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St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749

Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
March 9, 2014
2nd Sunday in Lent

Scripture Lessons: Hebrews 2:10-15; Passion: Gethsemane
Hymns: 358; 142:1-4; 163:1-6; 151:1

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord
and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: Isaiah 52:7-12

How beautiful upon the mountains
Are the feet of him who brings good news,
Who proclaims peace,
Who brings glad tidings of good things,
Who proclaims salvation,
Who says to Zion,
"Your God reigns!"

8 Your watchmen shall lift up their voices,
With their voices they shall sing together;
For they shall see eye to eye
When the LORD brings back Zion.

9 Break forth into joy, sing together,
You waste places of Jerusalem!
For the LORD has comforted His people,
He has redeemed Jerusalem.

10 The LORD has made bare His holy arm
In the eyes of all the nations;
And all the ends of the earth shall see
The salvation of our God.

11 Depart! Depart! Go out from there,
Touch no unclean thing;
Go out from the midst of her,
Be clean,

You who bear the vessels of the Lord.
12 For you shall not go out with haste,

Nor go by flight;
For the LORD will go before you,
And the God of Israel will be your rear guard. (NKJV)

This is the Word of God!

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth.
Amen.

In Christ Jesus, our Crucified Savior, dear fellow Redeemed.

INTRO: Celebrating Jesus' Death

When we consider the Passion of our Lord Jesus we find ourselves in sort of a strange position. Surely there were many people that were present when Jesus suffered so much at the hand of sinners that found themselves delighted in the fact that all this trouble and pain and evil was befalling Jesus. Many, if not most of the Pharisees and Sadducees, who could hardly ever agree on anything, found themselves in total agreement concerning the death of Jesus. They were delighted to see Him scourged and then crucified. They were part of the mob calling out for Jesus' blood, calling out for Jesus' death by crucifixion.

I'm am not suggesting that any of us would find such delight in Jesus' Pasion. And yet even though we observe the Passion of the Lord in somber ways with somber music, we Christians definitely use the word "celebrate" in connection with Jesus' death on the cross. What kind of people are we that we should celebrate His death? We celebrate when someone evil is removed, when someone who is intent on harming others is taken out. But Jesus never harmed anyone! Jesus was not evil in any way! And yet, indeed, we do use that word "celebrate." We do celebrate His death! After the sermon this morning we are going to join together in singing a hymn that opens with that idea.

TLH 163:1 : The death of Jesus Christ our Lord, We **celebrate** with one accord; It is our comfort in distress, Our heart's sweet joy and happiness." –

It is not some perverse spirit that leads us to celebrate Jesus' death, but rather the Spirit of our God reveals --

THEME: How Jesus' Suffering Is Good News.

I. It Has a Joyous Message for Us to Hear.

It is **good tidings of salvation!** How does one spread good news? Well, living in the age of mass communication and electronic communication, it is hard to imagine the careful watching for the messenger to come from the battle field with a report of how things have gone. And of course it was the messenger with good news that was the welcome sight. It was the messenger who could report that a great victory had been won that caused everyone to cheer, and celebrate. This is the picture that opens our text, but the picture is not merely of a temporal battle against physical enemies. It is a far greater spiritual battle with eternal consequences. The enemy is powerful indeed, and the only thing about it that is greater than its power is its evil. So the people fear, and the people tremble, and the people are captive to the forces of evil until a Champion comes along who is mighty to save, a Champion who is willing ready and able to stand up to the old evil foe, and prevail. It is this battle that decides the eternal future of all people. What shall be the outcome? Is it to be life? Or death?

Isaiah 52:7-8 How beautiful upon the mountains Are the feet of him who brings good news, Who proclaims peace, Who brings glad tidings of good things, Who proclaims salvation, Who says to Zion, "Your God reigns!" 8 Your watchmen shall lift up their voices, With their voices they shall sing together; For they shall see eye to eye When the LORD brings back Zion.

The focus is on the message salvation. The focus is on the victory that was won. That is most welcome news! There is peace! Of course this isn't speaking of the temporary peace that is seen from time to time among between nations. This is about the much more difficult peace to attain, peace between the most holy God and the sinner! While nations are never able to achieve peace that lasts, this peace was won for us once and for all time. The enemy has been defeated! **Your God reigns!**

The reign of terror which was the devil's doing, has been taken away forever! Now there is peace and salvation! **Your God reigns!** He has and will continue to direct the course of human events for the salvation of His people. Man sees the evil in this world, and thinks that the forces of evil prevail. But this is a mistaken perception. **Your God reigns,** and the watchmen are seeing the coming of the messengers of victory, and life and salvation. So their exuberance is heard and seen, and even before the details can be reported the people join in the rejoicing.

Yes, Jesus suffered and died upon the cross for this to come to pass. But His death paid our debt. His sufferings and death redeemed us to God and brought us peace. His death and resurrection made the victory complete, and evident!

We celebrate the passion of Jesus Christ because --

II. It Brings Us Blessed Benefits.

That is also made clearly evident in the words of the prophet.

Isaiah 52:9-10 Break forth into joy, sing together, You waste places of Jerusalem! For the LORD has comforted His people, He has redeemed Jerusalem. 10 The LORD has made bare His holy arm In the eyes of all the nations; And all the ends of the earth shall see The salvation of our God.

Sing and rejoice! Who is to do this rejoicing? Our text commends the waste places of Jerusalem to rejoicing. How does that relate to us, who are living some 2500 years after these words were written? These words were first addressed to the physical city of Jerusalem who had fallen into idolatry and was a wasteland spiritually, and Isaiah was prophesying of the days of judgment that lay before Jerusalem, and how the remnant finally would be restored to their homeland. However, this text also refers to the day of Christ's victory when He crushed the serpent's head by His death on the cross. It refers to the establishment of spiritual Jerusalem made up of a people who had not known the Lord, but had dwelt in the darkness of unbelief and sin. These spiritual waste places would be comforted by the gospel. They would learn of the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. They would learn of how they have been

delivered from sin, death, and the power of the devil through the power of God. He would reveal the strength of His arm in overpowering the forces of evil that had held the people of this world captive. This revelation of the saving power of God would be talked about to the ends of the earth. And that's us! We were the ignorant, lost sinners out at the ends of the earth. And the Lord has made known His salvation to **us**. He has comforted **us**. He has redeemed **us**. He has brought us into His people. He has revealed Himself to us so that we might own Him as "**our God**." Yes! Now we have seen "**the salvation of our God**," because Jesus went forth from Gethsemane to meet His enemies, and handed Himself over to them, and suffered many things at their hands, and was crucified, died, and was buried.

And so we sing and we rejoice, and we praise the Lord! And we celebrate the death of Jesus because --

III. It Brings Us Security.

Isaiah 52:11-12 Depart! Depart! Go out from there, Touch no unclean thing; Go out from the midst of her, Be clean, You who bear the vessels of the Lord. 12 For you shall not go out with haste, Nor go by flight; For the LORD will go before you, And the God of Israel will be your rear guard.

The prophet directs these comments to those who "**bear the vessels of the Lord**." Back then that would have been the faithful priests, and other temple workers who desired to preserve the true worship of the one true God. A few had not gone along with the rest of society into idol worship. Now in the time of the priesthood of all believers where we are all able to access the throne of God because of the Passion of Jesus, these words apply to all believers. The instruction to flee the world and all that which is unclean, is just as important for the layman today as it is for the pastor. We all carry with us the name of the Lord Jesus. We are disciples, and declare ourselves to be just that when we tell others that we are Christians. So let us be Christian not in word only, but also in deed. The Apostle Paul encouraged this very same thing when he wrote to the Romans:

Romans 12:2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

So we live to the glory of our Savior. We have been purified and washed clean by His blood. So then we should not walk in the darkness of sin, but rather in the light of the Lord. So let us walk as children of light (Ephesians 5:8). But the world does not like it if we fail to conform to their ways, and their social values, or their political correctness. They do not like it when we point out sin to be the sin that it is, and a danger to one's soul. They do not like it when we say that our good deeds are not enough adequate to gain for us salvation. They rant, and they threaten. And the Lord says, "Don't run from them. Don't hide in fear." The words of our text speak to us of the victory and security that we have in the death of Jesus. He has gotten us the victory. He goes before us and He follows after us. He is our point man as we go out into the world with the gospel. He is our rear guard that keeps us safe as we make our way through the world unto eternal life. Remember the words of our Savior in John 10:

John 10:27-29 My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. 28 And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. 29 My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand.

You are safe in the Lord's hands. No one, that is absolutely no one, can snatch you out of the Lord's hands. Be strong and courageous. Abound in the work of the Lord. Live to His glory. Walk in the way of righteousness, and know the blessing that comes to us in a Savior slain.

Rejoice in the good news that comes to us because of Jesus' Passion, and yes, let us join together to celebrate the death of Jesus Christ our Lord, and the blessings and security that is found in Him alone.

AMEN.

And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.