

Text: Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11

Theme: Built Up and Restored

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father, and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

My dear beloved flock the text for our meditation today is the Old Testament lesson of Isaiah chapter sixty-one verses one through four and eight through eleven.

Intro: Boys and Girls, I pray that you are doing well today. I have two pictures here. Which place would you rather live in? Would you like to live in the first? No! It is an ancient house in tatters. It used to be a glorious mansion in former days, full of joy and light, splendid gatherings of people in their finery as they gathered for great feasts. And now? Now it is nothing. A specter of its former well past faded glory. Old, rotted, and broken-down stairs, windows shattered and shards of glass everywhere. Vines covering everything in its embrace. Candle holders with nothing in them. Tables dust covered and droppings everywhere. Talk about a fixer-upper house, can anything be done to repair it? This is what the people of Israel faced. Their house is in tatters. It needs restoration. How does God restore it? How does God restore us? Ponder those questions as you hear the rest of the sermon.

We are just as fallen.

How many of you see yourselves pictured like that old house? How many of our lives are fixer uppers in need of repair and constant reworkings? Our sinful nature makes all of us into fixer uppers. None of us is perfect. We all have words, thoughts, and deeds that we would love the opportunity to rework if we could once done and uttered. We think that we are good outwardly, but inwardly? We are shattered and dust covered. We break the law of God every moment. Another window

shattered. None of us can keep even one of the ten commandments perfectly. We lie, we cheat, we steal. We covet the wonderful things that our neighbor has as we fight over them. When we do not get our way, we pout, cry, and scream. More and more vines entangle us. We lay like that old house in disrepair and unused, good for nothing but housing for varmints and vermin. We mourn over our fallenness but try as we might, there is no way that we can restore ourselves. Lives are often filled with greed, jealousy, pride, lust, envy, hatred, and anger. At the end of human life stands death—inescapable, dark, and undeniable. All humans are heirs to such conditions because of their own sins, rebellion, and guilt.¹ We can never restore ourselves back to the old glory we used to have before Adam and Eve fell into sin. We stand broken and shattered, a solemn warning, merely watching the effects of sin in our children and grandchildren, from generation to generation.

God restores us in JC.

So what are we to do? We depend upon the One anointed by God Himself, Jesus Christ. Jesus has come to announce good news. His entire mission centers on the “good news,” or the gospel. We should not forget that God did not send his Messiah to restore the earthly kingdom of David and Solomon or even to establish a new, better kingdom on earth. The speaker tells us that he has come “to preach ... to proclaim ... to comfort ... to bestow.” He descended with a message of good news, healing, and freedom. He came to address that good news to the poor, the brokenhearted, and the prisoners.² Jesus is the one anointed by God, sent for our benefit. Every believer may rejoice that God has covered his or her sinful life with the robe of righteousness. Jesus fashioned this robe from the threads of his perfect life. Then he wove it on the loom of the cross and colored it with his own red blood. God freely gives the cloak

¹ Braun, J. A. (2001). [Isaiah 40-66](#) (p. 331). Northwestern Pub. House.

² Braun, J. A. (2001). [Isaiah 40-66](#) (pp. 329–330). Northwestern Pub. House.

of his Son's perfect life to the sinner, and it covers every sin, rebellion, and deviation from God's standard. This robe of Christ's righteousness is long and wide enough to cover every twisted human thought, word, and deed. But this robe comes only from God. No human can erase a single sin. Left to ourselves, we walk about as Lady Macbeth did. She killed the king, and her sins haunted her conscience and heart. Like Shakespeare's character, we vainly attempt to wipe our own sinful hands clean. If we are honest, we will conclude as she did: "Here's the smell of the blood still; all the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand" (*Macbeth* 5.1.52–54). Only God's grace in Christ can cover human sin. Forgiveness cannot be achieved by human effort, no matter how godly that effort may appear to other human eyes. We are justified, that is, we are declared righteous, freely by grace. By faith we put Christ's spotless robe on our shoulders and make it our own.³ Jesus takes us as a fallen down house and fixes us up. He does not just a small patch job, but a full and complete restoration.

God builds us up for others.

In and through Jesus Christ, we have been restored. Our broken windows are made new. Our vines are cut down and burned. Our sins are cleansed away. Our old and faded glory is restored in bright luster. God does this to us in Holy Baptism, we are granted His Holy Spirit. We are restored not only for our own salvation but also so that others can be restored, just as we were. God uses us and works through us for His glory. This is why we do our best to obey His laws, not because we earn anything by it, but for the sake of our neighbor. For example, why do we make quilts and give them away? Why do we serve food and drink for others? Open up our building to other various groups to use for those suffering from alcoholism and other vices? Why do we make cookies and go caroling today? It is to make ourselves feel better and puff ourselves up? No, rather we do it because God has blessed us with all of

³ Braun, J. A. (2001). [Isaiah 40-66](#) (pp. 335–336). Northwestern Pub. House.

these gifts. He has restored us by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ our Lord. In His restoration, we reach out, that those who have fallen down, as we were, may be fully restored once again.

We know that our fallenness still remains, and we look forward to the day when it is no longer a part of us. We look forward to that glorious day when all is restored fully and completely when our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ comes in His power and glory and we will be with Him forever and ever. Until that day dear Christians, rejoice. Rejoice that your God has loved you in Jesus Christ and has built up your ruins and clothed you with the garment of His salvation.

Now may the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, guard and keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.