

The Divine Anointing - Part 3

by T. Austin-Sparks

The sermon emphasizes the transformative power of grace as proclaimed by Jesus, highlighting its significance and the human tendency to reject it.

Duration: 41:09

Scripture: Leviticus 25:10, Matthew 9:13, Luke 4:18-19, Luke 4:21, Luke 4:24, Luke 18:13, Romans 3:23

Topics: "Divine Anointing"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the background of Jesus' first sermon and the significance of the year of Jubilee in Israel. He emphasizes that Jesus came to proclaim the good news of grace and release to those in bondage and captivity. The preacher highlights the pitiable plight of humanity, far from their heavenly home and blinded by the god of this age. Despite Jesus' proclamation of grace, the religious people in Nazareth reject him and seek to destroy him, revealing the sinful nature of man.

Transcript

It may be that there are some here this evening who have not been with us through the earlier meetings of this conference. Therefore, for their benefit, I may say that we have been led in this season to give our attention anew to the great matter of the Holy Spirit, which is the spirit of divine anointing for the believer in Jesus Christ. We have looked at this matter from various standpoints and pursued it along various lines.

So, this evening, in this closing gathering, we are coming back to this great basic passage which has been read here from the Gospel by Luke, chapter 4. Jesus visiting Nazareth, entering the synagogue, and the attendant evidently knowing him as belonging to and having been brought up in that town, passes to him the roll with the prophecies of Isaiah inscribed upon it. And he took it and unfolded the roll, working in the unfolding toward that point in those prophecies which we know as chapter 61. And then he began to read.

Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he anointed me to preach good tidings. So, this evening, we are to be occupied with the anointing in relation to the good tidings, what we call the gospel. Now, as you see, Luke puts this incident very early in the ministry of Christ.

It would seem that the Lord had visited Capernaum. Perhaps he had taken in Cana of Galilee, but had come very soon to Nazareth. Luke, in his record, is wanting to make clear that the Lord Jesus, in his great ministry, preaching and teaching, at the very beginning, the very first sermon that he preached, struck the note of grace.

The whole subsequent score, the great harmony of the gospel, would be tuned to that keynote, grace. It was Luke's particular object to record the gospel of grace. He differs from the other writers of gospels, particularly in that matter.

Matthew will give us the gospel of the kingdom. It's not a different gospel, but it has that particular aspect. The kingdom of God, the kingdom of heaven.

Others will have their own particular object in writing. But Luke knew quite well what he was after. So, his gospel, in a peculiar way, is tuned to this great initial keynote, grace.

It's Luke that alone writes of the prodigal son, a great, great story of grace. Of the lost sheep, of the lost coin, and sets over the whole of this gospel. The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.

It's the gospel of grace. And so, he puts the Lord Jesus here, as at the beginning, and gives us this. Grace is here.

It's mentioned, actually, in that word, once. But it is there in the original language, covered by another English translation, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. Which, many of you will know, in the original text is the year of grace.

The year of divine grace. The grace of the Lord. That is what comes out here, particularly.

This is a sermon on the grace of God, by Luke, made the foundation of all the ministry and work of the Lord Jesus, and declared to be the object of the anointing. The thing for which Jesus was anointed. The anointing of the Spirit then has, as the object, grace.

Grace. For this dispensation, which is the year. The year which began when Jesus came.

And will end when he returns. It's a long day. It's proving to be much longer than anybody expected.

Not a day of hours, but a day of centuries. Nevertheless, bounded by a beginning and an end, between those two, the character of this dispensation in which you and I live, this day, is grace. Good news as to the grace of God.

Well, to begin with, Jesus said that he was anointed to preach good tidings. Grace is proclaimed. And grace is proclaimed with a mighty context.

There's a two-fold background to this declaration of the Lord Jesus under the direction of the anointing Spirit. Firstly, there is the background of Isaiah chapter 56. Now, if you turn back to that chapter from which this prophecy is taken, you will find that its connection there, its literal and actual connection, that is, of this very prophecy, and it is the prophet Isaiah who in the first place is speaking of himself.

He is not in the first instance thinking of the coming Messiah. He is saying of himself, the Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he, the Lord, has anointed me to preach good tidings. Isaiah was the preacher of the gospel then.

But do you notice the setting? The setting there was the ending of the captivity of the Lord's people in Babylon. For seventy long weary years they had been in exile because of their sin. After long pleadings and entreaties and warnings and beseeching, they still went their way.

The prophet said, all we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned everyone to his own way because of their persistence in that own way, not the way of the Lord. At last the threatened judgment had fallen on them.

They had been carried away into exile and bondage. There, according to the prescribed time, they languished for seventy years. And whatever may have been true of some who may have settled down and sought to make the best of the situation or even to have a good time with all that Babylon could offer, there were those who never did so.

There was a considerable body of those exiles who longed for home. This is not home. We are in a foreign country.

This is not the place to which we belong. Yes, you may say that we are romancing about home. But it is not all that we in exile imagine it to be.

Nevertheless, it is home. We are away from home. This is not our life.

Little glimpse into how they felt is given us in such words as these. We hung our harps upon the willow. Said, how can we sing the songs of Zion in a strange land? No song, no song in a strange land.

A people in bondage, people in weakness, a people deprived and stripped of everything that was really theirs by the will of God. Fruited in spirit, imprisoned in body, blinded by frustration and disappointment and the eternal longing in their hearts. Oh, to get back home.

The day came, the dawn of a day broke and a sound is heard like a trumpet call. Prophet is crying. Spirit of the Lord is upon me.

The Lord has anointed me to preach good tidings. One of the good tidings sent me to proclaim release to the captives. The recovering of sight to the blind.

To set at liberty them that are bruised. To proclaim the year of grace. And can you imagine what those captives felt like? As with that morning they heard me cry, and the day of your release has come.

The day when you can go home. You can have all that for which your hearts have longed these many years. You can go.

You're free. That's the first background that Jesus takes up and says, yes, but my good news is even better than that. This world is like that.

You men and women are like that. You are exiles from your heavenly home. Far from your heavenly home.

Far from the Father's house. You are in bondage and captivity. God of this age has blinded your eyes.

You're in a pitiable plight. More pitiable even than those exiles in Babylon. But listen.

I've come with good news. I've come with good news. This is the year of the Lord's release.

This is the year of grace. That's the gospel he was anointed to preach. That's the first of the two backgrounds of this wonderful first sermon of the Lord Jesus.

And before I pass from there I want to remind you that he said, this day, this day is this fulfilled. This day. In your ears it's fulfilled.

While no doubt literally he was referring to that particular Sabbath day in the synagogue of Nazareth. Spiritually it ushered in the day of this thing, this very thing for mankind. The day has come for the release.

But there's a second background. Familiar to many of you? It's the background of that great festival of Israel known as the year of Jubilee. Once every fifty years in the life of Israel a great festival took place.

And it lasted for a whole year. During the fifty years many a tragedy had been enacted. Many a dark shadow had come in to spoil and blight the lives of the people.

Here is a poor family unable to meet its liabilities and pay its debts. And so under the law this thing could be exacted in some way. A mortgage could be taken on their property.

Their inheritance of fields could be taken away from them. And used to raise the crops to pay their debts and they get nothing out of it. A son in a family could be taken and put to forced labor.

Get no wages to pay the debt. Things like that. A lot more things like that could happen.

People during the fifty years were having that sort of experience. And then the fiftieth year, the year of Jubilee. What happened? With the first streets adorned.

That first day of the year of Jubilee. The trumpets of Jubilee were sounded. And those who kept the sons in bondage had to go and say to them, You can go home.

You can go home. I can keep you no longer. It's the year of Jubilee.

It's the year of release. I have no longer any power to keep you. Go home.

Use your imagination. Family at home. This festal morn preparing the home and scanning the horizon for the return of that son who had been kept as a hostage against their debt.

Many are home. Many a broken family mended that day. And the lawyer has to write across the deed of mortgage.

Cancel and send it to the poor people whose inheritance had been taken away. All that sort of thing was happening all over the land. It was the year of Jubilee.

All slaves must be released. All properties must be returned. Everything under judgment must be freed.

And listen, what's that sound? The keys are turning in the cells of prisoners and the gates of the prison courts are being opened and the jailers are saying, You can all go now. It's the year of Jubilee. That's the background that the Lord Jesus takes up and says, You think that was good news to the land? To those homes? To those people? Good news? They heard those trumpets of Jubilee.

You think they rejoiced? Indeed they did. But I've got a better gospel than that even. Gospel, the good news that I have come to preach, to proclaim is better than the return from Babylon's exile and better even than the year of Jubilee.

The gospel, the grace of God, of eternal salvation. Yes, He's anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor. It was a bad thing to be poor in Israel.

A creditor could come, take away your son, take away your home, take away your land. It's a bad thing to be poor, to preach good tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives, the recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are poor, to proclaim the year of grace of the Lord.

So it's proclaimed with a tremendous background, isn't it? But, and I don't think that I'm reading anything into this, what the Lord Jesus really did mean and what it has proved to me in this long drawn out day is that what came with Him by the anointing is a better thing than Israel had in getting back to the land and leaving Babylon. And a better thing even than they had in their year of jubilee once in fifty years. The years may be a lifetime, but it's not eternity.

What He came to give was eternal salvation. To err long upon the details, of course, prisoners and blind people and bruised people and poverty, they all have a spiritual counterpart. But, the sermon is not finished.

Not finished. Suddenly, a strange, strange turn in the course of His discourse carries us away back, away back into ancient Israel, the days of the two great prophets, Elijah and Elisha. And He says, as we have read, of a truth I say unto you, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah.

The heaven was shut up for years and six months when there came a great famine over the land. Unto none of them was Elijah sent but only to Zarephath in the land of Sidon and to a woman that was a widow. I wonder what Elijah would think about that.

I don't know whether he knows about it now. He did appear with Moses on the Mount of Transfiguration. He may know more than we think he does.

But I'm quite sure that if he knew, or when he does know, he would get a bit of a surprise that the Lord Jesus took up that incident and used it in this way. What would Elijah think? Well, yes, it was a terrible day that followed my declaration, there shall be no rain upon the earth by the space of three years and six months. Terrible time.

And there were many, many poor widows in Israel. But the Lord would never let me go to any of those widows to help me. But one day, one day, the Lord told me to go right outside of the land of Israel altogether to the land of Sidon to a poor woman who was a widow.

Well, we know what happened there. Elijah would say, I never realized what I was doing at that time. What was I doing? What was the meaning of it in God's mind? Why, the Lord Jesus has uncovered the hidden meaning of this.

In the land of Israel, in the land of Israel, is the place where they think that they have a right to everything. Of course, they are the people. They are the people.

They have the oracles. They have the revelation. They have the commandments.

They have all that which God gave of Sinai. They've got it all. They are the people who have a right to everything.

Self-satisfied, self-important, under judgment because of their pride, their arrogance. They, therefore, are not suitable subjects for grace. You'll never know the grace of God if you have any kind of spirit or mentality like that.

You've got to be like a poor widow, a poor widow who is regarded as an outsider. You'll know grace then. That's a discovery for Elijah even, that he was enacting under the direction of the Spirit of God, he was enacting the gospel of grace.

In this sense, that it is to those who are aware of their needs, really conscious that if they are going to get anything at all, it will have to be by grace of God. Tis mercy all. Immense and free.

Only people who have no sense whatever of merit in themselves, of right to anything at all, can speak like that. Tis mercy all. Immense and free.

And it was a poor widow in the land of Sidon who came to know the gospel of the grace of God. But the Lord Jesus doesn't finish there. There were many lepers in Israel in the days of Elisha.

Elisha had the anointing. He could by the anointing have cleansed all the lepers in Israel. But he wasn't allowed to go to one of them.

It was in Israel, it was in Israel, when Israel was not in a state to know the grace of God. There was one man who was a foreigner, an outsider altogether, not in Israel, known the leper. And just to him was Elisha sent.

For he alone, an outsider, was cleansed of his sin. You see, the Lord Jesus is putting a tremendous emphasis on the gospel. Is the gospel a grace? On one side you have no place in this acceptable year of the Lord, this year of the Lord's release, this year of grace, with all that it means you have no place in it, if you can still hope to find what you're after in any other direction than the grace of God.

You're simply ruled out. On the other side, if you are such as the widow of Zarephath or Naaman, the Syrian, who is led and governed by this sense of poverty and sinfulness, you're the candidate for the gospel, the good news, the grace of God. And I think Elisha would be a bit surprised if he knew what he did over Naaman the Syrian was going to be taken up by the Lord Jesus centuries after and used as an illustration of the grace of God, that he was enacting the gospel of grace.

It's proclaimed, it is illustrated and set forth in this vivid and forceful way by the Lord Jesus. But such is the heart of man, and, dear friends, how it is borne out there in Nazareth. Here it is.

He is, by the anointing, proclaiming the good news, the gospel of grace, the year of jubilee, the year of the Lord's release. They are not prepared to number themselves with the poor and the blind and the imprisoned and the needy ones. They still stand on their religious dignity as the people with the result that they reject him who brought the good news of grace and would destroy him.

Would destroy him. Such is the heart of man. Such is the heart of man.

That's what men will do. They may go to church every Sunday and in their religion say God be merciful unto us, God be merciful to me a sinner and you meet them immediately after and say hello you miserable sinner. See what will happen to you.

I know, not having that. Yes. That's what happened there.

He was trying to make them see on the one side that they were needing the grace of God. They were needing the grace of God. And on the other side that the grace of God had come to them that very day in his person.

But their blindness is so great and their imprisonment so strong. They are exiled from God so far that they will take the very messenger of grace and destroy him if they can. Grace or rejected.

I am not surprised, I am not surprised that Nathaniel said can any good thing come out of Nazareth. That's Nazareth. That's Nazareth.

But even there, marvel of marvel, he who knew his own native town. He who knew the state of things there. He who knew those people.

He who knew their pride, their prejudice. He who knew it, he lived there after years. He knew it, he knew it.

And this very sermon shows that he knew it. Shows that he knew it. He made that the place of his first preaching of the grace of God.

Marvelous isn't it? Marvelous. You would say that's the place to be left. Never go there.

Preaching good news, they won't have it. They won't have it. Indeed, you'll find they will more than reject it, they'll reject you nevertheless.

Son of God knew when he came into this world what a reception he would have. He came unto his own. They that were his own received him not.

He knew when he came here that he would not be received. But he came. But he came.

Tis mercy all. Immense. But that's not the end of the story.

I'm sorry that it's broken up in this way. The end of the story? Ah yes. They led him to the brow of the hill whereon their city was built that they might throw him down headlong.

He came to Capernaum, the city of Galilee. He was teaching on the Sabbath day. There was in the synagogue a man which had a spirit of an unclean deed.

You know the rest? You know the rest? How does this really finish? There, like this. There went forth a rumor concerning him in every place of the region round about. Grace has been proclaimed.

Grace has been illustrated. Grace has been rejected. But that's not the end.

Here, grace is triumphant at last. It is triumphant at last. There in Capernaum, grace triumphed.

Poor, devil, ridden, dominated, delivered. The people marveled, marveled at this. The fame of rumor of him went to all the region.

What kind of a rumor do you think it was? Ah, you look into this, say, you see what they marveled at was. Grace coming from his lips. Grace coming from his hands.

Grace coming from his presence. Grace. Spirit of the Lord is upon me because the Lord has anointed me to preach good tidings.

To? Those who need grace. That's what it must. Those who need it? Ah, no.

Those who know they need it. Their only hope is the grace of God. Year of grace.

Year of release. Year of jubilee. Dear friends, that is the effect of the anointing.

Effect of the anointing. Holy Spirit has assumed the responsibility for that. The gospel of the grace of God.

You and I come under the Holy Spirit's action. We shall ourselves be children of the grace of God. And we shall be those whose supreme note to which all life is tuned is grace.

Grace. Marvelous grace.

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