

ALL ACCESS ADVENT

The prophet tells us this is a year of favor from our God. He longs to bring liberty to captives and release to prisoners. Most importantly God wants to bring healing to the broken hearted. To access God we must await His magnificent blessings. This is not easy.

When we look around, many do not feel this is a year of favor, but rather they feel captive and imprisoned by what is going on with restrictions. Lives have been changed and many do not experience it as being for the better. So many want access to us and demand our attention. Probably the craziest for me are the constant emails offering me pet insurance. I do not have or want a pet. I love animals, but that kind of responsibility is beyond me. There was another email that told me my horoscope is what I make it. Seriously? Life is what we make it. Whether we have a horoscope or not, we have a heritage and a lineage from God and that is what matters. So how do we get to the real voice of the prophet?

When I was teaching catechism, I was assigned to third grade. I was preparing the students for the weekend Mass by going through the readings that would be proclaimed. One was from the Prophet Isaiah. I asked the class if they knew what a prophet was. One child who raised his hand had never participated before, so I called upon him. He said a prophet was when you get more than what you pay for. I have never forgotten that definition. We will get more than we realize when we follow the prophet. We must ask ourselves what is keeping us from the message? To get to that access we must overcome obstacles. To overcome obstacles we must see this as a priority.

I ordered some things online this year. Some items I ordered were in keeping with traditions and some were purchased out of necessity. When one of the boxes arrived, it did not contain everything on the packing slip. I launched myself into making it right. I went to the company's website only to find no number to call or to contact. Their correspondence was done only by email. So I composed myself and wrote a very nice email explaining that even the carton size they were shipped in could not handle the two things I had ordered. It was too small of a box. I sent the email and got an immediate response that in 72 business hours I would get a reply. Realistically that is maybe a week because it said working business hours. Day after day I kept waiting for an email with the resolution for which I was looking. Nothing. I also called a customer service line about another order and was put on hold. The recording informed me it would be 27 minutes until the next agent could assist me. All of this gets discouraging. All of this keeps me from the joy of the purchase.

God longs to give us more than we ever expected. He longs to offer us healing, liberty and release. So often we are enslaved by the things of this world. We are broken by the situations we live in and the expectations of others. Accessing God and allowing Him to access us involves waiting patiently in the stillness. Real imprisonment often manifests itself in hurtful words we lock up inside ourselves. Brokenness becomes the pain we won't let go of, and we are captive and captivated by things that can never give us eternal happiness.

The year of favor is real when we realize the prophet is talking about everything going on in our hearts, not in society. The interior journey makes these moments resonate. God wants us to get there; He does not want to put us on hold to wait and He will not make it difficult to access Him. This week the heart is the destination and His blessings are the foundation. May we realize this is a time of favor from our God when we allow Him access to our captivity, our brokenness and our own **imprisonment**.



Father John Ouper