

**Isaiah 52:7-10 (The Nativity of Our Lord—Christmas Day)**

**“Peace with God Through Our Lord Jesus Christ”**

**Lutheran Church of Our Redeemer, Enfield, CT**

**December 25, 2021**

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Our text for Christmas Day is the Old Testament lesson recorded in Isaiah 52:

<sup>7</sup> How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, “Your God reigns.” <sup>8</sup> The voice of your watchmen—they lift up their voice; together they sing for joy; for eye to eye they see the return of the LORD to Zion. <sup>9</sup> Break forth together into singing, you waste places of Jerusalem, for the LORD has comforted his people; he has redeemed Jerusalem. <sup>10</sup> The LORD has bared his holy arm before the eyes of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.

The pastor of a church in a small town was ordering a sign for their outdoor manger scene. The company needed to know the dimensions and the words for the sign, but the pastor wasn’t sure. Since time was of the essence, the company suggested that the pastor send the information to them by way of messenger as soon as he could. The next day a Western Union employee was shocked to see this message come across the wire: “For unto us a child is born. 8 feet long, 3 feet wide.”

As shocking as that misunderstood message was for the Western Union agent, it is equally and even more so amazing and wondrous (and perhaps shocking as well) that unto us a Child a born, to us a Son is given. When we receive this Good News message again this Christmas, how do we react? For Christians, the message of Christmas brings great joy!

“How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, “Your God reigns.”” This is how our Christmas Old Testament reading begins. By means of speeding messengers, God’s people (here called Zion) received the announcement of their

deliverance. At the exact time needed, these messengers have appeared with their tidings of good news, a news bulletin of Gospel. This message originated with God, and refers to the blessing that alone is good, the salvation of sinful mankind. The Lord has made true His *Here I am!* God has come to save and deliver His people. This salvation finds its origin in God and comes from Him alone. He dispenses this salvation, for it is a salvation from all those things that brings God's wrath against people—sin, original sin, sins of thought, word, and actions, sins of not doing the good we ought.

The appearance of these messengers of Good News upon the mountains around Jerusalem is a beautiful thing. These messengers cause peace to be heard because the message that they deliver has peace as its grand subject. It's not a peace which merely means the ceasing of hostilities among warring nations. This is the peace that only the Lord God can give to His people. This peace means the Lord no longer stands in a hostile relationship to His own people.

Liu Feng needed help. She couldn't deny it any longer. It was starting to affect all her relationships. Her marriage had ended in divorce five years ago. Then she alienated her children, Joseph and Joy, both of whom had moved out within the past year. She hardly saw them anymore. Now she had succeeded in hurting her best friend, Carol. All Carol had suggested was that Liu get counseling. Carol was right. Liu knew that her life was coming apart at the seams. But she couldn't help herself. She felt all torn up inside.<sup>1</sup>

What Liu didn't know was that her internal disunion was only a hint at a much greater division between her and God. Her internal disconnection was but an image of her separation

---

<sup>1</sup> Illustration from Jacob A. O. Preus, *Just Words* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2000), 145.

from God. All people have cut themselves off from God by their sin. We are an unruly people, bent on cutting ourselves off from the One who made us. We are unable to get along with one another, even with ourselves at times, because we can't get along with God. The real source of friction in our lives is our contention against God. We are separated from Him by our sins. We are at odds, at war, with Him, according to our sinful nature.

The message of Christmas, however, brings peace where there was no peace with God. God consented to take to Himself human flesh and dwell among us. In the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ, in His birth among us, there is the announcement to all the world of beautiful Good News and salvation which brings peace. Take a listen: "And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with fear. And the angel said to them, 'Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.' And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!'" (Luke 2:8-14).

Jesus, born for us to be our Savior, has brought peace to this world. Ironically, Christ brought this peace between sinners and God to us through violent suffering and death. Jesus placed Himself on the breach. The humble Child of Bethlehem endured internal peacelessness and agony in the Garden of Gethsemane praying, "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done." (Luke 22:42). He suffered violence at the hands of an angry crowd. On the cross, Jesus was torn away from His heavenly Father.

He suffered both external and internal conflict in our place. The result: He brought about peace between us and our heavenly Father.

This peace, of which the angels sang at that first Christmas, is so much more than a feeling or experience of tranquility. Jesus brings about the objective state of peace that goes beyond our experiences. It is a real peace no matter what feelings we might have at any given moment. Christ's gift of peace to sinners is like the declaration of peace between two warring parties. It is real and objective, even if some people don't feel particularly peaceful and continue to feel the effects of conflict. As Paul says, it is a peace "which surpasses all understanding" (Phil. 4:7). When we feel it, we rejoice in it as a gift from God through Jesus Christ our Lord. When we don't feel it, we rejoice that we are still, through our Lord Jesus Christ, at peace with God.

"The voice of your watchman—they lift up their voice; together they sing for joy." There is now every reason for shouting in jubilation. There is now every reason for us to be filled with a joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory (1 Peter 1:8). "The Lord has bared his holy arm before the eyes of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God." Jesus Christ, God the Son, rolled up His sleeves and went to the work of the cross for us. In His suffering and death, He showed the strength of His holiness as Jesus was our perfect sacrifice for sin, winning our everlasting peace with God. God the Son has delivered us from sin and won our peace. This is the heart of the message that Isaiah was proclaiming. It is the heart of the message of Christmas, the cross, and the empty tomb of Easter. In Christ, God has mended the breach. The peace that now exists between God and us doesn't depend on our perception or reflection of it. It is real and objective because Jesus our Prince of Peace made it real through His suffering on the cross.

“How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, ‘Your God reigns.’” This is the Christmas Gospel of peace and joy because our Savior was born for us so that He might bring the salvation of our God to all of us through His suffering, death, and resurrection. Rejoice always in the Christmas Gospel of peace! Celebrate God’s goodness to you in Christ! You are at peace with God through our Savior, now and forever. “Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it” (1 Thessalonians 5:23-24). Amen.