

Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, Amen.

¹ *“The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me, because the LORD has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; ² to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn, ³ to console those who mourn in Zion, to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified. ⁴ And they shall rebuild the old ruins, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the ruined cities, the desolations of many generations. ⁵ Strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, and the sons of the foreigner shall be your plowmen and your vinedressers. ⁶ But you shall be named the priests of the LORD, they shall call you the servants of our God. You shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, and in their glory you shall boast. ⁷ Instead of your shame you shall have double honor, and instead of confusion they shall rejoice in their portion. Therefore in their land they shall possess double; everlasting joy shall be theirs. ⁸ For I, the LORD, love justice; I hate robbery for burnt offering; I will direct their work in truth, and will make with them an everlasting covenant. ⁹ Their descendants shall be known among the Gentiles, and their offspring among the people. All who see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the posterity whom the LORD has blessed. ¹⁰ I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. ¹¹ For as the earth brings forth its bud, as the garden causes the things that are sown in it to spring forth, so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations.*

Text: Isaiah 61 A 12/11/16 1 Corinthians 9:16-23 Luke 3:3-14 Psalm 72 (Resp. Ps.: 85)
Hymns: 706, 712, 103, 707

JESUS CAME TO DELIVER US FROM OUR SINS!

Dear fellow believers in the Christchild,

At Christmas time we sometimes we hear from those who don't understand the real meaning of Christmas, "I wish there could truly be peace on earth." From God's Word this morning we're reminded that there **is** true peace on earth. It's found in the baby Jesus.

In the fourth chapter of Luke Jesus quotes these words from Isaiah in our text: *“The LORD has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD.”* Jesus then proclaimed to the people, *“Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing”* (fr. Lk. 4:18-21). So our text from Isaiah is a prophecy of Jesus coming into the world to be our Savior.

In our text Jesus speaks of those who *“mourn in Zion”* that is, of God's people mourning over our sins. *“Mourn”* in the original is a feeling of complete exhaustion under the weight of our sins. The psalmist says, *“When I kept silent”* (about my sins), *“my bones grew old through my groaning all the day long”* (32:3). His guilty conscience weighed heavily on him. Jesus speaks of *“ashes,”* which is a reference to the Jewish practice of wiping ashes on their forehead as their way of showing God sorrow over their sins. Jesus says this sorrow is carried to the point of giving us *“the spirit of heaviness,”* which in the original also means “a dimly burning wick.” A

person with *“the spirit of heaviness”* would be so troubled by his sins that he would feel as if his faith is as weak as a sputtering flame about to go out.

Jesus says He came *“to comfort all who mourn.”* The comfort spoken of here in the original includes not only **speaking** comforting words, but also **giving** comfort. Jesus not only tells us to be at peace, He takes away all of our sin and guilt and gives us His peace. *“Comfort, yes, comfort My people!” says your God. ‘Speak comfort to Jerusalem, and cry out to her, that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned’*” (Is. 40:1-2a).

On the first Christmas the angel told the shepherds, *“I bring you good tidings.”* In our text Jesus says the same thing: *“The LORD has anointed Me to preach good tidings.”* *“Good tidings”* in the original is also *“Good News”* – *“the Gospel.”* Jesus brings us *“good tidings”*– the *“Gospel”* message of our forgiveness and salvation in Him. That’s what Christmas is all about. The Son of God has come to save us from our sins!

Jesus says, *“The LORD has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the ... brokenhearted;”* literally from the original, those whose hearts are *“shattered in pieces.”* The psalmist says, *“The Lord is near to the brokenhearted, and saves those who are crushed in spirit”* (34:18). When we’re *“brokenhearted”* over our sins, Jesus, our Heavenly Physician forgives them all, lovingly binding the shattered pieces of our heart back together again. Our Savior soothes our troubled conscience with the healing balm of His forgiveness, telling us, *“Be happy, your sins are forgiven”* (Mt. 9:2).

The Apostle Paul confessed, *“I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the wishing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. For the good that I wish, I do not do; but I practice the very evil that I do not wish. ... Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?”* (Ro. 7:18-19, 24). As long as we’re on earth we’ll have our sinful flesh. Like Paul, we sometimes feel as though we’re captives of our sinful nature. Jesus says He has come *“to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound.”* The freedom pictured here in the original is the *“swift, soaring and diving flight of a bird.”* When Jesus said, *“It is finished”* on the cross, He forever destroyed sin’s ability to enslave us. We sin, but in Jesus **we’re not slaves to sin**. Jesus proclaims to us His *“good tidings”* of deliverance from our sins, sets our guilty conscience free, and makes our spirit soar like a bird in the heavens!

Jesus says that His *“good tidings”* make us *“trees of righteousness – the planting of the Lord.”* The psalmist says, *“If You, LORD, should mark iniquities”* (If God kept a record of all of our sins), *“O Lord, who could stand? But there is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared”* – held in awe! (Ps. 130:3-4). The *“good tidings”* Jesus brings us takes away all of our sin and guilt, and causes us to stand strong and confident in His forgiveness.

Jesus gives us some concrete illustrations to help us picture the message of the *“good tidings.”* He says that to those who mourn He gives *“ornaments”* (a beautiful headdress) and the *“oil of joy.”* This pictures times of celebration in Isaiah’s day. Jesus forgives us, wiping away the ‘ashes’ of our mourning over our sin. He assures us, *“I, even I, am the one who wipes out your transgressions for My own sake; and I will not remember your sins”* (Is. 43:25). Instead of *“the spirit of heaviness,”* Jesus has caused us to *“greatly rejoice in [Him].”* Remember *“the spirit of heaviness”* is the feeling that our faith is as weak as a dimly burning wick. In His Word God promises of Jesus, *“A bruised reed He will not break, and a dimly burning wick He will not extinguish”* (Is. 42:3a, NASB). Jesus strengthens us when we’re faint and causes us to *“greatly rejoice in [Him]”*!

Jesus says, *“The Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before **all** the nations.”* Jesus’ *“good tidings”* of deliverance from sin is for **everyone!** Jesus says, *“They shall rebuild the old ruins, ... the desolations of many generations.”* Jesus is speaking of **spiritual** rebuilding – rebuilding **spiritual Jerusalem**. The majority of the Jewish nation at Isaiah’s time had rejected God. What was once a strong body of believers now for the most part lay in ruins. The rebuilding would be a rebuilding of the Christian Church: the body of believers. Jesus says that this rebuilding would be accomplished through the small remnant of believing Jews, along with us believing gentiles: *“**Strangers** shall stand and feed your flocks, and the sons of the foreigner shall be your plowmen and your vinedressers. ... You shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, and in their glory you shall boast.”* Along with believing Jews, Jesus uses the devotion and the offerings of us believing gentiles in building up His New Testament Church.

Jesus says, *“I will direct their work in truth, and will make with them an everlasting covenant.”* After Isaiah’s time, the Jews were taken away from their homeland, Jerusalem, during the Babylonian Captivity. The small believing remnant among them clung to God’s promise of *“an everlasting covenant”* in the **spiritual** Jerusalem. They would always be a part of the spiritual Jerusalem: the body of believers. Jesus has made this *“everlasting covenant”* with all of us who believe in Him. Even though later God’s Old Testament people were in captivity in Babylon, and even though we New Testament people of God are in the ‘captivity,’ so to speak, of this sinful world, Jesus is keeping us as members of **His** kingdom who have received His salvation!

Jesus tells us, *“You shall be named the priests of the LORD.”* Peter tells us, *“You are ... a royal priesthood, ... that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light”* (1 Pet. 2:9). As Jesus’ *“priests”* He has commissioned you and me with the wonderful privilege of telling people about their forgiveness and salvation in Him! At this time of year that means telling people about the true meaning of Christmas.

What is our response to Jesus’ *“good tidings”* of deliverance from our sins? *“I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God.”* We rejoice because even though we are sinners, Jesus assures us that He has *“clothed [us] with the garments of salvation”* – *“covered [us] with the robe of righteousness.”* The same Jesus who binds up our broken heart and comforts us with His forgiveness clothes us in the robe of **His** righteousness. God no longer sees our sin but Jesus’ righteousness, and pronounces **you and me** righteous in His sight!

What a blessing from God that we understand the real meaning of Christmas. We have true peace on earth in the baby Jesus. “Dear Jesus, thank You that You came as the baby in the manger in Bethlehem to give Your life on the cross on Calvary and deliver us from our sins.”

Oh, then rejoice that through His Son God is with sinners now at one;
Made like yourselves of flesh and blood, Your brother is the eternal God.

What harm can sin and death then do? The true God now abides with you.
Let hell and Satan rage and chafe, Christ is your Brother--ye are safe.

Ye shall and must at last prevail; God's own ye are, ye cannot fail.
To God forever sing your praise With joy and patience all your days. Amen.

(TLH #103:3-4, 6)