

***14 Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside. 15 He taught in their synagogues, and everyone praised him.***

***16 He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. And he stood up to read. 17 The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:***

***18 “The Spirit of the Lord is on me,  
because he has anointed me  
to preach good news to the poor.  
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners  
and recovery of sight for the blind,  
to release the oppressed,  
19 to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”***

***20 Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him, 21 and he began by saying to them, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”*** (NIV84)

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## **Jesus is Revealed ... AS THE PROPHET**

With popular movies like the Matrix trilogy, the Lord of the Rings trilogy, and the Harry Potter series, the idea of prophecies and fulfillments are becoming very familiar. The problem with *these* prophecies, however, is that they’re all fictitious—the inventions of some author’s imagination. Other prophecies, like those of the stock market analysts and those election predictions, or even of the famous French “prophet,” Nostradamus, don’t always (in fact, rarely) come true.

That’s the problem with most prophets. They’re either invented fairy tales or they’re regularly way off base. Only a few dozen prophets have proven to be without error in every one of their predictions. Those prophets of course, are the Biblical authors. Every word written by them has proven to be true because these men were inspired by God. But no prophet was as great as *the* Prophet—Jesus of Nazareth.

This morning as the Great Rabbi returned to his home town and went to worship at the synagogue, he had the opportunity to guest preach there. And with everyone listening intently to what he had to say, Jesus read a prophecy from the book of Isaiah (the Old Testament lesson for this morning that we just read). And he pointed out that Isaiah was right on multiple levels. Not only was he right about the Israelites being released from captivity, but Jesus himself was the greater fulfillment of these verses. So in our lesson today we see **Jesus Revealed...as the Prophet**.

### **I. To Fulfill All Scripture**

Roughly 700 years before Christ fulfilled it, Isaiah wrote his prophecy. He claimed to be inspired by God with the Spirit of the Lord on him. Anointed as a prophet of God, he claimed to speak

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on God's behalf, being sent by him. But how do we know his claims were true? Well Jeremiah tells us the test of a true prophet: ***"But the prophet... will be recognized as one truly sent by the LORD only if his prediction comes true."*** (Jeremiah 28:9)

So how about Isaiah's prediction? Did it come true? Was there good news for the poor? Were prisoners set free and the oppressed released? The Israelites were in captivity in Babylon when Isaiah wrote, but what happened to them? Do you remember? They were released from their oppression and set free from their prison. Cyrus, king of the Persians, released the Israelites sending them back to Jerusalem, just like Isaiah predicted.

And once more the people celebrated the year of the Lord's favor. Now this phrase is one used of the Old Testament festival of the Year of Jubilee. This was a year-long celebration that took place every 50 years. It was a time when all the people, all the animals, even all the land, rested with no farming and no work taking place. It was a year when everything was reset and property was restored to its original owner. This way, if debt and hard times forced someone to sell his land, it was given back in the 50<sup>th</sup> year. If even harder times forced someone to sell themselves as a slave, they were released from their slavery in that Year of Jubilee.

Released from their Babylonian slavery, with their family land back in their possession, this prophecy of Isaiah's was fulfilled. But there was a second fulfillment to these verses of his. There was a *greater* fulfillment.

***<sup>20</sup> Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him, <sup>21</sup> and he began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."***

Jesus fulfilled this (and every) prophecy of Scripture! Jesus had the Spirit of the Lord on him. Jesus was anointed, not just with oil, but with the Holy Spirit. (We saw that two weeks ago at his Baptism.) And Jesus proclaimed good news to those poor sinners in that synagogue that morning. What an awesome treat they had! To have Jesus not only expound upon the text and preach about it, but to fulfill that text himself!

And, dear friends, what an awesome treat we have! Jesus still comes to us today. He's right here with us fulfilling this prophecy in your hearing! What a privilege is ours to hear him speak to us in his Word every day in our Bibles! Dear friends, take advantage of those opportunities Jesus gives you. Follow his example and make it your custom—your habit—to go to church every week, just like Jesus did. Think about that. If perfect Jesus – God himself – came to church and worship every week, how much more appropriate and needed for us sinners to do that same. Jesus did it because God is worth it, not because he'd get so much out of it, not because it was absolutely inspiring every moment, but because God is worth it. We too can show God what he's worth to us. We have even more reason than Jesus to worship, because here we receive forgiveness in his Word, here we thank him for his love. Here we learn how not just this one, but all of Scripture is fulfilled in Jesus. Learn the Word and see for yourselves how the Bible is completely trustworthy. And be assured that he will fulfill every promise just as he already fulfilled our salvation!

## II. To Fulfill Our Salvation

Let's take a look at Isaiah 61:1-2 again and see how Jesus would fulfill this particular prophecy. Jesus said, <sup>18</sup> *"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, <sup>19</sup> to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."*

With four pictures Isaiah describes what the Messiah would come to do. With these words *Jesus* tells us what he would do: Bring freedom to prisoners, restore sight to the blind, release the oppressed, and proclaim the Year of Jubilee.

On November, 29, 2005 Robin Lovitt, a convicted killer sentenced to execution by lethal injection, was waiting in locked cell. The very next day the sentence was to be carried out. But that night, a phone call from Mark Warner, governor of Virginia, changed everything. After Gov. Warner reviewed the case and found that some evidence against Lovitt had been "accidentally" destroyed, clemency was granted. Lovitt's life was spared and not a minute too soon.

In a similar way clemency—mercy—has been granted to each of us. Jesus brought freedom to us captives—a freedom, not from the prison of Babylon or of some cell on death row, but a freedom from hell where Satan held the key. Guilty of a life of sin, of neglect of the Word of God, of selfish behavior every day, we were sentenced to an eternity of death in hell. And there was no chance of any prison break.

But Jesus stepped in and changed everything. He took our place. He set us free, giving us his perfect, sinless life—a life that *always* worshipped God, not just once a week, a life that loved to hear (and share) God's Word. And he took our crimes on himself. He took the sentence we deserved because someone had to pay for what we've done. And he was executed for us. In that act he set us free from death and from hell.

And how does this pardon become ours? Also through, Jesus who fulfilled every aspect of our salvation! You've heard of the three blind mice, but have you heard of the blind mice who regained their sight? This past November scientists in the UK have done just that. Through some new medical research they've successfully restored the sight of some mice with macular degeneration.

And while Jesus literally restored sight to the blind, even greater still is the sight he's given to the spiritually blind. You see, left on our own, none of us would even be aware of our impending doom in hell. We would continue in our rebellion against God and rejection of him and his love. But through Baptism, through the preaching of the Word, Jesus has given us sight. He let s us see what he's done for us on the cross. He creates (and sustains) the faith in our hearts that trust in that love.

And when he does that he also releases us from our oppression. We are no longer crushed by guilt as we try to live up to God's impossible (yet just) standard of perfection. We don't live our lives in fear of losing God's love by our sin. Instead, released of any obligation to do anything more for our salvation, other than what Jesus has already done, our hearts soar and we celebrate not just a year, but a Life of Jubilee—a life of rest, a life that's been reset as we've been restored to our original owner, a life released from the slavery of sin, free to serve God in love and thanks!

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What good news Jesus has preached to us spiritually poor, impoverished sinners—that through this perfect Prophet, Jesus, who fulfilled the Scriptures, who fulfilled our salvation, we are no longer poor. We're as wealthy as you can get. We have joy in spite of the sorrows of this life. We know we'll have eternal joy and release from all oppression and pain forever in heaven. What good news! That every prophesy of Scripture is fulfilled in Jesus! That every aspect of our salvation has been fulfilled by him! That we have become rich through him. As Paul put it in 2 Corinthians 8:9, ***“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.”***

And if the Great Prophet Jesus spoke it in his Word, then we know it is true. His poverty gives us wealth unimaginable! His humble life and willing death mean life everlasting for us! Rejoice that these prophecies are yours and their truth is confirmed, because we are in the Prophets family of Faith!! Rejoice that he's been revealed and look for opportunities to share his truth with others that they might see, and know and believe with us – **that the Prophet has been revealed – in Jesus!!** Amen.