



*18 The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, 19 To preach the acceptable year of the Lord. 20 And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. (Luke 4:18-20)*

I have sometimes been queried regarding the term, Anno Domini, or if you prefer the complete term: *Anno Domini Nostri Jesu Christi*, which simply means 'In the Year of our Lord' or, 'In the Year of our Lord Jesus Christ.' Our calendar years are all calculated from Before Christ (BC) and After Christ (Anno Domini). Recently, those who are offended that we must date our birth and all major events on computations of the date of Christ's birth have tried to substitute the terms Common Era (CE) in the place of Anno Domini (AD), and Before Common Era (BCE) to denote the years BC This is a flimsy ruse in that SOMETHING must have happened 2015 years ago that would dictate such calculations. Whether we go along with the atheist (and Jehovah Witnesses who deny the divinity of Christ) in using AD or CE, the fact remains our Gregorian calendar is still based on that crux in time which divides eternity past from eternity future. I simply make this introductory comment to contrast the "Year of the Lord" from that to which Jesus makes reference in the above verses – ". . . *the 'acceptable' year of the Lord.*" It is the latter about which this devotion is written.

Here we see a very perfect Preacher, and a very perfect text from the Word of God. Of course, every Word of God is that which constitutes the nature of our Lord Jesus Christ because He is the fullness and completion of the Word itself. *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.* (John 1:1-3) This was, in my view, the most perfect sermon ever delivered. It stuck strictly to the biblical text and was expositionally delivered – an approach that seems to have faded with the fervency of Christian ministers over the years. Instead, today's ministers are more apt to select a single verse out of context and preach a gospel that is in complete contrast to that Gospel preached by Christ!

True art is not some abstraction that corrupts the beauty of Creation. True art - whether graphic, music, or poetry - attempts to imitate that perfect beauty of God's Creation. So must the 'called' minister of God attempt to imitate the teaching and preaching of Jesus Christ in every aspect of his role as minister. Of course, he will fall far short of the mark; but an arrow or projectile that is aimed at a target some distance removed must take a high arc if it is not going to fall so far short that the target remains untouched. The preacher, too, like Jesus, should make the Word appealing and

tantalizing to the audience to which he preaches. There is something of passage in Isaiah (from which He quotes) that Jesus omits. If you would like to play detective, why not read the passage in its complete form from Isaiah 61:1-3 and Isaiah 42:7. Did you find the missing phrase? If so, why do you suppose Jesus did not quote that one verse in the fuller context of the passage? Was it because He desired to deliver, as many moderns desire, a softer message than the Gospel allows? No, not at all!

First of all, consider the venue and moment of the Sermon that Jesus preaches here: It is in Nazareth where Jesus was raised as a boy; It is in a Jewish synagogue; It is delivered from the Hebrew lectionary on the Sabbath Day; the Preacher is the Son of God bearing our own likeness and flesh; and the message is the presentation of Himself as the Desire of Ages and of all the Law and the Prophets.

What initial response did the Sermon of Jesus evoke? *And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him.* He commanded the attention and respect of both believers and enemies of the faith. I am not sure that our preaching today commands such a scope of respect. The sinful lifestyle of many ministers has led to a distrust and lack of respect for them outside the walls of their churches.

But which term did the Lord omit from His Sermon? It was: . . . . *and the day of vengeance of our God.* (Isaiah 61:2) Jesus – even His Name signifying – preached salvation and Himself as that Salvation. He was both the Seed and the SOWER of the Seed. It is this point that is the salient point of the prophet (Isaiah), and of Jesus in His Sermon. Why did He omit mention of the one phrase in Isaiah? He mentions all of the portion of Isaiah that offers mercy, but omits that part that warns of vengeance!

Isaiah minces no words in proclaiming the complete nature of God in His both His goodness and His severity; but Jesus read only the part that mentions God's goodness, and closes the book. He thereby conceals the portion that references the vengeance between the parchment folds of the book.

Standing on the prophet's vantage point upon the mountain of truth and wisdom, Isaiah looked far away beyond the coast and time of Israel – all the way to the open sea of eternity future. He saw, in that moment, the fullness of the nature of God in two lights – one advancing ahead (MERCY) followed by another light of ominous appearance (judgment). Both of these lights perfectly and completely define the nature of God. Too often man attempts to eliminate the negatives and to (as Bing Crosby sang) "accentuate the positive." In reality, this is neither possible nor desirable. There can be no POSITIVE without a NEGATIVE! Electric current will not flow though the conductor without a negative and positive pole. It is this new concept of engineering the natural state of the physical and spiritual universe, and thereby Nature's God as well, from the forum of human thought. The Rev. William Arnot, more than 150 years ago identified this tendency in theology:

*" . . . . a theology, as its name indicates, with a great many noes in it. It teaches that human nature, the patient, is not so radically diseased as the popular creed represents it to be: the cure does not demand so much power and wisdom as we have been taught to suppose: the sacrifice of Christ was not required as a satisfaction to divine justice, and his death on the cross had not so deep a meaning as is commonly assigned to it: the Scriptures are not all, or at least not all equally, the inspired Word of God, and the harsher portions of them must not be explained too strictly: God is not a stern Judge, but a Father; and fatherliness means fondness, softness. Thus, by introducing a string of negatives into the gospel, they contrive to rub its sharpest corners off; and leave a figure more like the dim, beautiful outline of the changeful clouds, on whose edges you might fall without being hurt, than the stern summits of the everlasting hills, whereon, if a man fall, he will be broken to pieces. By taking the gospel of the Scriptures, eliminating from it everything that offended their taste, they have constructed a gospel which seems beautiful in*

*their eyes, and is smooth and agreeable to the touch; but it is not the gospel of Christ. It is not coarse and loathsome, like the idols of the heathen or of Rome; it is not made of gold or, silver, wood or stone—its matter and its mould are more refined and spiritual: nevertheless it is an idol; the workman made it, therefore it is not God. Granted that this gospel is soft and seemly; what then? it will not sustain a sinner in the hour of his extremity. When you fall, and its arms are opened to receive you, you will sink through them, as through a shadow. It will not in the least degree break the fall of the lost sinner in the day of wrath.”*

Sermons and Lectures of Reverend William Arnot (1858)  
Stover Creek Publications

So, was this the approach of Christ in this Sermon? No, it was not. Jesus, standing on the higher tower than Isaiah stood, was preaching of that first light which was MERCY. He, Himself, was that first Light to come which proclaimed Mercy to all who believed on Him. He is in that present moment of Mercy as He speaks, for He is that Mercy. He came as a Savior, and that is the theme of His sermon; however, that part which He omits shall come as the second light of Judgment. Those who attempt to adjudicate their sins without the shed blood of Christ will have no defense at the Judgment Seat for without that blood, they stand just as naked and fearful as Adam in the Garden, before the searching eyes of the Lord. Jesus does not mix Mercy with Vengeance – it shall be all of one, or of the other. No one shall EARN their salvation. Only Christ could redeem us of our sins in Mercy. But, having rejected the Mercy made available to us, there is only one resort left us – JUDGMENT. And no man can pass the judgment on his own merits – only those merits of Christ will suffice!

Here are a few verses to test your state of salvation, friends:

*23 For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; 24 Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”* (Romans 3:23-24) Friends, that ALL probably includes YOU and me!

*23 For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”* (Romans 6:23) Our only wage is of sin. We are incapable of doing righteously even when we do our very best.

Next is the clincher:

*1 And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; 2 Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: 3 Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. 4 But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, 5 Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) 6 And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: 7 That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. 8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: 9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.* (Eph 2:1-10)

Yes, we were all dead in trespasses and sin until our souls were quickened (made alive) by the intercessory work of the Holy Ghost. We, as dead bodies, were unable to even think of our need until the voice of the Holy Ghost penetrated the stone tomb and called our name, just as Christ called upon the name of Lazarus at Bethany.

If you do not have an intimate, saving relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, you are still a dead-man-walking (in your sins). But having been called and chosen to the Throne of Grace, you, who were dead, are now alive in Christ Jesus!