

Isaiah 61:1-3

Week #9 in the Series "Whose Verse is it Anyway?"

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Good morning! It's good to be with you all. My name is David Woolverton. For those of you who are visiting with us for the very first time, I'm one of the pastors here and it's a real joy for me to share with you the word of God for today. Today's passage is a bit long, so I'm not going to repeat it right now. We're going to look at it a little bit closer and we're doing something spontaneously creative that we haven't done before. We are going to be engaging in what I'm affectionately calling dueling sermons. So we're going to take the passage that was laid out for us from Isaiah Chapter 61. And we're going to interact with it together, live, raw and unprepared. On his part, I at least had a little bit of prep.

Lots of prayer going into this. So as we prepare our hearts and our souls for the Word of God, would you join with me in prayer? Lord, open us up to your word. And open your word to us. Father, teach us what you need us to learn as you conform our lives into the disciples that you have called us to be. All of this, Father, we pray in Jesus name. Amen.

I have a question for you. Has there ever been a time in your life perhaps you can pick a quadrant of your life where you did something and got caught and you needed to, like, confess? I feel like that was every year between the ages of 12 and 18. So, you start with an interesting question. And I'm not sure where you're going by asking that question, but like many, I have had to face the consequences of my own actions. And I'm not even afraid to say that even on the stage in front of all these people. And there have been times in my life, especially when I was younger, where I did things, got caught and did not take responsibility for it. I grew up in a city where my dad was an active-duty police officer back when I was a kid. So I never got away with anything, which is why I'm such a good kid now. Um, yeah. Thank you for that. LAUGHTER again. So I remember when I was younger, I was with my dad at the grocery store, and I stole a pack of gum. Put it in my pocket, and my dad was ahead of me putting things onto the conveyor belt. As he emptied the cart, he turned to me and he said, why don't you put the pack of gum on the on the conveyor belt as well? And I looked at him and I went What?! He said Why don't you put the gun on the conveyor belt so we can buy it? I remember even as a kid saying, how does he do that? How does he see behind him? How does he see everything that I'm doing, even when I think he's not looking? I put it on to the conveyor belt and he paid for it. We got out into the car and that's when he said, why don't you tell your mother what you did? And of course, I had every excuse in the book. I just could not take responsibility. And finally, we got home. And because I didn't take responsibility, my dad said, your punishment is I want you to sit at the table and you have to write out. I, I promise I will not steal. And I said, how many times? He said, 100 times. So I started doing that to get way through the one page. And I thought I was being ingenious. I had discovered the power of those repeat little marks, the quotation marks. So, I did half of the page handwritten, and then the rest of it, quotation marks. And then I turn that in thinking, I just nailed it. I did it. Well, It wasn't me who nailed it. It was the reverse. And I got nailed for it because then the punishment was more intense. Had I just said - I did this, and I'm sorry, it would have been so much easier.

Have you Ever have had an experience like that? I did, yeah. I was probably about seven years old. My dad was raising us on his own at that time. So, you can imagine how adventurous a trip to the grocery store was. It's the same situation where in this little country grocery store that we had in Norwich, they had that

big candy rack right by the right by the front door. And when my dad was trying to pay for the groceries, I kind of grabbed a couple of Hershey kisses without telling him and ate them, and I put the trash in my pocket. When we got home, he somehow saw that I had those wrappers in my pocket. He said, where'd you get this? I took it from the grocery store. Dad. And boy, did he lay into me a lecture on how awful it was to steal and how much this would put to question my character. And I felt completely awful about it. I grabbed piggy bank, and I walked all the way down to the grocery store by myself. And I told the owner of the store what I'd done, and I tried to pay for it. And he said, It's okay. Don't worry about it. But don't do it again.

Owning responsibility for something that you've done is one of the key factors of maturing growing up, and it's also one of the hardest things that we must do, whether as a child, a teenager, or as an adult or as a senior adult. We need to own responsibility for what we do and why we do it. The gift is the gift of confession and apology. We don't always see it that way, but it's the gift. Confession, apology and the changing of our behavior. About two decades ago, in 2002, you may have heard me talk about it before, Ken Blanchard, wrote a book called *The One Minute Apology*, Basically, it's a parable telling the story of how do we how do we apologize? How do we just jump in and apologize for our behavior, especially when we're screwing up? So in a nutshell, what this parable teaches is that in order to do this one minute apology, you need to own what you did. You need to take responsibility for your behavior. And then you need to realize that your behavior has impacted someone or someone else, right? And we need to take responsibility for our behavior. And we need to own the fact and recognize that our behavior impacted somebody else. That's called empathy. We now need to apologize. We need to say I'm sorry. I know that my behavior hurt you in this way. Name it out loud so that you hear it. And they hear that you understand their pain. And then change your behavior. It's also about restoring trust. Restoring trust means you change your behavior so that you are intentional about not doing the behavior that hurts somebody else again. So that's the basics of this book. One minute apology. That book has revolutionized how I live. I read that back when it came out because I would read everything.

I just want to tell you that the Isaiah 61 passage is important on two fronts. One, within its context in Isaiah, because it has a context, but also because Jesus quotes these words, he quotes this passage at the very start of his ministry. In Luke Chapter four, we see Jesus getting in front of a crowd in his hometown of Nazareth. He gets into the synagogue on a synagogue worship day, and he's asked as a visiting rabbi to preach. So he opens up the scroll and points to the passage of the day. And it is this passage. He finishes reading it, which we're going to do in a moment. He closes the scroll and he looks out in front of the whole audience. And he says today this passage, this prophetic voice announced hundreds of years prior to this moment today is fulfilled in your hearing. That was monumental. It's how he inaugurated his earthly ministry. And do you remember what happened? What happened then is all the religious leaders in that synagogue stirred up the crowd and kicked him out. That's how radical these words were. So, as I say, The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted. To proclaim liberty to the captives. And the opening of the prison to those who are bound to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor and the day of vengeance of our God to comfort all who mourn, to grant to those who mourn in Zion, to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the garment of praise, instead of faint spirit that they may be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord that day, that he rather may be glorified.

Beautiful. So I want to say two things to you all, and then we can interact with us two statements that I think are really screaming at me from these words. The first statement is judgment without hope is all about control. Second statement is Judgment With Hope is all about nurture, Love, and discipleship. The kind that

leads to life. There are individuals, even in our modern history, that remind us that judgment without any hope is about controlling the people. But judgment with hope looks at justice and says, I want better for you.

A tougher question. Has there ever been a time? When you did something And somebody else Took responsibility for it instead of you? I remember I was in 11th grade English class, there was one time we had a substitute teacher, and we were awful that day. We were unruly. We. We talked aloud without raising our hands. I know this sounds shocking. We. We just basically kind of blew the class off because we recognized that this teacher had lost complete and total control. There were two people sitting beside me that were especially bad. But in the mix up of everything, the substitute teacher wrote my name down as one of the ringleaders. And when my English teacher came back to class the next day, Oh, was she ready for us. She had me and this other ringleader, one of the two stand up in class, and she read aloud the things that the substitute teacher wrote. And I felt awful because where some of those things drew about me. Yeah. Was I one of the ringleaders? No. But I was going to take whatever punishment came my way because I felt awful. But then, as she was about to lay down the hammer, the voice of the other student who was actually the ringleader said, Actually, Mrs. Blazek, it was me, not Matt. And I will never forget his face. I will never forget his name for that little act of honesty that hit us both in that moment.

Thank you for sharing that. You know, the interesting thing about our maturing is the level of maturity. There's a hallmark of taking responsibility for what we do. That ramps up 12 notches in my book when we begin to take responsibility for someone else. By stepping in, in love, not to deny the old the discipleship moment for them, but to augment and illustrate a larger discipleship love moment. Why do I say that? Because that's what Jesus did. That's what Jesus did. Hold on to that for just a moment. Jesus quotes this passage at the beginning of his ministry, that passage in Isaiah has a really important context. Isaiah is a prophet in the Old Testament. And I'm going to just stay on simple terms. There's multiple layers to interpret the book of Isaiah, a prophet sent by God to announce judgment and hope to the people of Israel. They went hand in hand, judgment and hope. Sometimes the judgment felt so bad that the people did not have hope. And to some degree, rightly so. They were so bad at times the people of Israel that they repeatedly engaged a cycle that pushed God away. They wanted to do things their way. They didn't think that they needed God. They didn't want to believe that they were dependent on God for anything. And so their arrogance, their pride would push God away until something happened and they became desperate. And they were crying out to God, where are you? And God would deliver. So the prophet Isaiah steps in with a with a word from the Lord, and most of the book is about that judgment part. But there's a there's a swing that happens, a switch that that is turned on in Isaiah 59 when Isaiah begins to talk about just confess it, confess it. It's almost as if Ken Blanchard could have written the book for the people of Israel back then. Own your behavior, own it. Realize that your behavior has implications across the board because nothing we do is ever done in a vacuum. It always impacts somebody else. And here it impacted their relationship with God. It impacted their relationship with other believers. Other people within the community. Realize that it's impacting others and apologized. Confession. That's what we mean by that word. Confession. Confess it and then change your behavior. That was the invitation that Isaiah was giving. Judgment for Isaiah then moved to hope. I'm not going to read all of this but listen to the larger context of Isaiah 61 by looking back to Isaiah 60. This is how Isaiah 60 begins: Arise, shine, for your light has come and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. See? Look! Darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the people. But the Lord rises upon you and His glory appears over you. Now he's saying this to the people of Israel, the people of faith that are defined by God. This is what he says. Nations will come to your light and kings will come to the brightness of your dawn. Lift your eyes and look about you are a symbol and come to you. Your sons come from afar and your daughters are carried on the arm. Then you will look

and be radiant. Your heart will throb and swell with joy. The wealth on the seas will be brought to you. To you, the riches of the nations will come. In other words, he is saying that because of your willingness to confess and own your behavior and bring about a restoration of your relationship with the Lord, God takes that very seriously and that restoration will be in abundance. Because God never goes back on his word. So, the rest of Chapter 60 is all about that. That's when Isaiah then says the spirit of the sovereign Lord is on me because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news. And this is why Jesus takes these words and owns them for his ministry. He's preaching good news. He's preaching about freedom, proclaiming that justice is going to roll out and people who are in bondage, bondage to what? Not just in chains for prison, but bondage to sin and brokenness. Judgment with no hope is about control and God is not about control. Judgment with hope leads to life. It nurtures, it equips it disciples and it's all about love.

Has there ever been a time when you had to discipline your kids? Yes, David. Just one time. What's the heart behind your discipline? You know, it's not just about control and correction. It's about it's about shaping their hearts into who God has called them to be, and while we may not understand that in the moment, we know that we were called to be parents. So the discipline and the shaping, that is one of the hardest parts of being a parent.

The shaping of hearts into who God has called them to be, and what matters. But ultimately all of your discipline is to prepare them, and all of God's discipline is to prepare us to be all that God has called us to be. So that we, in turn, can represent him in the world, to be ambassadors of hope. Why? Because judgment with no hope is about control and judgment with hope leads to life. So, when you think about your walk of faith, when you think about your relationship with God, when you think about the things that maybe have been a part of your journey, think of those things that you may have done or things that you may not have done, the things that got in the way or things that other people took responsibility for that were really yours. And superimpose this message of life. Jesus began his ministry quoting these words. Look at how those words end. All of this picking up in verse two to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor and the Day of Vengeance of our God. That sounds ominous. But justice, judgment, as a part of the journey, sin must be paid for. But, Verse 3, to comfort all who mourn, to grant to those who mourn in Zion. That's Israel. To give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes. What does that mean? You know, when people back in the day were grieving their brokenness, when they would confess and be so overcome by what they had done, they would literally sit in ashes and sackcloth. They would put ashes on their heads as a sign of repentance. So what God is saying through this, this incredible prophetic message, is that instead of ashes on your head, God's going to replace that with a beautiful headdress. Can you picture that? He says, to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning. He's going to replace the grieving of our brokenness with joy. That comes in repenting the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit. And get this, that they may be called oaks of righteousness. Oaks of righteousness! So an oak tree is pretty sturdy. And what the image here is being used as that solid foundation tree of righteousness. And that's going to be your life. That's how God will see you, as you confess and repent and engage your trust in the One who has stepped in to take your punishment. God is going to turn the tables. He's going to flip the script. And he's going to take everything to the cross so that you could have that new life. The planting of the Lord that He may be glorified. It only took a moment. Maybe not Ken Blanchard's minute. But a moment, a death, for every one of us to have access to that kind of righteousness. How does that impact you personally?

You know, when I think about the big transitions in life, I think of a lot of the uncertainty and anxiety that begins to creep in. When I have to have a courageous conversation at work, or if I'm walking into a situation as a pastor with a family that's in mourning, I begin to get really anxious. And what the enemy does, I think,

in that moment is he reminds me of my humanness and all the things that I've done in my past that should never put me where I am right now. And then I remember, it sounds silly, but I remember the cross. I remember what Jesus did for me. I'm reminded of what He calls me - a redeemed child of God.

Yeah, and it's ironic or maybe it's not that we had communion just before this message, right? As a tangible reminder that a price was paid, and somebody stepped in and took responsibility for something that we deserved. Judgment with no hope is about control. We don't serve a God who demands control. Judgment with hope reminds us of a life that is yet to come and a God who is shaping our hearts to be the people that He has called us to be.

How does that impact you? It's an invitation. So, if you've never had that moment of your one-minute apology with God. I invite you to do so. It's about taking responsibility for who you are. And you will discover a God who wants to lavish hope on you. He's inviting you to come into his presence and trust that what he has in mind for you is so much better than what you have in mind for yourself. And as you trust in that God, He's going to take the ashes off your head, the proverbial metaphoric ashes and He's going to replace them with a crown of life. I invite you into that crown of life. You're worth it. You were worth Jesus dying for.

Let's pray. Gracious Lord, we give you thanks for your word and for the message several hundreds of years ago that you announced through Isaiah. That you re-announced through Jesus. Thank you for reminding us that you are a God who turns mourning into dancing, grieving into joy, and death into life. And all we need to do is come to you. We come to you, Lord. As we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.