

**Good News to the Oppressed  
Criminal Justice  
Third Sunday in Advent, Year B  
OVERVIEW OF TOPIC**

**Focus Text: Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11**

“The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me; [the LORD] has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners...”

**Scripture Commentary by David C. Forbes, Sr., Retired Pastor of Christian Faith Baptist Church, Raleigh**

“Isaiah 61:8-11 gives clear indication that the Lord loves justice and justice advocacy. And the Lord hates robbery and wrongdoing and promises recompense appropriate to such carelessness. Those who proffer justice are promised by the Lord an everlasting covenant and blessings. Righteousness involves active care and love for God’s people who include the captive and the oppressed.”

**Pastoral Reflection by David C. Forbes, Sr., Retired Pastor of Christian Faith Baptist Church, Raleigh**

“Extending the good news to the captives, then, is not just a good idea, it is an imperative... To what extent does Advent speak not only to those who can smell the advent wreath and hear the joyful bells and carols, but to those also whom the Lord appears to favor: the oppressed, the wounded and the captive?”

**Personal Vignette by Rev. Otis Hardy**

“In June of 1979, I was sentenced to two life sentences for armed robbery, even though I did not carry a gun. The conviction for armed robbery carried more weight and heavier sentencing. The sentence was for two life sentences without eligibility for parole until 2038. Proverbs 19:21 says ‘Many plans are in a man’s heart, but it is the Lord’s purpose that prevails.’ I now know that God has a purpose for each one of our lives...”

**Key Fact**

Over the past 2 decades, state spending on incarceration increased 127%, while spending on higher education only increased 21%.