

**ST. LUKE EV. LUTHERAN CHURCH
SERMON BY PASTOR ANTHONY E. SCHULTZ
2ND SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.
JANUARY 14 & 17, 2016
ISAIAH 61:1-6 EISENACH SERIES
THE YEAR OF THE LORD'S FAVOR**



61 The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, ² to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn,³ and provide for those who grieve in Zion – to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the LORD for the display of his splendor. ⁴ They will rebuild the ancient ruins and restore the places long devastated; they will renew the ruined cities that have been devastated for generations. ⁵ Strangers will shepherd your flocks; foreigners will work your fields and vineyards. ⁶ And you will be called priests of the LORD, you will be named ministers of our God. You will feed on the wealth of nations, and in their riches you will boast.

People of God – rescued from the flaming lake of fire in Hell by the innocent blood of the very Lamb of God: Tom Edward Bodett tells stories. Tom Edward Bodett tells stories like Garrison Koehler tells stories. Tom Edward Bodett tells the story of being in a big city – in a place where they were serving beverages. There are fermented grain beverages – served in Pilsner glasses – narrow at the bottom and wider at the top – served with a little foam at the very top. There are beverages sold in pints – much darker – very precisely served – almost black – with foam at the top that looks like root beer but doesn't taste like root beer. There are all sorts of beverages – the higher the shelf – the more expensive they get. Some served in pudgy little glasses – where you swirl them around – and warm them – smell them – sip them. Tom Edward Bodett watched a man wearing a suit – that was tailor sewn – so that the Italian fabric was flawless – each arm the proper length – the tailor sewn cuff just peeking out – the

bejeweled cufflink just barely visible. If you sat close enough to this man – you would smell just the faintest smell of his very expensive cologne. And still this man was miserable – grumbling and complaining about his high standards and high expectations that again and again were not being met. Tom Edward Bodett looked out the window and there saw a homeless man armed with a rag and a bottle of Windex. The homeless man was washing the little window of the parking meters. He was greeting the people going to work on his block. He was singing and whistling and kind of dancing as he went from one parking meter to another. Go figure! What's the difference? It has nothing to do with the \$! I have during my 63 ½ years known people with immense earthly wealth. And I have known people who are quite literally malnourished. I have known people who eat food you would never eat – who are happy and some who are miserable. I have known people who have known terrible tragedy and loss and still their ♥ is happy. Today God's Word says:

Celebrate God's Son Jesus!

1. **Jesus' preaching brings comfort**
2. **Jesus' preaching builds His Church**

It was some 650 years before baby Jesus was born that the prophet Isaiah saw through the eyes of faith the Gospel ministry of the Son of Man – the Son of God. The Holy Spirit moved Isaiah to write concerning Jesus: **61 The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. Anointed!** Anointing oil – the purest olive oil with liquid myrrh and cinnamon, calamus and cassia. This oil was poured on your head – and ran down on your beard and onto your clothes. It had a smell – a fragrance unlike any other. This was the oil for anointing Prophet, Priest and King. Prophet, Priest and King – to announce good news to the poor! Jesus announced good news – the Gospel in the *Sermon on the Mount*: **Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven!** The first beatitude – the first happiness – to realize I am poor in spirit. Nothing in my hands I bring – simply to thy ☩ I cling! This is the ♥ of the Apostle Paul. **15 Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners – of whom I am the worst.** And again in Romans 7 **21 So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. 22 For in my inner being I delight in God's law; 23 but I see**

another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. ²⁴What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? ²⁵Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord! When we realize how weak we are on our own – that’s when Jesus is strong in us and for us! When we realize how weak and spiritually poor we are – that’s when we are strong in Christ!

He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, ²to proclaim the year of the LORD’s favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn,³ and provide for those who grieve in Zion – to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. There are lots of words for sadness here – and so? Brokenhearted...those who grieve – ashes – mourning – the spirit of despair! That’s sadness to the point of thinking, “I can’t go on!” But we can. Jesus will not allow us to be tested beyond what we can bear. With the difficulty will come the strength to persevere! We will get through this! There is a reason Martin Luther said every Christian ought to memorize the whole letter to the Romans. Romans chapter 8: ¹⁸I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. ¹⁹For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. ²⁰For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope ²¹that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God... ³¹What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³²He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all – how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? ³³Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. ³⁴Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died – more than that, who was raised to life – is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. ³⁵Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? ³⁶As it is written: “For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.” ³⁷No, in all these

things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the LORD for the display of his splendor. I read this week about a young lady in England named Kashmea – just 11 years old. She came across an IQ test on your I-pad and thought to take it – to see if she got a good score – so she could tell her parents they didn't have to keep giving her a hard time about doing her homework. Come to find out – she got an IQ score – at age 11 – two points better than – like Albert Einstein and Stephen Hawking! If you look into it – there are all kinds of insight and understanding. There is what's called fluid intelligence. That includes the ability to understand new principles – to solve problems – using information that's unfamiliar – and using new procedures. There is crystalized intelligence. That is applying all the information you have learned in the past – to apply it – to accomplish tasks and goals. There is short term memory – to discover something – and then in a very short time apply it – to solve a problem. There is this whole thing about making good decisions in a minimum of time – when there is great pressure to decide – and powerful consequences – depending on what you decide. There are communication skills – able to take complicated truths – and explain them and apply them so that other people benefit. The danger – with all these gifts and abilities is to forget they are exactly that – gifts. The abilities we have – to think and understand and solve problems and accomplish good – are all gifts from God – to be used to God's glory and not our own. What we have and what we are – are all gifts from Jesus! If you stop and think about it – everything that happens – all the blessings we have – are because of the grace of God. That you woke up this morning – that you were able to get washed up and cleaned up and dressed. That you can tie a neck tie – make a toaster waffle – brush your teeth – start your car and drive through a busy intersection – walk across the parking lot without slipping and falling. The fact that you can hear – and sing and stand up and sit down – are all gifts from Jesus! To make it safely home today is by the grace of God! Today might be the day Jesus

calls us home to Heaven. In the meantime – we are to be like oak trees – strong – beautiful – solid – giving all glory to God and not to ourselves!

Thomas Edward Bodett tells the story of being in a big city – like New York – walking down the sidewalk – seeing a homeless man sitting on the sidewalk on a piece of cardboard.. Thomas Edward – looked into the eyes of this homeless man – and he felt compassion. He felt that powerful feeling – there but for the grace of God – go I! And Thomas Edward started to reach for his wallet – thinking I am going to help this man! And the homeless guy looking at him in an instant realized it too. This man is going to help me. It was then – that Thomas Edward was jostled by a bunch of young executives – business guys wearing designer clothes – in a hurry – self important – they pushed past Thomas Edward – and in that moment it crossed his mind – cool, successful, busy, well educated and well dressed people – don't give \$ to homeless people do they? Of course not! We are way too busy – and way too self-important to help homeless guys! And so Thomas Edward pushed his wallet back in his pocket – and hurried down the sidewalk – and with each step realized the homeless guy knew what had happened, too. And he could feel his eyes in his back. But he just kept walking. Now – Thomas Edward would do anything – to have that moment back! He would do anything – to be back on that block – by that homeless man – to talk to him – to help him – to be his friend – but he can't! That's regret. That's remorse! That's the pain the devil tries to kindle in our ♥s about the mistakes of the past. The truth is Jesus died to wash away all our past most painful sins and failures – so we can face the future unafraid! In Jesus we have the good news that all our sins and most painful failures are all covered with the innocent blood of the Lamb of God. As day after day we see the snow fall – covering all that is dirty and scared and ugly – remember Jesus' blood covers all our sins. Today and every day say, "Thank you, Jesus!" Amen!

To God alone all glory!

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Rev. Anthony P. Schatz". The signature is written in black ink on a light blue rectangular background.