



Walk | Read | Pray | Join | Commit

The Jesus Manifesto | Week 8 | Isaiah 61:11 | Mark 16:1-8

Collect

Possible openers:

- Where, outside the Church, do you find people regularly singing? What are they singing about? How joyful do you think those songs are?
- This week we focus on the final verse of the Jesus Manifesto in Isaiah 61: the second half of a spontaneous song of praise, beginning in verse 10, where Isaiah celebrates being clothed in garments of salvation. It might be fitting to begin your time of fellowship together with some worship: either sung, or spoken, giving praise for all God has done this last week or month.

Context

Isaiah 61:11 inspires us with a vision of the slow, steady but unstoppable spread of righteousness and praise throughout the world. The ultimate result of Christ's coming and the Spirit's outpouring will be that both God-honouring living and God-treasuring joy slowly and steadily permeate the entire world.

The related passage in Mark 16 on Jesus' resurrection is the ultimate example of God making righteousness and new songs of praise spring up (literally, in the Righteous One) from what first looked like a lifeless state.

Discuss: Alongside our reading in Mark, read John 19:41 and think on the connection between Jesus' death and resurrection and the promise of Isaiah 61:11.

In the Old Testament there are two closely related justice-words, *mishpat* and *tzedeqah*, which are often translated 'justice' and 'righteousness' respectively. The former appears in 61:8, and tends to carry the sense of justice at a society-wide or structural level (a 'just society'). The latter appears in 61:10-11 and carries the sense of God-honouring thinking and action at a much more personal and relational level (a 'just person'). Such a definition reminds us of Jesus' words in the sermon on the Mount: "For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven." (Mat 5:20 NIV) ... where he then goes on to apply God's justice even to our thoughts and motives.

Discuss: People today are much more comfortable talking about justice at the society-wide level than they are at the personal level. Why do you think the idea of a 'just person' seems so foreign in our culture?

Further reading: For more on the biblical concept of justice, see [here](#) for an excerpt from Tim Keller's book, *Generous Justice*.



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Content

The great vision expressed in Isaiah 61:11 is of “righteousness and praise springing up before all nations” as a result of the coming of the Saviour (52:11-53:12, 59:16) and the outpouring of the Spirit (59:21, 61:1). This is not just so that the nations will see it, but be drawn to it and become part of it – a theme that echoes throughout Isaiah (2:2, 49:6, 52:15, 60:3).

RIGHTEOUSNESS: It is striking that this spread of righteousness begins with God’s people first being clothed by God in righteousness (v10) before it steadily spreads (v11).

Discuss: Share personal examples of times when you have been inspired or challenged to live more God-honouring lives. How does knowing that Christ has already made us righteous in God’s sight help us to make progress in this?

PRAISE: The vision is of ever-increasing praise ...

Discuss: What examples can you think of in the gospels where the Lord Jesus brings new joy and praise? Ask individuals if they’d read the following for inspiration: Luke 1:64 / 2:20 / 18:43 / 19:37 / 23:47 / 24:52-53. Acts 2:47 / 3:8 / 8:5-8 / 8:39 / 16:25.

This ever-increasing praise is due not only to the number of God’s people is increasing, but also because the joy of Christians is also ever-deepening.

Discuss: When has your praise been on the wane rather than the increase? What practically can help to keep feeding and deepening Christian joy?

PATIENT PERSEVERANCE: One of the messages of the growth metaphor in verse 11 is to remind us that this great vision will be fulfilled, but slowly and steadily. We are also reminded that it ultimately depends not on us but on the Sovereign Lord.

Discuss: Why do these reminders help us not to get disillusioned?

Challenge

To play your part in this vision of ever-increasing righteousness and praise, spilt into pairs and discuss:

- How are you growing in righteousness? (i.e. God-honouring living)
- How are you investing in the growth of this in others? (i.e. discipleship)
- How are you investing in the increase of praise? (i.e. evangelism)
- Where do you most need to patiently persevere?

Connect

- Pray for righteousness and praise to increase in the places and people groups on your heart.
- Pray for each other in the light of the challenges you identified, ask God for prophetic encouragements, especially in areas where people have been struggling.