

## A Heavenly Exchange

*The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because the Lord has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn, to console those who mourn in Zion, to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified (Isaiah 61:1-3).*

Upon entering the synagogue in Nazareth, Jesus was handed the book of Isaiah. As He read from Isaiah 61:1-2, He said, "*Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing*" (Luke 4:18-21).

Jesus' assignment from the Father was clear. He did proclaim the good news that there is redemption for those who trust Him. We will escape God's day of judgment on sin because of His substitutionary death on the cross.

While His followers are still here on earth, however, He said that the Father sent Him to:

- heal our broken hearts
- proclaim freedom to us when we are captive
- open our prison doors and
- comfort and console us when we mourn

His love and sacrifice enabled a heavenly exchange:

- beauty for ashes
- oil of joy for mourning
- garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness

When we allow that heavenly exchange to take place, it results in fruitful living to the glory of God: *that they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified.*

Just before His crucifixion, Jesus passed on this assignment to His disciples. "*I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing... By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples*" (John 15: 5, 8).

Hearts are broken all over the world by sin. Believers are persecuted and even imprisoned for the cause of Christ. Those who mourn are everywhere. Some feel that they have been abandoned to the ash heap of life. There is a heavy spirit among even the most devout Christians.

We can help our Christian brothers and sisters most when we remind them of God's heavenly exchange: our sin for His salvation, our sadness for His joy and comfort, our fear for His freedom, our timidity for His boldness, our confusion for His clarity, our heavy hearts for His praise.

We all need that heavenly exchange. I know I do.