

Beauty for Ashes: The Exchanged Life - Isaiah 61

Sermon

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[0 : 00] The message tonight is about the exchanged life, the transferred life. And Isaiah 61, it reads from verse 1, The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek.

He hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all that mourn, to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness, that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified.

Let us pray. Lord, we thank you for your word and our gathering together unto it. Lord, for all the graces you give unto us. Lord, for all your mercies and for the faithfulness that is new every morning.

Lord, we thank you for it. And Lord, minister, we pray, by your spirit, through your word, let it speak to every heart. And may we take action thereupon.

We pray in Jesus' precious name. Amen. A story of ashes, of beauty. And here's a bright verse, verse 3.

[1 : 34] It speaks volumes of the work of God in the soul of man, the hope that grace can bring to our world. And here's good tidings, glad news.

Here's hope for the brokenhearted. God gives liberty to the captives. And here is a blessing for your soul. Let's take a closer look at verse 3.

It tells of our Lord, he has come to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness, that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified.

For some it can seem that life itself is like ashes. For some it can seem that life itself is like ashes. A broken world at times, isn't it? So much that we could think of hardness, of tough things.

There's sorrow, there's pain, there's difficulty, there's faded hopes and losses, shattered dreams and relationships. And some carry a heaviness deep down inside from the grind of lost trials.

[2 : 48] It can be something we can all have that touches our lives from time to time. And it can be the weight of guilt and shame. And yet into this world of weeping, the Lord steps in.

And he brings these words of glad hope that we can take heart in. His promise of comfort for the soul. And God's heart is here. You see the heart of God in these words.

If we would just dwell on these words, Isaiah 61.3, think about the promises of God, of God's heart. His heart to lift the broken, to anoint the weary.

And there's a purpose here too. That our lives might bring him the glory, ultimately. And so these words, it tells us like a transfer, this exchange. This, if you like, I suppose you could think of it as a kind of shift.

A shift, a swap, a switch, a replacement of these kind of different truths here. And it tells here of this exchange of beauty for ashes, of joy for mourning, of praise for heaviness.

[3 : 59] This transfer and the ultimate purpose is to bring our Lord God the glory. And it's the story of redemption, you could think of it too. Right here, God takes our brokenness and he transforms us into his very own precious people.

There's hope here for every soul. His promise. Notice our Lord, it tells, comes to those that mourn in Zion. Now Zion speaks naturally of God's own people.

The promise here is for those who belong to God. Those who are in Zion. The people of God. Those who belong to God. Who find themselves in seasons of sorrow.

And in the context, of course, Isaiah is speaking to the exiles. They're returning from Babylon. They've had this hard time now. Their homeland, as they come back, is in ruins. Their hearts are heavy after this time of captivity. And the message here is that our Lord ministers to the brokenhearted. He is near. It tells us in Psalm 34, 18, The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart, and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.

[5 : 13] God knows your tears, your regrets, your loss. And here is where God can do a work in each one of us, by his grace. And it's how God works, isn't it? It tells us that God will appoint unto them these truths.

Appoint unto them. To give unto them. Beauty for ashes. This word appoint means to set or establish with purpose. It's like a king would establish something.

Appoint. It's a decree. A royal edict. And it's a purposeful appointment. In other words, God's taking some intentional action here. An appointment.

And then it says he gives. The word give is a generous bestowal. A gift freely given. It's the grace of God, isn't it? To give. His gracious intervention. And notice it's he that does it.

He appoints. He gives. He initiates it. It's like salvation, isn't it? Really, truly, it's by his hand. From his hand. And as our Lord stood up in the synagogue in Nazareth, he read Isaiah 61.

[6 : 17] The first two verses there. He tells how that he's been anointed. That he's come to bring liberty and bind the broken in heart and bring healing.

And we see that he fulfills it. And he says in Luke 4, 21. Today, this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing. Think of Christ, the anointed one, as he is sent to bind up the brokenhearted.

He's sent to set the captives free. And of our Lord, we know it tells of him that he is acquainted with grief. He knows our pain. He sees within. He's the man of sorrows.

And it's at his cross we see this wonderful exchange happens. He takes our sin and sorrow and he gives us his righteousness and joy. He rose from the dead, showing his redeeming power.

And it's not a work of man, of human effort. It's a miracle of grace. All of these truths that we're just going to touch on tonight. And we see that God delights in transforming our mess into a masterpiece.

[7 : 20] It says in Psalm 147, 3. He healeth the broken in heart and bindeth up their wounds. Whatever your struggle, that it be for you as life has these different seasons.

It could be of shame, of grief, of despair. There's this wonderful exchange that God provides. He trades our sorrow for his splendour. And every exchange you could think of it is marked by four. So we see oil of joy for mourning. We see the beauty for ashes. We see the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.

So this word for, it signifies a complete replacement. It's a complete replacement. He takes the one away and he gives us the other. So we'll unpack that a little.

So notice firstly, it tells us he exchanges a pile of ashes. Now I've got some ashes here. I could cover myself with these ashes. And you can see they're dirty. Think of ashes.

[8 : 24] I know I've been in a house. Have you ever been in a house where it's been burnt down? Who's ever been in a house like that? I've seen it with a friend. I've seen it with our own house. I've seen a house like that.

And you walk in what used to be a beautiful house. And now it's just a pile of ashes. And you walk into that house and you crunch through the doorway. And everything's been destroyed.

And think of ashes. They're a symbol of grief, of ruin. And it's a graphic picture. When you walk into a house like that, a burnt out house, you crunch through the soot and the muck.

And what was once a beautiful house is just these, just charred ashes. Just, oh, you can smell it. You can smell the soot. And you think of, in the biblical sense, in Israel, the mourners would sit in the ashes.

Or sprinkle them on their heads. I could put this bucket over my head. But I won't demonstrate it quite as graphically as that. But you think of this sign of despair, of just desolation, isn't it?

[9 : 26] And of, like, loss and lack. And this public sign of these charred embers, burnt remains, charcoal, useless soot, and fragments of destruction, of loss.

And ashes can be a sombre thing, can't they? When you think, I know we've got some ashes in our yard because we had a bonfire with some wood. And you think of what it was, and now it's just destruction and loss, isn't it?

It's these flakes, these fragments. They just lie grey and cold. And there's a nothingness. There's just nothing there. There's really no value to that, as much as I've put some of it in my garden, hoping it's going to be a bit useful for some plants.

But apparently ashes are good for some plants, but not for others. So the point is that ashes can be just a nothingness, just a smell. These remnants of what once was, of what was consumed, and now it's in ruins, it's devastation.

And in contrast to that, we see beauty. Now this word beauty, and I had some help here from a, I just washed my hands now after the ashes, and one of my friends here gave me the idea, and it says that there's an exchange of those ashes, beauty for ashes.

[10:45] And you think this word beauty, this word beauty is, it's got a picture of like a crown. Okay? This word beauty, it speaks of like a crown. Think of the ashes now being replaced with a crown.

That's the picture of it, isn't it? From the ashes to the crown. So he replaces the ashes, he takes them away, and he comes and he places the crown, if you like, the crown of this beauty upon our head.

And the word beauty, it relates in God's word, as I say, to like a crown. So like a crown of royalty, of priesthood, of celebration. You see that in Exodus 28 verse 2, Esther 6, 6 through 11.

This picture of the crown, this beautiful crown. Now, of course, this crown, if I was to truly demonstrate it, would be golden, and it'd be full of jewels and sparkling emeralds and such things, of diamonds.

This would be a glorious crown. I know when I was a youngster, I had a time where my folk were looking around London, and where we lived in England at the time, and we went to the Tower of London, and had the display there of the king's jewels and the crowns and the orbs and whatnot, the different ornaments and the beauty of the jewellery and the vestments and everything.

[12:05] You can think of this crown, if you could truly picture it, as a glorious crown, as a beautiful crown. And so the point is that God takes the charred remains of our lives, and he replaces them with beauty, with a crown.

He crowns us with glory, with his glory, and he gives to us his honour and identity. Our Lord took our ashes, if you like, so that sin and brokenness, our desolation, the destruction of what sin has made of our life, just a pile of ashes.

And he comes to us, and he says, Here, a crown, a crown of glory, a crown of beauty to you. He gives us his righteousness, a crown of honour. It's a great exchange, really, isn't it?

We see in 2 Corinthians 5.21, For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

What an exchange, what a transfer. What a deal. This is a deal that you cannot refuse. That our sin and his righteousness, that we swap places as it happens at the cross.

[13:11] He took our sin, our shame, our sorrow. He gives us his righteousness, his honour, his peace. Let go of your ashes, alright? Just don't carry the ashes anymore.

Chuck them out. Let go of your ashes, whether it be guilt or pain or heaviness. And surrender them to him and receive his beauty. Receive that crown, that glorious crown.

Receive the beauty. God offers us such a swap, a switch, a change, a shift. And next up, God offers, secondly, the oil of joy for mourning.

The oil of joy for mourning. For grief, he gives gladness. Mourning, it speaks of a deep sorrow. Some would stay there, stuck there in this state of grief.

This pity party that never ends. This crouching in a pain that they cannot let go. Overcome, overwhelmed in a grief that never subsides. You see, some, their lives are in this hardness, this bitterness, this sadness, this valley that they never seem to rise out from.

[14:17] And there's people like that. The bitterness that never seems to end. A heartache that never stops. A sorrow, a bruised spirit. Fractured, hurting. A chill of despair.

We see this mourning, this picture of someone who's in grief and desperation. And this verse tells us, it is a promise for you, that God can turn things around.

Amen? God can turn things around. He can exchange the mourning, as in the grief, for the oil of joy. The oil of joy. Not some plastic fake kind of smile that we might paint, but a true joy.

A true joy. That floods our soul. A joy that replaces that bruised spirit. And this verse tells us the way through. We see here this face that was once glistening with tears.

Glistening with tears. It's now shining with the oil of joy. It's a picture of this anointing of joy of oil that was applied. Now it's shimmering with this glow.

[15:21] With this radiance. This shining joy. A real joy. A face beaming now. It's been anointed with oil. This picture of anointing with oil.

A picture of blessing and of grace. And there's healing here. There's restoration. Think of the work of God in your soul. There's a deep-seated joy that happens. There's that grief that we know that we're cut up and convicted of our sin.

There's angst. There's mourning. There's weeping. And then this glistening with joy of the anointing of oil upon our faces. Beaming now.

A freshness. A blessing. Of grace. And there's healing here. Of restoration. This deep-seated joy. The joy of my salvation it talks about. Doesn't it? The joy of my salvation.

There's a release here. There's new life here. That we know in Christ. And the oil is pictured. We see in references here and there. Of a picture of divine favour.

[16:20] It's the oil. It's like a celebration. It's a reception of joy. It's the oil of joy. It was for anointing. So when you had a guest or a feast.

A coronation. A crowning. When we get the crown. When someone was crowned. When there's a coronation. There's this blessing. There was oil. And there's a consecration of the priest.

Of the king. Of the guests. This oil was poured out. And oil is sometimes used as a picture of a healing balm. It brings soothing and comfort. We know that in Psalm 23.

He anoints my head with oil. It brings soothing. There's a word joy here. That also. It speaks of a vibrant gladness. The oil of joy. It speaks of a vibrancy of gladness.

And brother, sister. Where is true joy? It's in his presence. It's in his presence. The joy of God's presence. Just the joy of Jesus. The joy of our salvation.

[17:18] It's Jesus, isn't it? And we know that joy is a fruit of the Holy Spirit. Hebrews 1.9. It talks about the oil of gladness. The oil. Speaks of an anointing.

A supernatural empowerment. Nehemiah 8.10. It says, The joy of the Lord is your strength. No matter how deep your grief. And hey, even as believers.

Believers can have depression. Believers can have mental health challenges. Believers can still have the frailty of the flesh. Of the mind. Of the spirit. Believers can still get overwhelmed.

With life circumstances. And heartaches. And heartaches. And hurts. Yet, in all of that. The joy of the Lord is your strength. Nehemiah 8.10. Take that to heart.

No matter how deep your grief. No matter how heavy the weight. The load. The burden. That God's spirit can anoint you. And there's an anointing with joy.

[18:12] That endures. And God lifts us above our circumstances. I love Psalm 30 verse 11. It says, Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing. Thou hast put off my sackcloth.

And girded with me with gladness. So they used to have sackcloth and ashes. As we pictured. Maybe pouring that on your head. Rather than oil. Covering yourself with ashes.

And covering yourself with sackcloth. And then the picture of turning from the mourning into dancing. Yay! The complete opposite, isn't it?

Rather than mourning. Actually, yay! Praise! There's dancing. There's joy. There's jubilation. There's that joyfulness of spirit. And he's girded me with gladness.

He's clothed me with gladness. So God can give joy even in the darkest, the hardest of times. We can think of many examples through the scriptures. And even through biographies of famous believers.

[19:09] For example, consider the story of Mary Slessor. A Scottish missionary. She went to Nigeria. During the late 19th, early 20th centuries. And in Nigeria, Mary Slessor faced immense hardships.

Of disease. Of isolation. Cultural resistance. She worked with the ethnic people. And there was harsh conditions there. There was limited resources. And she confronted dangerous wildlife.

Tropical illnesses. There's horrible society practices like the killing of twins. And she passionately opposed these pagan things.

And sought to bring light. The light of the gospel. And in all of this, she radiated Christ. She radiated the joy of God. The love of God for these people.

And a deep faith in this unwavering commitment to her mission. And she was able to spread hope. Even in the face of adversity. It's like there was a joyfulness there.

[20 : 08] Even in what was such a stressful and challenging mission field. So we've seen the wonder of beauty for us. We see the oil of joy for mourning.

And thirdly, we see the next exchange is this garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. The spirit of heaviness. Think of the spirit of heaviness.

Maybe it's this crushing despair. This weight that we feel like we can't manage. Weighing down the soul. You could think of depression. We think of this heaviness.

We think of this garment, if you like, as it were, that Satan comes and closes with this garment of heaviness. Oh, it's heavy. This heaviness. This spirit.

This spirit of heaviness. You know. Got this heaviness. This shroud of heaviness. This shroud. This weight. This sense of depression.

[21 : 05] Of a head bowed. Of shoulders slumped. Of regret. Of grief. Of spiritual burden. It makes you think of storm clouds. Of hopelessness.

Of despair. Of oppression. Of failure. Of giving up. In place of the spirit of heaviness. God offers the garment of praise. Now he doesn't just put the garment of praise over the spirit of heaviness.

He takes off the spirit of heaviness. All right. It's for. It's in replacement of. It's replacing. Right.

Right. And so. I've got this wonderful garment here.

It's not a very manly looking garment. But if you overlook that for a moment. Just imagine this is a royal garment. It's a beautiful garment. It's the garment.

Of royalty. It's a royal robe. You think of the garment. Of praise. And you think of that spirit of heaviness. That spirit of heaviness. That drags us down. And makes us feel miserable.

[22 : 04] In place of that. God gives us the garment of praise. All right. Imagine this garment.

Maybe it would be like Joseph's coat. Of many colors. You think of this garment. A new set of clothes. You get a new set of clothes.

I know we've been talking amongst friends. About dress code. This is the dress code. Now don't come like this next Sunday though. But there's this garment of praise. All right. There's this garment of praise.

Amen. And it's tailor made. Just for you. It's a new set of clothes. Just made just for you. That the angels have fitted you out. With this garment. This cloak.

It's something that envelops. And defines you. Think of this garment. Of praise. Think of that. In other words. It's a powerful state of being. Isn't it? That we are. As we put on this garment.

And your shoulders lift. And you know. This joy. Unspeakable. And full of glory. It makes your shoulders lift. It makes your breath deepen. And your steps grow lighter.

[23 : 01] As if the soul has shared. An invisible anchor. No more this spirit. Of heaviness. That's gone. Now there's a garment of praise. In its place. That's the picture of it.

And it's like this joy of faith. Isn't it? This garment. That it gives to us. And this sensation. Of joy. Deep down within. In the soul. As you're standing in this meadow.

And you're hearing the birds singing. And you're seeing the wonders of creation. Of the sunrise.

And you know that he hath clothed me. He hath clothed me. And Isaiah 61.10.

I will greatly rejoice in the Lord. My soul shall be joyful in my God. For he hath clothed me. With the garments of salvation. He hath covered me.

With the robe. Of righteousness. As a bridegroom. Decketh himself with ornaments. What a picture. As a bridegroom. As a bride.

[23 : 58] Adorneth herself with jewels. Here is the dress code. Of the saints. The garment of praise. Amen. Don't you want that? Don't you want that? To hang that in your wardrobe.

Better still to wear it. Amen. And he takes out tattered rags. And he replaces them. Doesn't he? It's interesting how the prodigal got a new outfit. Isn't it? In Luke 15.

What did the father say? This is Luke 15.22. But the father said. Bring forth the best robe. For my son. Bring forth the best robe.

And put it on him. And put a ring on his hand. And shoes on his feet. And the spirit of heaviness is cast off. Like sackcloth.

Replaced with a garment of praise. Think of it. You can wear that garment of praise. And you don't have to just put it on on a Sunday. When you come and sing. But you can have a garment of praise that you wear.

[24 : 52] 24-7. You don't even take it off at night. You can have songs in the night as well. Amen. And it's a wonderful joy to think of that garment of praise. And it's really.

It's a picture of God's promise. Isn't it? To heal. To redeem. To adorn his people. Turning mourning into dancing. Yay. Yeehaw. There's glory in Christ.

There's freedom. There's joy. There's joy deep down. And he takes our shame. And he turns it into glory. That's the wonder of who he is. Isn't it? See Romans 15.

13. Now the God of hope. Fill you with all joy and peace in believing. That you may abound in hope. And through the power of the Holy Ghost. Imagine. As I'm trying to picture it.

I know I'm being perhaps a little out there with it. But it's a picture isn't it? Of the radiance of the royal robe that you're garbed with. This robe of righteousness. His righteousness.

[25 : 47] That he clothes you with. And you've got these threads. These new threads of joy. Of gratitude. Of thankfulness. Of rejoicing. Of revival. And you're glowing.

You're shimmering. With these garments that are just dazzling white. It talks about the fine linen of the saints. In glory we're going to have this dazzling new set of clothes in glory.

The fine linen of the saints. Representing the righteousness. And we think of this garment of praise. It's the melody of worship. Of thanksgiving. And it says of this garment of praise.

The word praise here is for cheerful vocal praise. Let it out. Sing up. Sing out. It says in Psalm 34. I will bless the Lord at all times.

His praise shall continually be in my mouth. I don't think you can come and switch it on and switch it off. Only sing at church. Sing all the time. There's no limit to your praise.

[26 : 42] His praise shall how often? Sing it. Continually be. Continually be. In my mouth. And it's not just a change of mood. It's a change of identity, isn't it? That we take off that spirit of heaviness.

And he gives us the garment of praise. And we wear it all the time. By his grace. It's not a change of mood that's just temporary. Praise becomes our covering. It's our testimony.

It's our identity. And Hebrews 13.15 talks about the sacrifice of praise. That we give it continually.

Even when it's costly. So the sacrifice of praise. You praise even when it's a sacrifice to praise.

Even when it's hard. And praise overcomes despair, doesn't it? Brother, sister, we choose to praise. We choose that. We say, I'm going to praise no matter what. Even though I'm in pain.

Even though there's trouble. And be clothed in God's strength. So there's this great exchange. And it goes on to tell us of our glorious purpose in our text, again.

[27 : 40] Fruit in his season.

What a picture, again, of this tree that's sturdy and strong. Steadfast. Vibrant. Flourishing. Fruitful. God tells of the saved as like a tree.

Unshaken by the drought. A tree planted where its roots can draw from the water. I know where I live, there was one time I planted maybe 200 trees.

I think I've got about 10 that have made it. Because our sheep ate most of the other trees. Even though I tried to stop the sheep from eating them, they just couldn't help themselves.

And I know the neighbour was telling me, make sure you plant the trees down in the gully. Because there is where they're going to make it. That's where they're going to make it. And it's where the tree that's planted by the river, the tree that's planted by the water, is the tree that's going to flourish.

[29 : 04] We think of this tree, this picture of Psalm 1, a tree planted by the rivers of water.

Jeremiah 17 has a like reference to, talks about a tree planted by the waters, that spreadeth out her roots by the river.

Shall not see when heat cometh, but a leaf shall be green, and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit. The stance of the planting of the Lord.

It says that these trees of righteousness are going to be of the planting of the Lord. It shows God's initiative here, doesn't it? We need the master gardener to plant us, to nurture us, to cultivate us.

He has planted us. The planting of the Lord. Why? That he might be glorified. That's the ultimate, isn't it? That our Lord would be glorified. Isn't that the ultimate object of our life?

That he might be glorified? And here is our joy, brother, sister. Here is our glad privilege. That he might be glorified. And we think, how let our light shine. So let our light shine before men that they may see our good works and glorify our Father which is in heaven.

[30 : 09] That our lives would be a living sermon. Isaiah 61.3, really it's a prophecy of our Lord. We see as he stood up in Nazareth, as he stood there in the synagogue in Luke 4, it tells how he says, today this is fulfilled in your hearing.

It says, the Lord hath anointed me. And we know, who was he? The Christ. A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. That we might have his joy. He wore a crown.

Not a crown of gold. Not a crown of gold. But a crown of thorns. And he took our sin. The heaviness of it.

The weight of it. The full weight. He bore the brunt of it. The penalty of it. That we might wear a crown of life. Think of Jesus. He's the anointed one. He is the one who binds up broken hearts still. He sets captives free still. Can we lay our ashes down? Don't clutch the ashes as if they're something. Oh, I've got to hold on to those ashes.

[31 : 17] No. Lay your ashes down. Lay your ashes down. Be finished with them. And receive that picture there of that beauty.

The picture of this glorious golden crown, if you could imagine it. Receive the beauty instead of the ashes. To receive the joy of the Lord. It's your strength.

Receive his joy. And think, how can I be anointed with that oil of gladness? Gladness. How can I know that joy? That true joy that a believer can have by faith.

By faith, you can have joy. Even though you might not feel it sometimes. You don't always have to feel joyful to have joy. It says, in thy presence is fullness of joy.

Psalm 16, 11. And James says, strangely enough, in the trials, count it all joy. The trials, even then, knowing that God is working, he's good.

[32 : 14] And our story, no matter how broken, becomes really a living sermon of his grace, doesn't it? Our Lord calls us to put on. Put on the garment. Yes. Yes. Oh, I want that garment, Lord.

Put it on me, Lord. The garment of praise. I want that. Praise is a choice. Not a feeling. Put it on. Hey, Lord, help me to wear it today.

Help me to wear that garment of praise. It's deliberate. Put it on. There's verses there of talking of putting off, putting on. Put off the spirit of heaviness.

Put on the garment of praise. Put on the armour of God. The armour of light. Put it on. It's deliberate. He tells you to. He commands you to. Put on the garment of praise.

And it's a choice, not a feeling. It says Psalm 100. Enter into his gates with thanksgiving. Come into his courts with praise. Obey God and do it.

[33 : 10] Obey God and do it. Start each day with worship. God helping you. You don't have to have any particular instruments necessarily or even music playing.

But you can enter into his courts with praise in your own bedroom, can't you? In your own lounge room. And start the day with worship even when it's a sacrifice. Sing his praises aloud.

You think of praise, it shifts our perspective, doesn't it? Now we can shift from the spirit of heaviness. We can shift from the ashes, the mourning, the grief, and find the joy, the gladness, the worship, the praise.

And it shifts our perspective from the spirit of heaviness. Hey, we all have those moments when, okay, I'm wearing this old thing again.

I'm wearing this horrible thing again. The spirit of heaviness. I seem to wear it so often in my life. And he says, trade it for this, the garment of glory, of praise.

[34 : 11] And it's like David. We can see that praise breaks the spirit of heaviness. David did it. He told himself. He spoke to himself. And it's interesting, you look in the Psalms.

And oftentimes the Psalms are saying, Hey soul, this is wrong. Stop acting like an idiot. That's the Andrew Craig version. Hey soul, stop being a whinger and start praising.

And that's what David is saying here. He's saying, Psalm 42. Why art thou cast down, O my soul? Why art thou disquieted in me? Hope thou in God. For I shall yet praise him for the help of his counsellors.

He often spoke, the Psalmist references where he speaks to his soul. Say, soul, get your act together. Come on, Andrew, get your act together. And David praised God, didn't he? Despite his afflictions. We think how God wants us to be like a tree. To draw our life from him. A tree of righteousness. The fruitfulness comes because you're his tree. He's made you.

[35 : 13] He's planted you. He wants you to be fruitful. He wants you to bear fruit. And it tells in John 15, 8. Our Lord says, Herein is my Father glorified that you bear much fruit. Think of your transformed life.

It's a testimony, isn't it? To the grace of God. Your life is a testimony for God's work in you. Your words, your actions. You're a witness of his grace day by day.

God can transform. Beauty can come. From ashes to beauty. From mourning to joy.

You can anoint your face with joy. The oil of gladness. And from heaviness to praise. Get rid of that one. Don't put that back in your wardrobe.

Wear the garment of praise, all right? Think of it. I'm just trying to be graphic here. To drill this down. To instill this in you. That you can have that transformed life. And you can know God can transform you.

[36 : 16] Ashes to beauty. Mourning to joy. Heaviness to praise. And our lives can bring him glory. That's the ultimate. We think of the oil. The garment.

It points to the Holy Spirit's work. Our transformation. It's for his glory. That he might be glorified. That's the point of the verse there, isn't it? Verse 3. The ultimate of all of it.

Is that he will get all the glory. All of the glory. It says in Ephesians 1 verse 6. To the praise of the glory of his grace. Wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. It's all to the praise and the glory of his grace.

That's Ephesians 1 verse 6. And 1 Peter 1. It talks about trials. It talks about praise and honour and glory. Psalm 30 verse 5.

It says weeping may endure for a night. But joy cometh in the morning. Have you ever had one of those nights? Perhaps weeping may endure for a night. Oh no. But joy cometh in the morning.

[37 : 16] Friends here tonight. Can I invite you to trust him. To lay down your ashes. Your guilt. Your shame. Your pain. Trust Jesus to crown you.

With his beauty. His glory. His grace. To anoint you with joy. To clothe you with praise. What an exchange. God sees our brokenness.

He takes our ashes. Our failures. Our losses. Our shame. All the charred embers of what once was. And now it's just a pile of ashes. And God can work even in our seasons of heaviness.

There's this divine exchange. Beauty for ashes. Joy for mourning. Praise for despair. And you can be planted as a tree of righteousness.

Planted by his grace. Bearing fruit for his glory. Brother, sister. Brother, sister. Your ashes are not the end of your story. It can feel sometimes like life is a bit like this pile of ashes.

[38 : 17] Like a burnt out house. But that's not the end of your story, is it? That Jesus is here for us. And he takes the raw materials of our life.

Even when they feel like it's ashes. And we can become God's masterpiece. We can be like that strong tree. Like an oak. Withstanding the storms. By God's planting.

It can be a living testimony of his power. His redeeming power. So, brother, sister. Rise today.

Crown with his beauty. Anointed with joy. Clothed in praise. Planted in Christ.

And know that once where there were ashes, God gives beauty. Once where there was sorrow, he's given us joy. Once where there was heaviness, he's clothed me with praise.

And think, Lord, where we have sat in ashes, crown us with your beauty. Where we have mourned, anoint us with your joy. And where we've been weighed down with heaviness, clothe us with the garment of praise.

[39 : 19] Plant us as trees of righteousness, bearing fruit for your glory. And may your spirit empower us to live for your glory. And that you would shine as a testimony of the grace of God.

It tells us in Ephesians 3, verse 20. Now unto him that is able to do exceeding, abundantly, above all that we ask or think.

He gives us more than we can even pray for. Amen. He's able to do exceeding, abundantly, above all that we ask or even think that God would give us. He's able to give us more.

According to the power that worketh in us. Unto him be glory. Glory, glory, glory to our God. Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end.

Amen. A great exchange can happen. Think of it. Of this shift. Of this swap. Why would we want to hang on to the ashes? Let it go. Why would we want to hang on to the spirit of heaviness?

[40 : 24] Let it go. Why would we want to hang on to the mourning, the grieving, the grief, the sorrow? Let it go. Find rather the beauty, the crown of beauty.

Find the joy that is his joy. Find the glory that ultimately will be that tree. Let us pray. Lord, we thank you, dear Lord, for this wonderful shift that can happen, this exchange.

Lord, we thank you most especially, Lord, that you take our sin and you give us righteousness.

Lord, you take our guilt and you give us forgiveness.

Lord, we thank you that we can know this clothing, this new set of clothes that comes as we wear, really the garment of salvation, the road of righteousness, Lord.

And it's all by your giving. It's all by your manufacturing, Lord, not of ours. Lord, we thank you for it that each one can know that joy, unspeakable and full of glory.

[41 : 33] Lord, we pray each one might know the joy that it is to know as the prodigal came in his rags, in his tattered rags, in his smelly rags. He came stinking like a pig.

And you, as represented there, embraced him and kissed him and loved on him and gave him the best robe.

And we know the best robe really is Jesus. We know, Lord, that it's you to be clothed with your righteousness, Lord, to be clothed upon. Lord, to know that wonderful joy, that garment of praise. Lord, when we know you, we know our hearts just brim over with praise. We just can't help it but to praise you. Lord, we give you all the glory and honour.

We pray each one might know that joy of salvation. Sometimes we've got to say, Lord, restore it unto me. Restore that joy of my salvation.

[42 : 36] Sometimes it gets a bit dim. Lord, help us to refresh it. Clothe us again, Lord, with that garment of praise. We praise you in Jesus' name. Amen.