New Hope Global Sermon The Great Shepherd Heals the Brokenhearted

**Introduction**

In our *Scattered Flock* Daily Meditations we have come to a pivotal passage that describes Jesus’ ministry as our Great Shepherd. Jesus quoted it as the opening defining text in Isaiah 61:1-10 for his own ministry. “The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor:[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah+61%3A1-10&version=ESV#fen-ESV-18845a)]

* he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,
* to proclaim liberty to the captives,
* and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah+61%3A1-10&version=ESV#fen-ESV-18845b)]

to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God;

* to comfort all who mourn; 3to grant to those who mourn in Zion—beauty for ashes
* the oil of gladness instead of mourning,
* the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit;
* that they may be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified.”[“[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah+61%3A1-10&version=ESV#fen-ESV-18847c)] ESV

This description of Christ’s ministry while he was on earth and now among us in the Spirit epitomizes not only His character and work but is to characterize also the character and work of all of His people around the world. Centuries since His ascension and the formation of the church, aspects of Christians’ shepherding ministry done in His name have transformed entire nations. And transformed individual lives. So let’s take a few weeks to examine what it means to be under the care of Jesus Christ, the Great Shepherd of the sheep (Heb.13:229), and to see how His ministry can be lived out in our own lives and churches today. This week I want to consider just two aspects of his shepherding ministry from Isaiah 61: God has “sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives.”

**Healing the Brokenhearted**

****All Christ’s ministry is “good news to the poor” but the words do not mean just literal poverty. They are the emotional and often spiritual poverty of the brokenhearted, the captives, the oppressed, the grieving, the faint, and those burdened by the heaviness of suffering, depression, and evil attacks. People weighed down with each of these conditions are the subject of God’s healing and deliverance because of His loving care for His people.

Similar descriptions of God’s shepherding ministry are in Psalm 23 and Ezekiel 34. In both texts God is described as “tending his sheep” and “making them lie down in green pastures.” In Philip Keller’s classic book *A Shepherd looks at Psalm 23,* he says: “It is almost impossible for sheep to be made to lie down unless 4 requirements are met. . . a definite sense of freedom from fear, tensions, aggravations and hunger.” (Keller, Zondervan, 2007, pp, 41-42). The same is true for people. To be able to thrive as humans we need God’s deliverances from our fears, our friction in relationships, our frustrations that torment and issues that sabotage our daily needs for survival.

But I would add two other factors that need tending before people are at peace - a brokenheartedness and a fear of what their oppressors will do to them. The ministry of the Chief Shepherd is to heal and deliver His own people (his sheep) from all these factors.

The Psalms affirm that God heals the brokenhearted:

 Psalm 34:18 “The righteous cry out and the Lord hears them; he delivers them from all their troubles.

The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.

Ps. 147:3 “The Lord heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds”

Brokenheartedness can come from multiple causes but the 3 dominant ones are failed relationships, death of a loved one, and circumstances that dash our hopes and expectations.

As God’s people reach out to others through a shepherding lifestyle, those who are brokenhearted have deep emotional wounds and so cannot be healed superficially by quoting a Bible verse and saying “peace, peace” when there is the downward spiral of negative thoughts, discouragement, and depression. Similarly, if a person is caught in an oppressive context, giving bland words of hope that seem to contradict reality and do not take into account God’s miraculous power and victories is like pouring salt in their wounds. But when Christian care-givers are under the control of the Spirit, the Spirit’s presence through us can bring peace and the Spirit can give the appropriate words and reframing of anguish to bind up their wounds. True healing comes from the Lord so to minister to others deeply, the believer needs to spend consistent time in Scripture reading, prayer and cultivating a listening heart before God. As Ps. 50:4-5 says:

The Sovereign Lord has given me an instructed tongue to know the word that sustains the weary. He wakens me morning by morning, wakens my ear to listen like one being taught. The Sovereign Lord has opened my ears and I have not been rebellious; I have not drawn back. INIV

Morning by morning. Developing a Jesus-style life is a daily discipline. Those who care for others need a listening heart to God and to those they support and help because people coping with brokenheartedness are weary. It takes the compassion and presence of God and those walking in the Spirit to help them bind up their wounds. It is a gradual process. Healing brokenheartedness is not like MacDonalds fast food!

**Facing injustice**

But Jesus as the Great Shepherd also seeks to bring justice and deliverance from oppression. So much of the evil multiplying throughout the world is because of people’s greed, desire for power, vitriolic party-spirit and astonishing lack of moral guidelines. There are “coyotes” who exact huge amounts of money to smuggle people internationally, pimps who have made the sex trade one of the most lucrative illegal sources of pleasure in the world through their lies and subsequent slavery of poor, unaware women and children, politicians, landlords who charge unjust wages, world leaders who enslave those under their control, political systems that silence the voices of those working for justice or a fair wage or a voice at the table, or clean water etc., individuals who use social media to spread hate and false news; the list is almost endless.

During the past two weeks I have read and reviewed two books that reveal a vitriolic party-spirit against those with whom they differ – even within the Christian church! Eugene Peterson was as a pastor who had death threats because of his stance on homosexuality (*A Burning in My Bones*) and Jose Vargas was demonized for being a Dreamer – an illegal immigrant bought or sent to the States as a child (*Dear America, Notes of an Undocumented Citizen).* Jesus prayed before he died that the world would recognize Christians by their unity (Jn.17:11,23) and their love for one another (Jn.15:12,17). The spiteful hate messages Christians send to other Christians who don’t share their party line is in direct opposition to God’s heart. They are tearing apart what Jesus died to bring together. They are imprisoning people with their slander and hateful conduct when both Isaiah 42 and 61 make it clear that Jesus’ role as the Great Shepherd includes bringing justice to the nations, proclaiming liberty to the captives and opening the prisons to those who are bound.

In these extraordinary troubled times the role of the Great Shepherd and those who are under-shepherds through Him is the only eternal cure for our toxic, storm-tossed souls.

So hear again words of comfort and hope from the Scriptures:

“When I said, ‘My foot is slipping, Your love, O Lord, supported me. When anxiety was great within me, Your consolation brought joy to my soul.” Ps. 94:18-19

“The Lord is faithful in all his promises and loving toward all he has made. The Lord upholds all those

who fall and lifts up all who are bowed down” (Ps. 34:13-14)

“In my anguish I cried to the Lord, and he answered me by setting me free” (Ps. 118:5)

Jesus said, “Come to me all you who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of Me for I am meek and lowly of heart and you will find rest for your souls.”Mt.11:28-29

“Many followed Jesus and he healed all their sick. This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah: ‘Here is my servant whom I have chosen, the one I love…I will put my Spirit on him and he will proclaim justice to the nations. . .A bruised reed he will not break and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out (Mt. 12:15-20)”. [The brokenhearted and the oppressed are like bruised reeds and smoldering wicks’].

29And as they went out of Jericho, a great crowd followed him. 30And behold, there were two blind men sitting by the roadside, and when they heard that Jesus was passing by, they cried out, “Lord,[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mt.+20%3A29-34&version=ESV#fen-ESV-23820a)] have mercy on us, Son of David!” 31The crowd rebuked them, telling them to be silent, but they cried out all the more, “Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!” 32And stopping, Jesus called them and said, “What do you want me to do for you?” 33They said to him, “Lord, let our eyes be opened.” 34And Jesus in pity touched their eyes, and immediately they recovered their sight and followed him. (Mt. 20:29-34 ESV)

Jesus Christ is “the same yesterday, today and forever,” (Heb. 7:22) so these promise of God’s shepherding care remain ways His active presence is the transformative, redemptive power God wants to unleash today. We as Christians are called to step into this toxic world and bring God’s deliverance and healing to the brokenhearted and the oppressed through the power of the Holy Spirit . So we close with 2 songs – a challenge and a prayer.

Challenge Song: Let Your Heart Be Broken

Let your heart be broken for a world I need – feed the mouths that hunger, soothe the wounds that bleed; give the sup of water and the load of bread 0 be the hands of Jesus, serving in his stead.

Here on earth applying principles of love- visible expression God still rules above, living expression of the Living Word, to the minds of all who’ve never seen and heard.

Add to your believing deeds that prove it true – follow in his footsteps, go where he has trod, in the worlds great trouble risk yourself for God. (words Bryan Jeffery Leech, Music: James Mountain)

Prayer Song - Holy Spirit Rain Down:

“Holy Spirit Rain Down, rain down, Oh Comforter and Friend, how we need your touch again. Holy Spirit Rain Down, rain down Let your power fall, let your voice be heard, come and change our hearts as we stand on your word. Holy Spirit rain down. Rain down. No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind can know what God has in store. So open up heaven, open it wide, over your church and over our lives. Holy Spirit rain down.”

 (words and music: Russell Frager)

We are called as believers to be instruments through whom God’s mercy, love and grace goes out to the world to heal the brokenhearted, bind up their wounds, bring liberty to the captives and open up the prisons for those who are bound. Do it Lord!! Amen and Amen.

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