

January 11, 2023

The Lord wants you to live in His liberty and freedom.

Isa. 61:2-3 *To proclaim the year of the LORD's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, 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.* (NIV)

I love the picture that this gives us of our Savior. First of all, Jesus came at just the right time to show God's favor and also God's judgment for those who will not respond to the call of salvation. Jesus came to heal the damage that has been caused by sin. This is the great work of redemption. He proclaimed the good news to all who would listen. He still does. **2 Cor. 5:20** *We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making His appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.*

Now there is a picture of freedom and healing as He states that He will bestow on them, a crown of beauty instead of ashes. These were ashes that would be poured on their heads as a sign of mourning and death. Instead, He is bringing crowns of victory and liberty to those who have been changed by His life. The oil of joy is a symbol of God's power and healing being poured out upon His children through the Holy Spirit. What was once selective is now given freely to all who will receive Him. In ancient times, those who were in mourning would not only put ashes on their heads, but they would also wear sackcloth. Jesus says, they should be wearing a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. This is a time to rejoice in the Redeemer. So, we should stand strong, like the oak trees that grow in all types of weather and terrain. **Ps. 1:1-3** *Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, but whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on His law day and night. That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither— whatever they do prospers.* (NIV)

Dear LORD, You have done everything for us so that we might walk in Your freedom and liberty. Help us to be the hands and feet of Jesus in a world that so desperately needs it. In Jesus Name, Amen