

St Mary's, Final Thursday 10am BCP, 12th January 2017

Isaiah 61 v1 to 3

Here is my text for my final Thursday sermon. Its Isaiah 61 v3:

We are called to be,

**OAKS of RIGHTEOUSNESS,
a PLANTING of the LORD,
for the DISPLAY of his SPLENDOUR**

Not Geoff Oakes of Audlem **but oaks of righteousness!**

An oak is a TREE which is BEAUTIFUL, which is STRONG,
which is DEPENDABLE, which is LONG LASTING.

We are not trees but people. But we are called as Christian people to have
a righteousness which is beautiful, strong, dependable and long-lasting.

Righteousness is the state of being "*in a right relationship with God*", a
state of 'being fully accepted by God'.

As the Bible declares that **no human being can achieve this state
through their own efforts**, it is the gift of God.

And the gift is both a positive and a negative. Negatively, we have our
sins forgiven, cancelled, covered, no longer held against us and positively
we are given the Holy Spirit to live in us and give us a new life and new
desires, God's desires.

Righteousness comes through the cross and the Spirit.
And it becomes ours through faith,
through putting our trust in Jesus Christ and following him.

**An "oak of righteousness" is another word for a fully committed
Christian man or woman.**

As I said, we cannot achieve righteousness through our own efforts.
Which is why we are "a PLANTING of the LORD"

- It is THE LORD who sows the seed.
- It is THE LORD who causes it to grow.
- It is THE LORD who makes it righteous.

It is all HIS doing. **A Christian is a person who allows God into their
life to work HIS will.**

(2)

And so to the 3 "P"'s on the Bookmark:

-We are called to be the Lord's PERSON: an oak of righteousness

-We are called to be the Lord's PLANTING

-And, third, we are called to be the Lord's PRIDE.

Isaiah 61 v 3 says, '**for the DISPLAY of his SPLENDOUR**'

We are the Lord's SHOWCASE. '*For the DISPLAY*' the verse says.

The truth is NOTHING gives God so much pleasure as his people LIVING AS THEY OUGHT TO LIVE.

Living righteously.

Living so the church is a beacon of shining light of truth and love and compassion and faith.

Living "For the display of HIS splendour"

An oak tree cannot go unnoticed. It is too prominent.

But not all oak trees are beautiful:

Some have been hit by lightning and though still standing, are dead; others are covered in ivy and are being strangled by the ivy and its life sapped; others were planted where there is not enough water and have never matured properly.

BUT a fully mature oak tree, in full leaf, in the middle of a great park is a wonder to behold and everyone remarks favourably.

We are to be those THE LORD takes pride in and is proud of.

AND THIS is our calling and goal. It is our witness.

To stand tall in our faith so all will notice and admire and say, "*I want to be like that too!*"

I am going away and won't be with you anymore but don't stop being who you are meant to be:

**OAKS of RIGHTEOUSNESS,
a PLANTING of the LORD,
for the DISPLAY of his SPLENDOUR**

Isaiah 61 v3

May God help you to be these three things for many years to come.

AMEN.