

Always Restoring  
Isaiah 61:1-4, Luke 4:16-20, John 9

## **Slide 1**

As we finish this series of the Always God, today's message is titled Always Restoring.

Now, the word "restore" or "restoration" probably brings up something specific for many of you.

For example, if you're into antiques or carpentry, maybe you think about restoring a piece of furniture. If you watch the series This Old House on PBS, you think of restoring old homes to their original charm.

When it comes to God, I think about the work He does to restore humanity to its original factory condition which tells me there's no rest for the weary.

God is always restoring. There's no project too big, too broken, or too far-gone for Him to tackle. Our Scripture passage this morning illustrates this beautifully.

*Isaiah 61:1-4, "The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, 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. They will rebuild the ancient ruins and restore the places long devastated; they will renew the ruined cities that have been devastated for generations."*

## Slide 2

In verse 2 of this passage, you need to highlight the phrase, *“to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”* What’s this *“year of the Lord’s favor”* Isaiah was referencing?

In order to understand Isaiah’s mindset, you need a little background information.

Isaiah ministered in the Southern kingdom of Judah from roughly 740 BC to about 681 BC. The northern kingdom of Israel had been wiped out by the Assyrians when Isaiah was in his early 20’s.

Through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Isaiah knew that the day was coming when Judah would also be overrun and carried off to exile. Which happened in 586 BC, about a century after his death.

So, Isaiah’s writing to a people who’re stressed out and anxious about what they’re seeing happening in their nation.

There probably were some senior citizens shaking their heads saying, *“I just don’t know what this world’s coming to. I never thought I’d see the day when the Assyrians could just march in and take over.”*

In other words, it’s the same thing you hear people saying today. So, here’s Isaiah, prophesying that there’ll come a day when the One whom God anoints will make things right again.

Make things right again. That a catchy little phrase. I think I’ve something like it used recently, but I digress.

This One, anointed by God, will preach good news to the poor. He’ll heal the brokenhearted. He’ll proclaim liberty to captives, and He’ll *“proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”*

For the Jew, “*the year of the Lord’s favor*” referred specifically to something God created back in Leviticus called *The Year of Jubilee*.

According to Leviticus 25, every 50 years Israel was to get a reset. All debts were to be forgiven. Hebrew slaves were to be set free. Land that had been sold was to revert back to its original owners.

Also, for the entire year, the land was to rest from planting, so the people could rely on the Lord’s provision. The idea of *The Year of Jubilee* was to keep the playing field level.

There wouldn’t be inherited wealth, but there also wouldn’t be generational debt. No one would be born into slavery. Every generation would get a reboot.

Now here’s something that I think’s sad, but also completely predictable. There’s no evidence that the Year of Jubilee was ever observed.

We know it couldn’t have been observed after the time of Isaiah, because after the fall of the northern kingdom in 722, and the exile of the southern kingdom in 586, the boundaries for the twelve tribes no longer existed.

But there’s no mention of its observance anywhere in Joshua, when Israel conquered and settled the Promised Land, or in the time of the Judges, or at any time during the united or divided monarchies.

So, after the decree was laid out in Leviticus, it’s never mentioned again, aside from one reference to its future fulfillment in the book of Numbers.

Think about the repercussions of celebrating *The Year of Jubilee* every 50 years today.

Our entire financial system would collapse if all debt were cancelled every fifty years. Can you imagine giving Manhattan back to the Indians?

How about giving most of Tennessee, Kentucky, and parts of Alabama, Georgia, and the Carolinas back to the Cherokee?

What if every farmer let their land lay fallow for an entire year, trusting that the Lord would provide? You see, most people would write off Jubilee as impractical. Idealistic. Unattainable.

Yet, Isaiah prophesied that “*the year of the Lord’s favor*” was coming. How could that even be possible? Our world is too broken! Too complicated! Too selfish! Too sinful!

Notice that Isaiah didn’t stop with simply restoring society to its factory settings.

According to verse 3, anyone who was mourning would be given a beautiful headdress (like what a bride would wear) instead of ashes (what a widow would smear on her forehead).

There would be gladness instead of mourning. In other words, funeral homes would be empty and dance halls would be overbooked.

People would wear garments of praise instead of a faint spirit. Instead of meekness and timidity and lack of self-assurance, people would be strutting around in their best New Year’s Eve party tuxedos.

The citizens of this restored Zion would be called “*oaks of righteousness, a planting of the LORD.*”

They would be walking definitions of the godly men and women like Psalm 1 describes, *“a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither—whatever they do prospers.”*

Finally, cities that had been devastated for generations would be rebuilt and repaired. Ruins would become sanctuaries. What a picture of restoration and renewal!

When this anointed One comes, we won't just be “good as new,” we'll be “better than new.”

The goal won't be to make everything how it used to be. Instead, the Anointed One will make everything like it never had a chance to be.

We've never seen things restored to their original factory condition, because all we've ever known is a world after the fall, after sin entered the world.

How could this restoration even be possible? We're just too broken. This is what sin did to us. It corrupted us. It marred us. It broke the relationship between God and humanity.

Romans 3:23, *“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”* Left to ourselves, there's no way our world could ever be restored to mint condition, but there's Good News.

### **Slide 3**

Leaving Isaiah's timeframe, let's fast forward about 600 years.

One Saturday morning in a tiny, backwater village called Nazareth in southern Galilee, a local boy named Jesus was invited to read the designated Scripture passage for the synagogue liturgy.

He stands up, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. He unrolled the scroll, and found the place where it was written:

*Luke 4:18-19, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."*

And right there, in front of his hometown crowd, in front of the old women who changed His diapers in the nursery; in front of the guys He ran track with in high school, the Bible says that Jesus:

*Luke 4:20-21, "...rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. And he began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."*

Can you imagine the buzz that went through the crowd? *"Did He just say this Scripture is fulfilled? This is the year of the Lord's favor? Is this really the Jubilee?"*

The Israelites had been living under Roman occupation for roughly 100 years by this point. Was it possible that God was about to perform a factory reset?

There's something else. If people had been listening closely, and knew their Old Testament, they would've picked up on two differences between what Isaiah said and what Jesus said.

For one thing, Jesus stopped just before He got to the line about *"the day of vengeance of our God."*

Jesus was aware of just how much the people of His day were looking for a political Messiah that would lead a military insurrection against the Romans, so He wisely tamped down the “*day of vengeance*” part.

But notice what Jesus substitutes in His proclamation that wasn't part of Isaiah's prophecy. Jesus said He came so that the blind could recover their sight. That's not in Isaiah's original prophecy!

For the majority of Jesus' miracles, you can point to someone in the Old Testament that did something similar.

Think about some of His miracles, like the miraculous multiplication of food when Jesus fed the 5000.

Well, there was a miraculous multiplication of food when Moses led the children of Israel through the wilderness. Manna fell from heaven. Quail dropped from the sky.

Or what about the times Jesus demonstrated a miraculous control of nature when He calmed the storm, or when He walked on water.

Well, Moses parted the Red Sea. Joshua crossed the Jordan River on dry ground.

What about when Jesus raised the dead? Elijah did the same thing. Jesus healed leprosy, as did Elisha. But let this sink in, there's no story in the Old Testament about anyone being cured of blindness.

Yet there are at least seven instances, and possibly eight, of Jesus healing the blind in the New Testament.

When Jesus preached His inaugural sermon, He told His hometown crowd that recovery of sight to the blind would be one of the signs that God had anointed Him.

While John the Baptist was in prison, he began to wonder if Jesus really was the anointed Messiah. So, he sent a couple of his disciples to Jesus to ask Him,

*John 11:2-5, "Now when John heard in prison about the deeds of the Christ, he sent word by his disciples and said to him, "Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?" And Jesus answered them, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them."*

What was the first thing out of Jesus' mouth? Tell John that the blind are receiving their sight. This was THE sign that God was doing something through Jesus that had never been done before!

In John 9, Jesus healed a man born blind. Of all the miracles Jesus ever did, this one stirred up the most controversy. His neighbors wanted to know how it happened. So, the man told them.

*John 9:11, "He replied, "The man they call Jesus made some mud and put it on my eyes. He told me to go to Siloam and wash. So I went and washed, and then I could see."*

Then the Pharisees launched their own investigation. They're really bothered that Jesus did this on the Sabbath, because they considered making mud pies was working on the Sabbath, which kind of feels like they're missing the point.

But they asked, how come you're not blind anymore, and the man gave the same answer.

*Verse 15, "Therefore the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. "He put mud on my eyes," the man replied, "and I washed, and now I see."*



Then they asked his parents about whether or not this was their son, and whether or not he was actually born blind.

Then they brought the man back for more questioning, and the man gave them the fourth verse of Amazing Grace. Verse 25, *“One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!”*

They asked him a third time how it happened, and by this point he’s getting a little salty.

Verse 27, *“He answered, “I have told you already and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples too?”*

And it just kept going on and on. Why does this miracle get so much attention? Simple! It had never been done before.

The man who was born blind even pointed this out to the Pharisees. John 9:32, *“Nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind.”*

Jesus didn’t merely come to make everything the way it was. Jesus came to make things like they had never been.

## **Slide 5**

### Conclusion

True restoration and renewal aren’t going to come through political or military processes. It’s not going to come by politicians who promise to get the country back to traditional values.

No. True restoration and renewal can only come through Jesus. Isaiah predicted this when he said in Isaiah 43:19, that God would do a new thing.

Don't get stuck on the former things. Don't get hung up on the way things used to be.

*Isaiah 43:18-19, "Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland."*

You know what another word for favor is? GRACE. Grace restores what's broken. Grace releases what's bound. Grace renews what's lifeless. Grace rebuilds what's ruined. Grace opens blind eyes.

Jesus did it for the blind man, and He can do it for you. He can be your Jubilee. He can forgive your debts and set you free.

Here's how he did it for the blind man. The man born blind had been rejected by religion. The legalistic, self-righteous Pharisees did everything they could to shame him and ridicule him.

*John 9:34, "To this they replied, "You were steeped in sin at birth; how dare you lecture us!" And they threw him out." This is where Jesus found him. Thrown out, cast aside, and rejected.*

*John 9:35-38, "Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, and when he found him, he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" "Who is he, sir?" the man asked. "Tell me so that I may believe in him." Jesus said, "You have now seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you." Then the man said, "Lord, I believe," and he worshiped him."*

I'll ask you the same question Jesus asked, *"Do you believe in the Son of Man? Do you believe that there's Someone Who loves you, Who cherishes you, Who has always pursued you, who gave His life for you, Who is able to restore you, Who is always speaking to you, and in fact is speaking to you now?"*

If so, open your eyes, and see Him. See Him, maybe for the first time.  
Believe in Him and worship Him.