

*The Dynamic Gospel* (Isaiah 61:1,2)  
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(Some quotations taken from YWH, Q. J. Everest)

May 7, 2017  
Cornwall, ON

*The spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to preach good news to the oppressed, to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn.*

We are living in a world where many people are faltering and failing. Millions are broken hearted, captives of Satan, slaves of sin, and mourning of deliverance. Thank God there is a mighty Deliverer Who has proclaimed to us a way of deliverance.

Isaiah's text is bringing comfort to the exiles in Babylon, but the language is too elevated to apply exclusively to the prophet. In Luke 4:18, we read that it was on the Sabbath Day; the place of worship was crowded with people who were relatives and friends of Jesus. Everyone seemed to be anxious to hear the One who had captured their minds.

Jesus was handed the book of Isaiah to read. He read the passage we just shared, then He sat down. All eyes were fixed upon Him as he revealed to them that this prophecy was to be fulfilled by Himself. This of course meant that He claimed to be the Messiah. The phrase of the prophecy begins: *The spirit of the Lord is upon me*. This indicated that He had been anointed, not with oil as a prophet or a priest or a king, but with the Holy Spirit as the One anointed by God. With this declaration He further informed the hearers that He was to preach good news to the poor; He was to bind up the broken hearted; to proclaim freedom and liberty. This is a powerful announcement of the great ministry that was to begin and is still being carried out by His Church today.

This was not a sentiment expressed by Jesus to have people admire Him, but as we follow his life through to the last hours on the cross, this passage is vividly verified. On the cross, He spoke words of pardon, assurance and comfort to the penitent thief. Then in those all-inclusive words, we hear Him say, *It is finished* (Jn 19:30). So far as he was concerned, salvation for every person of Adam's race was completed. It is now the responsibility of every person to accept this salvation. Rejection will bring eternal retribution.

This Son of God has a compassion, a love and a concern for the souls of every human being. His heart was burning, yearning, longing for the salvation of His people. When hanging on the cross, His yearning, compassionate heart was revealed by the cry, *Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do*. (Lk 23:34). Jesus saw the multitudes harassed by fear, full of anxiety and scattered abroad. Those who should have been their spiritual guides and instructors were neglecting their duty; they were performing their work without heart zeal or sincerity. The people were led into error. Such conditions have not passed away. It is exactly the same today. Blind leaders are seeking to lead blind souls and Jesus states that both will fail. The business of the church is to make people wise only unto salvation; to get people realize they are lost, damned, hell bound sinners, and that their only salvation is through Jesus Christ.

Together the laity and ordained need to wait before God until we have a burning, consuming passion for the souls of humanity. Some of you know the story of John and Mary Welch, the daughter and son-in-law of John Knox. John was a very sick, anemic, consumptive preacher in the days of James of Scotland. He had been imprisoned for preaching the gospel. The filth and dampness of his

underground cell robbed him of his health and he nearly died. Mary appealed over and over again to the king for his release, only to be refused every time. One day she threw herself in front of the king's horse and on her knees begged the king once more to release John. After thinking for a moment he made her an offer. *Woman, if you will promise that your husband will never preach again, I will open the doors of his cell at once.* Mary stood to her feet lifting her apron, threw back her head and looking fearlessly into the king's face, said, *Your majesty, I had rather have the head of my husband in this apron than to make such a promise.* This so moved the king that he released John. Mary took him back to their home and gently nursed him back to health.

After a time he began to preach again, even though threatened and persecuted. One bitter cold night Mary woke up and found John stretched out on the frozen earthen floor, wrapped in a blanket, weeping and groaning in prayer. She urged him to get into bed. She fell asleep and was later awakened by the morning sun. John was still on the floor in deep agony and praying. She tried to cover him up and he responded, *Let me alone. I have 3,000 souls on my heart and know not how it is with many of them.* That is the result of a Spirit-anointed man. This is the same man to whom we owe much of our denomination to today, many call him the Father of the Presbyterian Church.

We need to pray that God would give us Spirit filled anointed and compassionate leaders today; people who will not be satisfied until they hear the cry of new-born souls. This is the spirit of Christ. It is the spirit of the gospel. It is the spirit that is indispensable in the lives of the teaching and ruling elders, if the cause of Christ is to move forward victoriously.

The spirit of the gospel is evangelization. It is either evangelize or fossilize. There is a tendency to settle down with comfort and with ease, forgetting about a world of people that are lost and going to Hell. In too many instances there seems to be a spirit of satisfaction in going thorough a form and a routine. Social functions have squeezed the spiritual life out of what should have been a spiritual giving organism. It is easy for the church to become a dead, dry, spiritless, god-forsaken organization, still vainly seeking to operate under the banner of the cross.

Christ gave us a message and has commissioned us to take it to the ends of the earth. We know it is a tremendous task but if we consecrate ourselves to God and become recipients of the Holy Spirit, we will become effective witnesses. When the early church received the Holy Spirit, God opened the windows of heaven, and souls were swept into the kingdom by the thousands. The devil raised up people to persecute the church and this persecution only scattered the Christians, and wherever they were driven, the fire of God burned out in ever enlarging fervour.

I wonder how many believe that the message of Christ is what the world needs today? Do you think we owe anything to the present and future generations? I believe it is for us to realize we are under an obligation to carry the glad tidings, not only to our friends but also to our neighbours across the street and around the world. Someone prayed for us, someone brought the message to us, and we must get it out to others. The late Dr. James Kennedy of Fort Lauderdale Presbyterian Church used to preach that you have not completed your conversion until you have passed it on to another.

During this 230<sup>th</sup> anniversary year of witnessing and preaching the gospel, we are grateful to God for his blessing on this ministry here in Cornwall. I am sure you are praying that God will continue to work for the salvation of souls. If we will obey God in praying, preaching and giving, I am sure that eternity alone will reveal the results of St. John's presence in this community. I am sure if Jesus were here, he would say, *Go forward with my message to those in this community who are in darkness and sin. Go Forward*, has been and always will be the watchword of the gospel.

The KJV of our text reads, *The spirit of the Lord is upon me because he hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the meek.* I know there are things to endure. The gospel is not all bone and skull – it is also good tidings. It brings joy, happiness, peace, satisfaction and blessing beyond what we are able to express. The gospel of the Lord Jesus is the most glorious news that was ever carried into this world. The triumphs far outweigh the trials and the tests.

We thank God that the gospel message can bind up the broken hearted, it can renew and mend broken and ruined lives, it can restore the joy of God's eternal grace to the soul, until life is worthwhile living. Paul said in Romans 1:16; *I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believes, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.*

The results of the gospel have always been and will be miraculous. Sinners have been changed into saints. Self-righteous, self-sufficient, sophisticated moral people have become humble, Christ-like pilgrims of the cross. This gospel *proclaims* liberty to the captives.

There is a story about a man who became sick and went to the hospital. After a few weeks he got better and returned to his job. This happened a second, a third and a fourth time. Finally he had to go to a different climate. He received news that a family member was gravely ill, so he returned home without health or wealth and with few friends. His children were hungry and the only thing he had left was his life insurance policy. He decided to commit suicide and give his family the benefit of the insurance policy.

He started for the lake, but a few blocks from where he was going to end it all, he heard some gospel singing. He had a struggle going on in himself. His family was hungry, he felt all he could do was end it all. Then something urged him to go into the church and listen to the singing. While at the service, the spirit of God seized him with conviction. He gave himself to the Lord that night. He went home with the money from the insurance policy he had cashed in, paid his rent, fed his family. The next week he took his wife to that same church, and she was so moved that she gave herself to the Lord. A family altar was established. He had heard about divine healing and asked the elders of the church to anoint him as in James 5, and God healed his body. He returned to his work and was wonderfully blessed.

Some of you have carried a heavy load weighing you down. Sometimes your whole life seems to be in reverse. One of the old hymns we used to sing in my home church, Let Jesus Come Into Your Heart.

*If you are tired of the load of your sincerity*

*Let Jesus come into your heart.*

*If you desire a new life to begin*

*Let Jesus come into your heart.*

I have said many times it takes intentional work to build up a church family and it takes intentional work to keep the worship family growing and vibrant. To do this I believe we as Christians need to pray, work, live and give to keep the gospel message reaching out. If the Spirit of God is upon us and in us, God will use all of us in this ongoing task.

I want to close by drawing attention to James 5:15&16, *The prayer of faith will save... the prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective.*

Paul prayed without ceasing.

Pentecost was preceded by 10 days of prayer.

Luther prayed 3 hours a day.

John Knox spent nights praying to God, *Give me Scotland or I die.*

Let us be fervent in our prayer until all the people we know have been liberated and comforted by this great and glorious gospel of the cross. Amen