

Jan 28/24 – Leaders' Guide – Small Groups

Read Isaiah 61

1. The 61st chapter of Isaiah describes a future Garden of Eden on earth. What are the various images describing this future and what do they mean?

The whole chapter of Isaiah 61 is bookended with images of paradise foliage. Even those who are liberated by the Messiah are described as "oaks of righteousness". The prophet foresaw a new Eden on earth, the new creation of the cosmos, and these images are organic, (super)natural, and flourishing in the backdrop of ruined cities, devastations, and darkness. It means that life and light are slowly overtaking and overwhelming death and darkness, the undoing and reversal of the effects of the curse.

2. The Messiah is described as being anointed to do a particular mission. How is this messianic mission described and what are its implications in the world?

The Messiah first proclaims the good news of the year of the Lord's favour (jubilee) and then He sets free, heals, and transforms people and the earth. The overture of the kingdom of heaven is firstly proclamation, and Jesus initially preached this good news and dished out samples of the new creation by healing, liberating, exorcising, and transforming lives. The climactic moment of His messianic mission was to die for the penalty of sin and from the curse of sin and to rise again, proving His sovereignty over death and the devil. Jesus will finally return to fully realize the new creation. For now, the impact and effects of this jubilee year are still unfolding and being felt by us and the world. The Church is called to continue in the same messianic mission throughout the world by doing what Jesus did on earth: rebuild, repair, reconcile, and repent.

Read Luke 4:16-30

1. Jesus' rejection at Nazareth establishes the narrative expectation of rejection for Himself in the gospels, and also for the Church thereafter. Why should we as Christians expect to be rejected for our proclamation of the Gospel?

If Jesus was rejected, His followers will also be rejected. The student is not greater than the teacher. The servant is not greater than the Lord. If the world hated Jesus, they will also hate the Church. The message of the Gospel is a threat to all of our human conventions and power structures. And so, we will naturally reject the message of jubilee.

2. In the face and expectation of rejection, how do we prepare ourselves in our lives as people anointed by the same Holy Spirit to continue Jesus' messianic mission on earth?

We gird ourselves with hope, faith, and love regardless of the cost and loss of our lives: hope in that death and suffering are not the final straw but we will be rewarded in the resurrection of the dead; faith in that we walk ahead trusting in God's promises and not by the sight of our human flesh; and love for all people, even our enemies, in order that some may even come to be saved.