

INI

St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749
Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
January 10, 2016
1st Sunday after Epiphany

Scripture Lessons: 1 John 3:1-6, Matthew 2:1-12
Hymns: 126; 127; 106; 129 (105:1,2,8)

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

Sermon Text: Isaiah 49:1-9

“Listen, O coastlands, to Me,
And take heed, you peoples from afar!
The LORD has called Me from the womb;
From the matrix of My mother He has made mention of
My name.

² And He has made My mouth like a sharp sword;
In the shadow of His hand He has hidden Me,
And made Me a polished shaft;
In His quiver He has hidden Me.”

³ “And He said to me, ‘You *are* My servant, O Israel,
In whom I will be glorified.’

⁴ Then I said, ‘I have labored in vain,
I have spent my strength for nothing and in vain;
Yet surely my just reward *is* with the LORD,
And my work with my God.’”

⁵ “And now the LORD says,
Who formed Me from the womb *to be* His Servant,
To bring Jacob back to Him,

So that Israel is gathered to Him
(For I shall be glorious in the eyes of the LORD,
And My God shall be My strength),

⁶Indeed He says,

‘It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant
To raise up the tribes of Jacob,
And to restore the preserved ones of Israel;
I will also give You as a light to the Gentiles,
That You should be My salvation to the ends of the
earth.’”

⁷Thus says the LORD,

The Redeemer of Israel, their Holy One,
To Him whom man despises,
To Him whom the nation abhors,
To the Servant of rulers:

“Kings shall see and arise, Princes also shall worship,
Because of the LORD who is faithful,
The Holy One of Israel; And He has chosen You.”

⁸Thus says the LORD: “In an acceptable time I have heard
You,

And in the day of salvation I have helped You;
I will preserve You and give You
As a covenant to the people, To restore the earth,
To cause them to inherit the desolate heritages;

⁹That You may say to the prisoners, ‘Go forth,’
To those who *are* in darkness, ‘Show yourselves.’

“They shall feed along the roads,
And their pastures *shall be* on all desolate heights.
(NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

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

In Christ Jesus, our Savior, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: Epiphany - Christmas for the Gentiles. –

The blessings of Christmas don't end on December 25th. The significance of the church festival extends far longer and deeper into our hearts and minds than the secular holiday. The day after Christmas people almost completely stop greeting one another with "Merry Christmas," or "Blessed Christmas." An individual apologized to me a couple of days after Christmas for having said "Merry Christmas!" He was embarrassed that he had said "Merry Christmas when Christmas was already two or three days in the past. I assured him that since it was actually only the third day of Christmas he should not be embarrassed at all that he used that greeting. I explained that the Christmas festival goes all the way to January 6th, with the Epiphany festival. Eastern orthodox churches actually observe the birth of Jesus on that day instead of December 25th.

The reason why we extend the Christmas church festival so long is that we have so much grace to appreciate. While we are focused on the mystery of the incarnation on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, we also want to appreciate the implication that the angel's message of "Peace on earth" has for us, people of the gentile nations. So as we consider the message of Epiphany we begin with the glory of the Lord being revealed for all the world. Already in the Old Testament prophets we hear the proclamation of:

THEME: The Majesty of Jesus as the Savior of the World!

In the opening verse of our text we read a special proclamation of the Lord as -

I. God Presents Jesus to the World.

Isaiah 49:1 “Listen, O coastlands, to Me, And take heed, you peoples from afar! The LORD has called Me from the womb; From the matrix of My mother He has made mention of My name.

What we learn here from the opening words of this verse is the extent of the salvation which God has planned in Jesus, the Christ. The coastlands, and the people from afar are supposed to pay attention to what is proclaimed concerning the Christ. It is important for us to understand that the calling of Jesus as the Christ was God’s eternal intent. Jesus was not someone called later in life to be the Christ. He was not someone who earned special status from the Lord by His devout life. Jesus was the Chosen One of God from the very beginnings of His life, when He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. The Savior’s name was not only known by the Lord but directed by the Lord according to His gracious good will for the salvation of a fallen mankind.

Jesus was especially qualified and equipped by the Lord for this calling. Jesus is the Lord’s secret weapon to take out the forces of the devil. The devil didn’t know how to counter this weapon. Jesus was the devil’s undoing by coming into the world as one of us and yet being born without sin. Jesus stood up to the devil’s temptations. He didn’t sin even when He was the focus of the devil’s tempting and deceiving power. Jesus defeated the devil with the power of the Word of God, and so His mouth was like a sharp sword.

Jesus was the devil's undoing by taking our sins in His own body to the cross. Jesus, as the Lamb of God was the perfect sacrifice for sin, His precious blood being more than adequate to pay the debt of man's sin. And so He was the hidden weapon in God's armory.

And so the Lord makes His proclamation in presenting Jesus to the world:

Isaiah 49:3 And He said to me, 'You *are* My servant, O Israel, In whom I will be glorified.'

Yes, Jesus is the Lord's Christ, and Jesus reveals the glory of the Lord! He reveals the glory of the Lord in His grace and mercy in the wonder of the Lord's salvation of the world.

II. Jesus Brings Salvation to the Ends of the Earth.

One might assume that since this was all understood by Jesus it was therefore easy for Jesus to be the world's Redeemer. In fact the people that surrounded Jesus didn't make it easy. The people of Nazareth and Capernaum, even Jesus' own family regarded Him with skepticism and actual hostility. Some were jealous of the attention Jesus gave to other cities and towns. Some regarded Jesus as being "uppity," that He was forgetting that He was only a carpenter's Son, and so no better than they were. This animosity weighed heavily on Jesus' heart. That is reflected in our text when the prophet reveals the Lord's heart.

Isaiah 49:4 "Then I said, 'I have labored in vain, I have spent my strength for nothing and in vain; Yet surely my just reward *is* with the LORD, And my work with my God.'"

We might think that we can relate to being unappreciated. On occasion we also may feel that our efforts were for nothing. However none of us has ever been in the place of the Lord, neither can we be, neither can we imagine the disheartening effect of Jesus' own people despising the salvation which the Lord Jesus had brought to save Israel. The just didn't care. They didn't see Jesus as being the Messiah they desired. Jesus' consolation was to be found in the acceptance of His work by His heavenly Father. His reward was to be found in presenting the mission His heavenly Father had given Him perfectly fulfilled, even if the people of Israel, as a whole, spurned this great redemptive work.

But God didn't let it go at that. These words of the Father presented through the prophet Isaiah so many centuries before Jesus was even born surely had to be a great encouragement to the Jesus in His mission,. Without doubt they are our delight on this Epiphany Sunday.

Isaiah 49:6 “Indeed He says, ‘It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant To raise up the tribes of Jacob, And to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also give You as a light to the Gentiles, That You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth.’”

Jesus was the Promised Messiah who was to come to Israel, but He was a great Savior, much greater than was needed to save one people. That is a truth that may be hard to fathom. Start putting numbers to how many people a hero can save. One? A dozen? A hundred? A million? The Lord says of Jesus' greatness as Savior, “It is too small a thing to regard Jesus as the Savior of one nation.” The effects of Jesus' righteousness, the far reaching effect of His sacrifice was enough to save all the

world for all time from the fall into sin to the final judgment. Jesus is God's salvation for all the world, to the very ends of the earth!

III. God Assured Jesus' Success.

Our text acknowledges the rejection of so many in the world. In this prophetic word God makes it clear that He knew long before He sent His only begotten Son into the world to die for the sins of the world that many, even most of the people of this world would want nothing to do with Jesus. God knew that people would despise the salvation Jesus purchased with His bitter sufferings and death. God looks past those who despise His grace and abhor His chosen Servant. The Lord looks beyond them to the success that Jesus will attain in defeating the old evil foe and bringing peace and life to the elect of God. At this point in our text the Lord speaks of the success of this great plan of salvation, the success which we have been brought to appreciate and celebrate on this Epiphany Sunday.

Isaiah 49:7b-9 "Kings shall see and arise, Princes also shall worship, Because of the LORD who is faithful, The Holy One of Israel; And He has chosen You."⁸ Thus says the LORD: "In an acceptable time I have heard You, And in the day of salvation I have helped You; I will preserve You and give You As a covenant to the people, To restore the earth, To cause them to inherit the desolate heritages;⁹ That You may say to the prisoners, 'Go forth,' To those who *are* in darkness, 'Show yourselves.' "They shall feed along the roads, And their pastures *shall be* on all desolate heights."

Kings shall see and arise. We actually know that the wise men were not kings, although they may have been advisors to kings. Still we see in them as the beginning of the fulfillment of these words of the Lord. He can and does bring some, even from the mighty of the world, to humble themselves before His Christ, even when He was no more than a mere Child. It was faith that led the magi, and other mighty men after them, to see in Jesus something more than the carpenter's Son, or even a great teacher, or a miracle worker. They saw in Jesus what the Lord would have us see in Jesus. He is the One who can and did restore the earth. He is the righteousness which God provides, and then credits to all who believe for their salvation. Jesus is the One who set the prisoners free. And so He has freed us from the condemnation of the law and the tyranny of sin. Only Jesus can make desolate places a fine pasture where His flock can dwell safely.

Epiphany is truly a great highlight in the Christmas season. For the next few weeks we will be examining the manifestation of Jesus' glory as our Lord and Savior. The Spirit will open our hearts to a greater appreciation of the wonder that is Christ, the Lord. This is all in fulfillment of God's desire to make His salvation in Christ known to the ends of the earth. So we sing with the angel host:

TLH 85:15 "Glory to God in Highest heaven
Who unto us His Son hath given.
While angels sing in pious mirth
A glad new year to all the earth."

AMEN.

Romans 15:13 "Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." Amen