Freedom's Calling
Text: Isaiah 61-62
Theme: The overwhelming benefits of salvation
Series: Isaiah #52
Prop Stmt: The Servant loves us, frees us and frees us to be loved.

N. Korea is one of the most isolated countries in the world. In the 90's about one tenth of the population died in a famine, while their military pursued nuclear weapons. People are desperate to get out. In 1992, 9 people reached S. Korea. In 2002, 153 escaped to S. Korea. Now, it is around 3,000 a year. But, they cannot go south through the demilitarized zone. They have to cross the Tumen River into China and take their chances from there. The N. Koreans are extremely racists towards the Chinese. If a N. Korean woman is found in China and sent back, she is typically punished. If she is pregnant when she returns, the baby is aborted since it is considered to be impure. But the Chinese are generally very racist against the Koreans. And here is a dynamic that many world leaders refuse to face. China's aggressive abortion program and one-child per family policy has resulted in a serious shortage of girls (like no one thought of that?). When a family can only have one child, they typically abort the girls, so that their son, (whom they do not have pay a bride price for) can carry on the family name. So, in order to get girls, China has to import them and N. Korea is willing to sell their girls as brides. The result is, poverty and starvation in N. Korea that people are attempting to escape from and slavery and abuse in China that people are attempting to flee.

World leaders are ignoring this for obvious political reasons, but Christians are not. Believers in China have set up an underground railroad system patterned after the one we established in this country to help slaves escape to freedom. If you want to escape and are looking for freedom, you are told, "Look for a building with a cross on it."

That is what these two chapters are about. They describe the freedom that Christ brings to those in bondage. The opening lines of chapter 61 were the words that Christ read in his hometown synagogue and then said to the people who were so proud that he read well, "today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." (Luke 4.21) Freedom has come! The Deliverer has come! Anyone who knew what the rest of this passage is about would have been stunned because these two chapters contain some of the most astonishingly personal statements in the entire Bible. There are things about God's immense grandeur and righteous majesty that overwhelm us, and we are rightfully astonished at such. But, what amazes us in this chapter is how intensely personal God is. These chapters speak of a love that is so powerful that it not only frees us from bondage to sin, and frees us from the punishment of sin, but it frees us to accept without question, the love of God. Many of you cannot imagine being loved, purely, perfectly, completely and eternally. It is a dream, but not a reality. Some of you have a taste of this because you have a good marriage and you have enjoyed a long marriage. That is a kindness of God to you. But, the older you get, the more funerals you attend and you know that your

marriage will not last forever. But this text speaks about a love that is not only perfect in its security and purity, but it will last forever. It is yours, only through Christ.

I. **Freedom comes through the Savior.** (1-3)

When Isaiah wrote this, I wonder what he thought? Peter spoke of the prophets, like Isaiah and said that these “*men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.*” (2 Peter 1.21b) Did Isaiah know whom he was writing about? Obviously, up until the time of Christ, there was a lot of debate as to whom Isaiah was writing about. But look at this verse. Here is an OT passage that speaks about the Trinity. I just want you to see that, because it is not a doctrine that is highlighted in the OT, but it is there. The Spirit of the Lord (adonai) God (elohim) is upon me because the LORD (Yahweh) has anointed me. Who is the me? Well, Christ removed all doubt about that when he read this text and claimed to be the One fulfilling it. Christ came to set us free. He did this in conjunction with and in harmony with the entire God-head.

A. **Who is anointed by God (1a)**

This was a prophecy about Christ who would come in order to be our King/Savior. The Spirit of God was going to come upon him because the LORD has set him apart for a kingly mission. When you read through the stories of the kings of Israel, you see that Saul was anointed by the prophet Samuel to be king. This ceremony that involved pouring oil upon him, symbolized that Saul was the representative of God (King) over the nation of Israel. The same thing was repeated with David and then with Solomon. The oil symbolized the Holy Spirit. This prophecy is saying that THE King/Savior is going to come and when he comes, he will be anointed with the Spirit of God because He is set apart for this mission to rescue people from bondage.

One of the major points that I want you to see and own from our text is how deeply you are loved by God. The evidence for that is already put on display for us here. Do you realize the implications of this verse? The entire Godhead is involved in your rescue operation and he will not leave you.

The CIA and the military are in a mess right now. In view of the fact that the Middle East is teetering on the edge of all-out war, it could not come at a worse time. Was all this a factor in what happened at Benghazi? I don't know. I know this much. When our embassy in Libya was being attacked, someone told our security forces to “stand down” and not attempt to rescue them. Two soldiers defied orders and went in anyway. They died attempting to protect the lives of others, and, by some reports probably saved 30 lives in the process. Can you imagine taking an oath of allegiance to a government and serving that government only to be abandoned by them in your hour of need because it was deemed politically inconvenient? It happens. It is a sad story that grinds us, and causes so much grief. That is why these words are so needful. The Father, Son and Spirit all cooperated and orchestrated a plan to get you

out of a mess that you could not fix. Here, God is going on record 700 years before it happens in order to promise that it will. And it did. Christ did come. When he presented himself to the public, the Spirit of God did anoint him in order to set him apart as the King/Savior. This promise that he made, he kept, all of which gives us absolute confidence that he will keep the rest of these as well.

A. **Who declares Freedom (1b-2)**

These phrases are beautiful. Christ is going to come and announce to the poor; that is those who are so broken down by the weight of life (their own sin and the sin of others) that they have no more fight left in them. They are on empty. There is nothing left. They are worn out and exhausted. They tried to believe, but can't hold on much longer. (That is what "poor" means). These are the ones to whom Christ speaks. But here is the difference. Christ is not a hot-air politician. When he speaks it happens! When he promises, it is as good as being done. His words create reality. Since death could not stand in his way, no prison of circumstance or memory, or sinful habit is a match for his gospel. That is what he announces. He announces good news! Do you know why he read this in the Synagogue in Nazareth and boldly told them that this was now fulfilled before their very eyes? Jesus declares the good news because He is the good news. He is the promise and the reality. He is the messenger and the message and the means and the motivation. He is the whole package. And He announces the year of the Lord's favor upon his people and vengeance upon his enemies. He brings grace to those in bondage, and justice to those who put people in bondage. "*For I the LORD love justice.*" (8) That is great news to those who have been taken advantage of. That is terrifying news for those who take advantage of others. Freedom will come to those who are in bondage and vengeance will come to those who put people in bondage.

"Judgment means that in the end, God's will will be perfectly done." Leon Morris

B. **Who provides gifts of love. (3)**

When we have weddings, we worry that there might be too much time between the wedding and the reception for the guests. Picking out the dress is a family event, except for the groom who is not permitted to see it. Ancient Israel would have thought us to be really odd. You see in the week leading up to the consummation of the marriage, the men would all celebrate together and the women would all celebrate together. Then, the bride would put on her wedding gown that the groom had provided for her and she would be led to the home of the groom where another round of feasting would take place. Think of the bride. She is wearing the dress that her groom has purchased for her. If it is elaborate and perfect, it says to all who sees her, that she is loved. She is cherished. She is cared for. She is provided for. She is treasured. There is a man who loves her so much that he is doing all of this for her so that she can be his wife. Is it really true? Does someone love me like this? All she has to do is look at her dress and she has the answer. Yes!! This is what Christ does for his bride – us! He provides us with a garment of praise (a garment that causes us

to praise), that we find out in vs.10 is a garment of salvation and a robe of righteousness. This is how much you are loved by God. But remember this. We are only beautiful as we reflect him.

II. **This Freedom is incomparable.** (4-9)

These verses deal with contrast. Instead of living among smoldering ruins left by the enemies' armies, the ancient cities will be rebuilt and the former glory of the country will be restored. If there is one city in the world where you should invest in real estate, it is Jerusalem. That is what God told Jeremiah. Jerusalem is forever. Even if Iran nuked it, it would be rebuilt. It is forever. That is not the case with many of the massive capitals of the empires of Isaiah's day. They are ashes in the wind. But there is more.

Instead of being sold off as slaves in exile, strangers, foreigners will be the ones who will be doing the menial labor in Israel. But, notice v.6 because I really want you to see something here. This passage speaks of the day when the Jews will be restored as a people who will love God and will be the people that God originally designed them to be. It makes sense to me that these promises are fulfilled during the 1000-year reign of Christ on the earth that we call "The Millennium." But what this verse does not say is that Israel, instead of being the slaves will be the slave-owners. No, it says that Israel will be the "priests of the LORD." Now, what does a priest do? He points people to God. He represents people before God. Here, God is promising his people that they are going to be restored in such a way that they will represent the world before God. They will show the rest of the world what it means to be a people who love God. I believe that these promises for Israel are also in store for the church, since we are called the Bride in Ephesians and in Revelation. When Israel finally returns to the Lord, this will only be a cause of great celebration on our part. This is what we have longed for. We know that Christ was born in this world as a Jew and was rejected by the Jews. We know that he came unto his own, and his own received him not. We know that their rejection of him opened the door of salvation to the Gentiles. But, we love the Groom. We love our King. When the original people of the King finally embrace Him as their King we will rejoice. He will not love us less, he will simply love more, for his love has no limits and his grace no measure. Now, you can understand why verses 10-11 are here.

III. **This Freedom causes rejoicing.** (10-11)

Here, the bride, the people of God is responding with joy because she is overwhelmed at the love that has been lavished upon her. It is not just the idea of being loved that is so wonderful (and it is), but, look at who we are loved by!! Can you believe it? And look at the gifts that he has given to us! We are given salvation (garments of) and righteousness (robe of). Even in the Old Testament, it is clear. Salvation and righteousness are not things that you earn, they are gifts from God. This is what causes rejoicing!

Why would you settle for another love when this is all yours? Why would you drink the rat poison of this world, believing its lies of immorality bringing happiness, wealth bringing security, and popularity bringing love? Why would you think that your future is all determined by your SAT, GPA, or IRA? The promises of this world are a mirage. But (v.11) the promises of God, the satisfaction of God, the provision of God is forever and ever. I read this text and think of the words of Anne Cousin based on letters from Samuel Rutherford

O Christ, He is the fountain,
The deep, sweet well of love!
The streams on earth I've tasted
More deep I'll drink above;
There to an ocean fullness
His mercy doth expand,
And glory, glory dwelleth
In Emmanuel's land.

The bride eyes not her garment,
But her dear Bridegroom's face;
I will not gaze at glory
But on my King of grace.
Not at the crown He giveth
But on His pierced hand;
The Lamb is all the glory
Of Emmanuel's land.

O I am my Beloved's
And my Beloved is mine!
He brings a poor vile sinner
Into his house of wine
I stand upon His merit –
I know no other stand,
Not e'en where glory dwelleth
In Emmanuel's land¹

IV. **This Freedom brings a new relationship.** (62.1-5)

Chapter 61 is so full of promise that it seems as if God knows that we will wonder if this is really true. Is it really possible that the King of glory and grace could love me so? But, there is something else going on here. God's plan for his people covers a very long time. He is working his plan throughout this entire world. Some of you want Christ to return right now, before Obamacare is fully implemented. You cannot imagine living under duress and persecution, or living without many of the things that you cherish. If and when you are called to endure hardness at that level, it is

¹ The Sands of Time are Sinking (Hymn) verses 3-5

easy to doubt the promises of God because he did not keep his promises according to our clock. Well, he is not on our clock. We can look back and see how the life of Christ fulfilled the OT promises about him in an amazing manner. But, the One whom Isaiah promised did not come for 700 years. So, when Christ says, that he will return, we must believe it and remain steadfast in hope. That hope will not disappoint us and chapter 62 speaks to how certain this hope really is.

In v.1 it is as if God is responding to the charge that he has been silent. And he is making it clear that he is going to finish what he started and keep what he promised. He then promises (2-3) that he will lavish upon his people not only gifts that make them beautiful and jewels that reveal his love, but he is going to give us a new name.

Now, the kids who were in Kids Bible Fellowship this morning, looked at an illustration of this truth from the life of Jacob (Genesis 32-33). God changed Jacob's name to Israel. God loved Jacob. God chose Jacob as his own, and God's relationship of love to Jacob was the reason why God changed his name. Do you see the picture? On that day, God not only made Jacob his own, but he gave him a new name. What happened to Jacob illustrated what happens to us when we become followers of Christ. When we trust Christ, we are born into his family (as children) and we become part of his bride (as his wife). We are his and he gives us gifts and a new name.

He calls us "My Delight is in her." (4) Now, I know that when some of you hear this, you think that he must be talking about someone else. You think that there is no way that God could ever call you "my delight is in her" after all, you see all of your insecurity, unfaithfulness and failure. You see your sin and brokenness and you live in a world that reminds you of your bad decisions and broken promises and you feel condemned to live as one who is cursed and can never catch a break. Do you see what God is saying here? He does not love you because you have finally earned his favor. He does not love you because you have proven to him how consistent you can be in reading your Bible. He does not love you because you have talents, gifts, money or personality. He does not love you because you first loved him and he just been waiting for you to be good enough. Like he did with Jacob, he loved you before you were born. He called you. He named you. He chose you. He came after you. He opened your eyes to his grace. He gave you a heart to believe.

In the wedding sermon for my son, I said to him and Taylor that Christ does not love us because we are pure and holy, but his love for us is so powerful and so intense that He will make us pure and holy. And he will make us so pure and so holy that we will one day be in his presence without even a spot and not even a wrinkle and not Botox! (I didn't say the Botox thing, but if I had thought of it at the time I probably would have.)

V. **This Freedom is guarded.** (6-9)

Verses 6-9 are more promises that tell us how secure this. In v.6 God is saying, that he has put watchmen (angels probably) whose job it is to remind the God who cannot forget of his promises to his people. Beloved, he cannot forget you and he will not forget you. But let's wrap this up.

VI. **This Freedom is yours to believe.** (10-12)

These last three verses are an invitation. This is an invitation to believe God's promises and to live, believing them. Here is the picture. God is saying, I am going to rebuild Jerusalem so that she is the focal point of the world. People will come to her from all over the world to learn of me. Do you believe this? If you believe this, then start building roads. Do you see the point?

God promises to restore his people because of Christ. Christ is the hero of the book of Isaiah. Christ is the one that the entire OT is looking for and Christ is the one that the New Testament is all about. Christ is going to provide a salvation from bondage. This salvation is first, foremost and forever a salvation from our sin. He provided this because he was rejected by his own people he came to save and died on a cross. But because he died as an innocent Lamb in our place, God, the Father accepted his death as our substitute, so that in my place condemned he stood. Isaiah knew that something like this was going to happen, though probably not every detail. You do know. You have heard about Christ and what he has done. He has come. He has lived in your place. He has died in your place. He has provided a home for you and a new name for you. Will you believe him? Will you accept him as your King and Savior? Will you realize that you cannot earn his favor, nor pay for his forgiveness? His forgiveness for you is driven by his love, not your performance. Therefore, you cannot trust in your efforts. You must trust in Christ alone.