



More Than A Job Description: Our Life's Work
Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11

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First Federated Church of Peoria, Illinois
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Even if you don't, yet, have a formal position within a company, we all have a good idea what a "job description" is based on our life experiences.

I first learned the meaning of "job description" when I was 12 years old. My older brother, Nicholas, had been a paperboy for a couple of years. I saw the money he made and all the things he bought. I wanted those things too, so I applied to the Grand Rapids Press to be a paperboy. Shortly after, I got a paper route. Before I began delivering papers I met with my boss to go over my responsibilities and the code of conduct. He handed me a sheet of paper and at the top of the paper were the words "Paper Route Delivery Person: Job Description." Listed in bullet point form were all the responsibilities of the job; papers were to be delivered by 5pm Monday through Friday and 8am on the weekends, payment was to be collected monthly, rubber bands were to be used on the paper when it was sunny and plastic bags when it rained or snowed, papers were to be put in the right spot. Oh, and don't rip the pages. Over the next two years I delivered the papers on time, as best as I could, collected money monthly, prepared the papers depending on the weather, and put them in their preferred location. For Mrs. Johnson I put the paper on the chair next to the door so she wouldn't have to bend over. For the Hoeksema's I had to put the paper at the side door. For Mr. Mooney the paper was to be tucked in between the screen door and the wooded one. The responsibilities of that job were simple and they were all listed in the job description.

But then I moved with my family to a new town and had to find a different job. Being a busboy was much more complicated than a paperboy. The restaurant manager gave me a printout of the job description and it had way more responsibilities listed on it. At my new job I had to: clear the tables of dirty dishes, wipe the tables clean, wash the dishes, stack them neatly, take out the trash, fill the ice bins, clean up spills, refill water glasses, and, it seemed to me, so much more. At that restaurant I realized just how important job descriptions are. Without it I wouldn't know what my job was all about or even the purpose of my job. I also wouldn't have known what I was held accountable for or the scope of my tasks. Job descriptions are important because they tell us what we are to do and why we are doing them, and also what we're signing up for when we take a job.

Those two jobs helped me to understand the importance of job descriptions. Perhaps it is because of those experiences that I see Isaiah's words in chapter 61:1-3 as a sort of Christian job description. Placed toward the end of the book, Isaiah states what exactly his responsibilities were and why he needed to do them. Isaiah had been anointed by God to: bring good news, bind up the broken hearted, proclaim liberty to the captive, and to comfort the mourning (61:1-3). Isaiah had a tall order before him because the Israelites had been overrun by the Babylonians years earlier. Their homes

had been destroyed. Their markets and schools had been torn down and flattened. Their places of worship were turned into piles of rubble. An entire community had been brought to ruin and Isaiah's job was to bring healing and restoration to the Israelite community.

Isaiah's job was daunting there is no doubt, but, I think, it would be a mistake to overlook what God's word says in verse one "The Lord has anointed me." Isaiah had been dedicated by God for a specific set of responsibilities. He had been dedicated to a special purpose. Isaiah, however, did not carry out his responsibilities alone. God was present with Isaiah helping him to restore the devastated Israelite community. As Isaiah worked to bring healing into the Israelite community he was a prophetic voice calling and leading God's people to accountability. Through it all, God was before him, behind him, and beside him. God was with him as he fulfilled his responsibilities because God loved him and he had been anointed by God.

Today, baptism is similar to Isaiah's anointing. When we are baptized, the water symbolizes our anointing as God's daughters and sons. The baptismal water also seals upon us the gift of the Holy Spirit. Isaiah was not alone. God was with him. We are not alone. The Holy Spirit is with us. Through the power of the Holy Spirit and the Spirit's presences with us we carry out our responsibilities. In other words, we live into our Christian job description.

Isaiah 61:1-3 tells us exactly what our responsibilities are. But there is a great difference between a standard job description and our responsibilities as Christ followers. A job description tells us about our work life [what we have to do and how much time we have to do it in]. Isaiah's words tell us about of life's work [what we are to do and for how long]. I was a paperboy for two years. I was a busboy for a couple more. Maybe you've worked baby sitter, as a teacher, a nurse, an engineer, or a lawyer for a time and that's your work life. Your anointing in baptism means you have a life's work. Our life's work is to restore people and broken communities. Isaiah was called to bring healing into his community. We are called to bring healing into our community. Isaiah's words not only led Israel - they lead us.

Being baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit assures us that we don't carry out our life's work to bring good news, bind up the broken hearted, proclaim liberty to the captives, or comfort those who mourn all by ourselves. We do all of it empowered by the Holy Spirit, having been gifted with abilities by the Holy Spirit for the betterment of this world. Together, anointed by God in our baptism, we work to restore those within our own communities who have been devastated by life circumstances, displaced from their homes, just as the Israelites were long ago. So we plug into Habitat for Humanity and help build homes for those in need. Together we share our time and resources with those in our communities, whose belongings have been taken away from them just as the Babylonians did to the Israelites. So we give of our resources to feed the children of Whittier Primary School. Together we connect with those who are struggling to keep up. So we give of our time and become "Reading Buddies," mentors, at Thomas Jefferson Primary School helping those who are having a hard time with school and strengthening our bonds with our neighbors. Together we come alongside of those who are facing the holidays without their husband, their wife, their granddaughter, or their son and we lament with them, crying out for comfort and peace, for the

coming of Christ. Together, we proclaim the grace given by Jesus Christ to our families members, our friends, and our neighbors. So we invite the people we know and strangers to join with us in Bible study, or community outreach events, or Sunday morning worship service. That is our responsibility as Christ followers. That is our life's work.

As a paperboy I knew exactly what I had to do and how long I had to do it. As a busboy I knew exactly what I had to do and how long. As a follower of Christ, the prophet Isaiah has made our life's work clear and for how long we are to do it, our entire lives. We are to bring the good news of the gospel to people in our community and around the world always. We are to bind up the broken-hearted, caring for and lifting up people have bullied, mocked, and pushed around always. We are to proclaim freedom in Christ to those who are captives always. We are to comfort those who mourn always. As we fulfill our God given responsibilities we don't do so alone. In our baptism we have been set aside as daughters and sons of God and have been given the Holy Spirit. By the power of the Holy Spirit, who is always present with us, we bring restoration to communities devastated by suffering of any kind. We bring restoration to our communities and we allow others to help restore us when we are suffering. That is who we are. That is our life's work.

In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.