

The Anointed One

Psalm 45, Acts 10:36–38

When a political leader takes office in the United States, there is a formal inauguration ceremony. Our family moved to Lansing almost 32 years ago. It was the first time we had ever lived in a capital city. James Blanchard was then governor of Michigan. But on January 1, 1991 a new governor, John Engler, took office. Our children were in school at the time. Norma and I decided that it would be good for the kids to go in person to the inauguration ceremony. I don't know if they remember the day, but I sure do! It was the first and only time our family had ever been on the grounds of the state capital. Here was a civics lesson in the making. It was a bitterly cold day, so most of the election formalities had been moved indoors. But the inauguration itself took place on the capitol steps at precisely 12 noon. That was before the recent renovations to the capitol building. The capitol dome itself was worn and weathered, but it still looked grand and provided a perfect backdrop for the occasion. The six of us stood in crunchy snow fifty feet away from where history was being made. The governor and his wife and other dignitaries came out on the steps. Even with the bitter cold there was a feeling of excitement in the crowd. The band played. The chief justice of the supreme court administered the oath of office. The governor gave a very brief inauguration speech—a great blessing born of the bitter cold. Pictures were taken, the ceremony came to an end, and all the state officials hurried back indoors. That evening there was an inaugural ball.

What had happened? There was a peaceful transition of power. Up until 11:59 a.m. James Blanchard was governor. But at exactly 12 noon the governor-elect took the oath of office and became the new governor. There was a new administration. Our family hurried to the car and home to lunch. As our feet warmed up, we had vivid memories of the ceremony. When the newspaper came to the door the next morning, there on the front page was a picture of the new governor taking the oath of office, his hand on a Bible. As our family looked at the photo we could relate. We had been there. We had been a part of it.

In ancient times inauguration ceremonies did not involve taking an oath on a Bible; rather, a prophet, priest or king was anointed with olive oil. Since ancient times olive oil has been prized for its taste and for its medicinal qualities. In the Middle East, the finest olive oil is made in small batches on family farms where everyone works together to pick the olives and press out the oil. The resulting oil, purchased directly from the farmer in perhaps a five-gallon container, tastes far better, I am told, than anything that can be procured anywhere in America, where so-called “extra-virgin olive oil” is almost always adulterated by the addition of what is euphemistically called “vegetable oil.”

In the Bible, anointing with oil signified consecration to a holy use. It also symbolized the filling with the Holy Spirit. The high priest and king are called “the anointed.”¹ Anointing a king was equivalent to crowning him or formally investing him with the kingly office.

From the earliest pages of the Old Testament God promised to send a deliverer who would come to deliver his people from their enemies. That promised deliverer is called the *Anointed* or *Messiah*. In Psalm 2 we read that “the kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his *anointed*”—literally *his Messiah*. The prophet Daniel calls him “*Messiah* the Prince.”² In Isaiah 61 the coming Messiah prophetically says, “The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath *anointed* me to preach good tidings unto the meek.” This anointing with oil is called “the oil of gladness” in our Old Testament text this morning: “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom. You love righteousness and hate wickedness; therefore God, Your God, has *anointed You with the oil of gladness* more than Your companions.” In John 1, when the man Andrew first met Jesus, we are told that “He first found his own brother Simon, and said to him, ‘We have found the *Messiah*’ (which is translated, the *Christ*). “Messiah” (Heb. מָשִׁיחַ) and “Christ” (Gk. Χριστός) both mean *anointed one*.

In our last chapter, Acts 9, we previously read that “Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who dwelt in Damascus, proving that this Jesus is the *Christ*” (Χριστός). The Jews knew exactly what he was claiming. The arch-persecutor of Christians now was preaching that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah of the Old Testament. This got him into trouble with the Jews, who had rejected Christ and called for his crucifixion.

Our text this morning is a brief extract from the apostle Peter’s sermon at the house of Cornelius, an uncircumcised Roman. Peter’s message was Christ. Last week we focused on verse 36. We saw that Christ is the eternal word, the *Logos*. He is the bringer of peace, the only one who can give peace in the midst of trouble—peace with God, peace with our fellow man. The only way that you can experience peace in this life is to have peace with God. “Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have *peace with God* through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Because of sin, all men are estranged from God, and are under his wrath and curse. The only way to have peace with God is to have our sins forgiven—washed away in his precious blood. With the knowledge that our sins are laid on him, and his perfect righteousness is credited to our account, comes the realization that we are “accepted in the beloved,” that is, in very person of God the Son, who loved us and

¹ Lev. 4:3, 5, 16; 6:20; Ps. 132:10

² Dan. 9:25, 26

gave himself for us. We who have peace with God can have peace with our neighbor—our fellow-man. Since we ourselves have been forgiven, we can forgive others. We don't have to nurse old grudges. The greatest gift that we can give ourselves is to forgive others. Soul-destroying bitterness can be killed at its very root. In its place springs up the fruit of righteousness.

Finally, in verse 36, as we saw last week, Peter declares that Jesus is “Lord of all”—the only time that important phrase occurs in the entire Bible. He is Lord not only “of all the earth,” as Joshua twice declares in the Old Testament. Rather, as he himself stated just prior to his ascension into heaven, “all power—all authority—is given unto me *in heaven and on earth.*” Jesus is Lord of all, and that being true, the only rational thing is to devote your life to him, to crown him as your own personal king and sovereign, and resolve to obey him in all things. Last week we focused on just a single verse, not even a complete sentence. Sometimes we have to do that because there are so many rich spiritual truths. But now, let us look at the sentence as a whole: “The word which God sent to the children of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ—He is Lord of all—that word you know, which was proclaimed throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee after the baptism which John preached: how God *anointed* Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.” Today, we will focus on four things: the Lord Jesus was *anointed by God, sent to preach, doing good works and healing the oppressed.* First,

1. Anointed by God

Peter specifically states that “God *anointed* Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power.” Here's that word “anointed.” *Anoint* means to sprinkle with oil, to consecrate to God, to dedicate to the service of God. Now while we might rub oil on dry skin or a sunburn to soothe it, soften it and promote healing, we in the West are not used to seeing a leader of the people anointed with oil as a symbol of being set apart to public office. Oh, we may have seen an old movie depicting David the son of Jesse set apart as king. Perhaps we recall the words of the familiar Psalm, “Thou *anointest* my head with oil; my cup runneth over.” But when Peter says that “God *anointed* Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power,” what Peter is claiming is that Jesus is the promised Messiah. That is a stupendous claim. For centuries the people of God had clung to the promise that God was going to send his Messiah, the one who would deliver his people from their enemies who conquered and enslaved them. God would fight for them, he would come to their defense, he would give them victory. As Peter delivered these words to Cornelius he was aware that the man that he was speaking to was himself part of the occupying force that was subjugating the Jews. Here was Peter, a zealous, patriotic Israelite who resented that his homeland was overrun by the imperious,

overbearing Romans. The Jews wanted the Romans to leave their land, to allow them to return to self-governance. But remember the history of the Jews. For centuries they had lived under Egyptian enslavement. Then God sent Moses, who went to Pharaoh and said, “Let my people go.” God delivered his people through Moses. After the Jews were settled in the promised land, God allowed his people to be overrun successively by Chushan-rishathaim of Mesopotamia, the Moabites, the Ammonites, Jabin, Sisera, the Philistines. God was teaching his people the important lesson that freedom *from* God brought enslavement to men; the only way his people could enjoy true freedom was to live in obedience to God. God sent a succession of judges to deliver his people, and there were years of peace; then, sadly, they would rebel against God and be in bondage once again. Later, the people asked for a king, so that they could be like the nations all around them. Samuel was brokenhearted, but God told him, “They have not rejected you, but me.” Eventually, the people’s disobedience worsened to the point that God sent them into captivity—Israel into Assyria, Judah into Babylon. Though a remnant eventually returned and rebuilt the temple in Jerusalem, that was not the end of their troubles. Palestine was ruled by the Persians for over 200 years, then later by the Ptolomies and Seleucids. The temple was plundered, and Jerusalem was invaded over and over. Now, at the time of Peter, Israel was again subjugated by the Romans. Later, it would be the Muslims.

But Peter told Cornelius and a courtyard full of invited guests that “God *anointed* Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power.” What Peter was saying was the Jesus was the promised Messiah—the one who in his own person fulfilled all the messianic prophecies of the Old Testament. How did Peter know this? He, though a humble fisherman, was a man who knew his Bible. He heard it read over and over in the synagogue. He listened intently. He hung on every word. This was in the day before background music and electronic entertainment. He didn’t have as many distractions as we have. If we are going to learn the Bible, we are going to have to spend time in it. We are going to have to treasure it as David, who said, “I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word.”³ But not only was Peter well acquainted with the Bible, he was also inspired by the Holy Spirit. This text, like all Scripture, was breathed out by the breath of Almighty God. It is a perfect expression of his holy will. This is a true saying, and worthy of all acceptance. Jesus the God-man was anointed by the Holy Spirit and empowered to perform all the work that God appointed him to do. Let us consider these in turn: preaching, doing good works, healing the oppressed. Peter states that the Messiah was

2. Sent to preach

³ Ps. 119:16

Notice that little phrase in verse 36, “preaching peace through Jesus Christ.” As I stated last week, the word for “preaching” here is the word meaning “to share the good news.” Here is the good news of Jesus Christ, the only one that can save us from our sins and reconcile us to God. Sinners in their foolish pride want to save themselves. They want to take credit for their own salvation. Like the Pharisee in the book of Luke who said, “I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess,” sinners want to do something to earn their own salvation. But God doesn’t allow us to take any credit. His word plainly says, “*all* our righteousnesses are like filthy rags.”⁴ Now every house needs rags. When a garment has worn out to the point that we cannot wear it anymore, we might turn it into a rag. An old tee shirt makes an excellent dust cloth. An old towel might be torn up and used to wipe up grease on an engine’s valve-covers. When we have a spill, we reach for an old rag. But when a rag gets so filthy that it can’t be laundered anymore, it eventually has to be discarded. A filthy rag is good for nothing. That is how a holy God sees our works of self-righteousness: they are like filthy rags; they are of no value. But the good news of the Bible is that God saves sinners. God has perfectly accomplished the salvation of his elect in Jesus Christ. Man can have the peace which is the subject of the good news only through Jesus Christ.

What is your life like? Are you at peace with God and men? Do you know that you are a sinner with no hope of eternal life except through Christ? Have you taken Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior? Are you looking to Christ alone for your salvation? Do you accept the truth of Scripture that his perfect righteousness is credited to you by faith? Are you resting in him alone for salvation? The wicked are like the troubled sea, roiling and churning, never resting. If we are depending on ourselves—our own good works—in order to be saved, then we can never be sure that we have done enough. Are we good enough? Have we done enough good works? Is there anything more that we can do? Have we prayed enough? Have we fasted enough? Have we abased our pride enough? Have we resisted the devil enough? Could we do more?

But the gospel is not about what *we* have done or could do. The gospel is about what *Christ* has done. Christian, you have a Savior who has gone into heaven. There he intercedes for you day and night. He says, “I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.” Jesus Christ is a mighty Savior. He alone is mighty to save. The one who trusts in him can sing, “Jesus, thy blood and righteousness my beauty are, my glorious dress; ’midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed, with joy shall I lift up my head. Bold shall

⁴ Isa. 64.6

I stand in thy great day; for who aught to my charge shall lay? Fully absolved through these I am from sin and fear, from guilt and shame.”⁵

Only in Christ do we hear the gospel. Christ is the preacher of righteousness who was sent by God to save guilty sinners. In him alone we have peace. But our third point this morning is

3. Doing good works

We read in our text that “God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, *who went about doing good*. Here in five words is a summary of the gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. The four gospels are filled with miracles that Jesus did. Jesus went about doing good. The devil has an evil intent. Jesus identified him as a thief: “The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.” Notice the contrast: the devil is a thief whose goal is to steal, kill and destroy. The word for destroy is ἀπόλλυμι. The related noun is Ἀπολλύων—Apollyon, the Destroyer, the angel of the bottomless pit (Rev. 9:11). If you play around with sin, Satan will destroy you. Satan, the destroyer, comes to steal, kill and destroy. On the other hand, Christ comes that his people may have life, and have it abundantly. The contrast is stark: the devil is the destroyer, Christ is the giver of life.

So when Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit, he went about doing good. The four gospels are the record of Jesus’ good works. He performed miracles of healing. He healed the lame, the blind, the deaf. He raised the dead. He lifted up the dejected. He gave hope to the hopeless. He spoke to the outcasts. On the other hand, he spoke truth to power. He told Pilate, “Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above.” He said of Herod, “Go, tell that fox”! He was unrelenting with the Pharisees: “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows’ houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. Therefore you will receive greater condemnation.” Jesus had time for honest seekers, but he was justifiably stern with proud, smug religionists. He had time for the woman at the well; as a matter of fact, “he must needs go through Samaria” (John 4:4). The Pharisees traveling up from Jerusalem to Galilee would go out of their way to avoid Samaria, but not Jesus. He made a special point to go out of his way so he could meet a woman with a bad reputation. The woman by the well said to him, “I know that Messiah is coming” (who is called Christ). “When He comes, He will tell us all things.” Jesus’ response to her was very plain: “I who speak to you am He.” Jesus is the Messiah, the anointed one, who went about doing good.

And, dear one—you who are trusting in Christ alone for salvation—you can have perfect assurance that whatever your wise heavenly Father brings into your

⁵ *Trinity Psalter Hymnal* 457

life, even if it is testing, he will ultimately turn to your good. “All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.” So do not be discouraged! Christ will strengthen you, he will help you, he will uphold you with his mighty hand, he will preserve you until the final day. He who went about doing good is still on the throne, and he will do good to you, his child.

Yesterday on the way to presbytery I heard the story of how one of my grandchildren was ordered absolutely not to leave his house for the next ten days. In fact, he was ordered to stay in his bedroom for ten days and avoid all contact with other family members, and not to come out of his bedroom except to go the bathroom, and then he must wear a mask. If he is seen out-of-doors, his parents might get into trouble with child protective services. And all for a virus which is less deadly than the seasonal flu! My grandson is not sick. He has no symptoms. What a way to treat an 11-year-old! The website of the CDC, the Centers for Disease Control, states—and I quote—that “The detection of SARS-CoV-2 RNA in ... asymptomatic persons does not prove that they can transmit the virus to others.”⁶ You heard that correctly. The idea that an “asymptomatic person”—that is, a person who is perfectly healthy, who has no cough, sore throat, runny nose, fever, any respiratory condition—can infect another person unintentionally is widely believed, yet altogether devoid of scientific proof. It is not proven that a person with no symptoms can transmit a virus. How would you feel if you were 11 years old and were ordered absolutely to stay in your room for 10 days, and you weren’t even sick? Would you feel that God had forsaken you? Would you look out your window and see other children playing on the street and wish you could be with them? Here is a child—and children have the lowest risk of infection with the SARS-CoV-2 virus—who might well feel forsaken by God. His mother cannot come to worship today. One parent or the other must stay at home non-stop for ten days. Schedules must be adjusted. Appointments must be cancelled. And this is America, the land of the once-free! I don’t even treat my dogs that way! But I have good news for you: God has not forsaken his people. He has a purpose in whatever he ordains. If you belong to Jesus Christ, whatever cruel mercy he has for you is ultimately for your good. He who went about doing good is still doing good! Finally, consider

4. Healing the oppressed

Peter preaches the good news to Cornelius: “God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and *healing all who were oppressed by the devil*, for God was with Him.”

⁶ https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/eid/article/26/7/20-1595_article?deliveryName=USCDC_333-DM27448, accessed 4-24-2021

Scripture tells us to “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.” Yes, the destroyer is like a roaring lion. Yesterday I was talking to two ruling elders in our presbytery who are dairy farmers. I asked one of the men if he ever lassos a cow. He said, not usually. He would rather move them into a chute or a corner. He said, “If you lasso a cow, you better have a plan.” A man may weigh 200 pounds, the cow may weigh 1800 pounds. Sage advice! Now if a cow may be scary, what about a roaring lion? I certainly would not want to tangle with a roaring lion in a dark alley!

So here comes Jesus. He comes to this dark earth to wage war with the Prince of Darkness. He successfully resists him on the mount of temptation. He does battle with him in the Garden of Gethsamene. On the cross, Satan almost has him. He bites the Lord Jesus Christ, as it were, on the heel, but our mighty Lord, the seed of the woman, bruises the serpent on the head. Now, Satan is a defeated foe. The outcome is secure. But even still he walks about, chained, as it were. He can only go so far, and no further. But no matter how he may rage, “one little word can fell him”—Christ, the eternal word. Though Satan oppressed many who had evil spirits, Christ delivered them. He never encountered a case that he couldn’t heal. By the power of the Spirit Christ healed all those who were oppressed by the devil. And he still does it today. He is still on the throne. “Who shall bring a charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns?” He has been put in his place. Nothing—absolutely nothing—“shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Believer, you are secure in Christ.

Today we have seen that the Lord Jesus was anointed by God, sent to preach, doing good works and healing the oppressed. His power is undiminished today. Amen.