



Walk | Read | Pray | Join | Commit

The Jesus Manifesto | Week 4 | Isaiah 61:4 | Mark 6:6b-13

Collect

Some icebreaker questions:

- What items do you think are essential for a good trip or holiday?
- Do you make a full plan of what you'll do and see when take a holiday, or do you prefer to take things as they come?

These questions will lead us into thinking about how we prepare ourselves before setting out into unknown places. Jesus sends out his disciples to do the restoration work set out in Isaiah 61:4, yet all they need for this trip is his authority.

Context

Chapters 56-66 of Isaiah speak into the anxiety and frustration the Jewish nation would face when returning from the exile in Babylon. They are a liberated people, witnessing the fulfilment of God's promise in returning them to their promised land – but their home is in ruins. The Temple, which housed the very presence of God, had been ransacked and defiled, their cities are devastated and their identity as a nation, as the people of God, is in a similar state.

Isaiah 61:4 is a vision of hope; a promise of national restoration that continues all that is detailed in verses 1-3. Not only will there be a personal restoration, of comforting, praising and spiritual growth (1-3), there will also be a physical outworking of this renewal, an outward sign of this 'good news' that is being proclaimed.

Discuss: Read Isaiah 61:4. Have you visited a city or region before and after restoration work has taken place? What feelings did it leave you with?

At the time of Jesus' ministry, aspects of Isaiah 61:4 have been achieved: Jerusalem has been rebuilt, its walls stand, yet the nation is operating under foreign rule. There is a new temple under construction, built by Herod the Great, but it is somewhat lacking in the ornate design of Solomon's original and its religious centrality is a point of discussion between influential religious and political groups like the Pharisees and Sadducees.

The 'Promised Land' is also vastly different in this post-exile era: the southern region of Judah has become Judea, while the northern region of Israel has given away to Samaria and Galilee. A hunger for a total fulfilment of Isaiah 61 sits large on the national conscience.

In Mark 6:6b-13, Jesus is yet to start his ministry within Jerusalem, the perceived epicentre of the nation and its faith. He is instead focusing on teaching the Good News of the Kingdom to the many villages in the northern region of Galilee and Samaria, eventually sending the twelve disciples out two by two to preach, heal and cast out demons.

Discuss: Read Mark 6:6b-13. Now read the following passages: Mark 4:13; 4:33-34; 5:42. The disciples haven't fully grasped Jesus' teaching, yet still he sends them out. How do you think the disciples will have felt upon receiving these instructions in 6b-13?



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Content

‘They will rebuild the ancient ruins and restore places long devastated...’ The voice delivering this passage in Isaiah 61, the one on whom the Lord’s anointing is resting, isn’t saying it will be the one to do the work of rebuilding and restoring, but rather it is the work of those called ‘oaks of righteousness’, those who had been in mourning (61:3).

Jesus lives out a life in which this restoration work is modelled and brought to completion – both spiritually, and with a fresh revelation of that physical restoration. There is a pivotal moment yet to come in which the centrality of the Temple is shifted to Jesus, declaring that it can be knocked down and rebuilt in three days (Mark 14:58, John 10:18). Jesus will identify himself as the new presence of God, and it is through his restored body, a rebuilt temple, that the world gains salvation.

In Mark 6:6b-13, we see that Jesus gives his disciples the authority to go out and set about this same restoration work – preaching repentance, driving out demons and curing illness. Jesus tells his disciples that they only require a staff, ‘– no bread, no bag, no money... wear sandals but not an extra shirt.’ This is not to be a long journey; they are to travel light, to rely upon the provision of those they meet along the way. There is an urgency to this call, to go out and respond, rather than worry or waste time fretting over the provision. The only qualification required is Jesus’ say so, his authority. They’ve witnessed him work, now it’s their turn.

Discuss: What parts of the world have you felt unqualified to reach? How does this passage challenge your understanding of the authority you carry?

Jesus’ fulfilment of Isaiah 61 also points to a ministry that doesn’t happen in isolation: just as a group undertakes the work of restoration (‘**THEY** will rebuild the ancient ruins’), Jesus sends out his disciples in twos. We as a church are a community united in that same mission of Jesus, to rebuild, restore and declare good news with his authority.

Challenge

What aspects of the world around you would you consider areas of ‘ruin’ and ‘devastation’ that need restoration? What hurts and pain are you aware of? What relationships and hopes within your own life can be rebuilt and remodelled in the practice of Jesus?

As we draw close to him, as we learn of his manifesto through his lifestyle, teaching and spirit, how might we set about this work of restoration he has called us into?

Connect

Spend time praying for the Lord’s favour and restoration to rest on:

- **An area of the world desperate for it;**
- **An area of London in need of it;**
- **A person we know who is longing for it.**