



# proclaim liberty

FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT, MARCH 22, 2026  
ISAIAH 61:1

## PRAYER FOR THIS READING

Almighty God, you sent your son Jesus Christ to declare good news to the poor, to heal the broken-hearted, and to offer freedom to the captives and those in prison. You further called us as living members of the body of Jesus Christ in the world today. Send your Holy Spirit to empower us to fulfill your promises of good news, healing, and freedom, and in your mercy help us to remember that these are promises for us just as much as they are promises for our neighbors. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

## REFLECTION AND QUESTIONS

Isaiah 61:1 is a foundational Christian text. I don't just mean that in the sense that the Hebrew scriptures can broadly be claimed to be foundational Christian texts, but rather in the sense that this text is foundational to Jesus' teachings in a very literal way. In Luke 4, after enduring temptation in the wilderness and beginning his ministry in a very "yadda yadda" way, Jesus returns to his hometown of Nazareth and reads this text aloud in the synagogue. While Luke doesn't say this teaching in Nazareth is the beginning of Jesus' ministry, it's the first distinct story told of Jesus' ministry, highlighting the deep connection between Jesus' teaching and this text in particular. What Isaiah is saying straightforwardly in this text is that God is sending him, empowered by God's own Spirit, with a particular mission and focus: good news to the poor, healing for the broken-hearted, freedom to the imprisoned and captivated. These are the folks God is particularly concerned about, relief of their suffering is what God promises them, and Jesus situates himself as the fulfillment of that promise. As members of the Body of Christ, we too are called to be chiefly concerned with the poor, the broken-hearted, and the imprisoned and captivated.

Many beloved children of God are being denied due process and being held in prisons in the United States right now for the mere suspicion of having committed the misdemeanor of being undocumented, sometimes through no evidence beyond their perceived ethnicity or speaking English with an accent. Many beloved children of God are being held captive by social media algorithms and media echo chambers that twist reality and moral frameworks, reducing their ability to perceive the dignity of other human beings, or even of themselves. Many beloved children of God are experiencing increased poverty through lost wages and increased costs associated with hiding in their homes for fear of being snatched off the street. Many beloved children of God have hearts that are breaking, either as a consequence of their own experience of injustice or of watching this injustice bear out.

God promises all these beloved children, including us, relief. Jesus declares himself the realization of this promise. We, through our baptism, are called to be a manifestation of that promised relief. We are not called to do this alone: God's Holy Spirit is with us, and we are with one another.

- **Where do I see myself in the midst of the poor, the broken-hearted, the captivated, or the imprisoned? How has God offered me relief?**
- **How can I offer relief to those who suffer in my own community? In this country? In the world?**
- **What do I need to let go of to live fully into what God has called me to do and be at this time and in this place?**