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St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749
Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
December 29, 2019
Sunday after Christmas

Scripture Lessons: Ephesians 1:3-6,15-18, John 1:1-18
Hymns: 136; 108; 718; 97

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

Sermon Text: Isaiah 62:10 - 63:3

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.

^{62:1} For Zion's sake I will not hold My peace,
And for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest,
Until her righteousness goes forth as brightness,
And her salvation as a lamp *that* burns.

² The Gentiles shall see your righteousness,
And all kings your glory.

You shall be called by a new name,
Which the mouth of the LORD will name.

³ You shall also be a crown of glory
In the hand of the LORD,
And a royal diadem
In the hand of your God. (NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

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

In Christ Jesus, the Babe of Bethlehem, our Savior, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: How well do you plan your Christmas gifts? --

Most of us have given and received the gifts we are going to share this Christmas season. Some of the gifts that have been shared are of short term value, consumable. That's not to say they weren't just the right gift for the individual. Other gifts that we gave or received were of a more durable nature, something we are going to benefit from for some time, maybe even a long time. I gave my daughters some tools, wrenches and drill bits, pliers and a handy-dandy little tack hammer screwdriver combo kit. Yeah, maybe that sounds a little crazy but then I don't have sons to give tools. NO, it's not just that. I thought about this. I thought about what they have, and what they need, and realized that each of these tool gifts I gave would be a benefit for my daughters in the future. I hope I did better then when I bought one of my daughters the magic kit. That was not a good gift, not well thought out. It's only benefit is for me to be able to say, "At least I didn't buy you another magic kit!"

So to the point, we have to think about the gifts we get for the people we love. We need to plan well and consider the benefit, be it short or long term, whether they know they need it or not. And that my friends in Christ is a lesson we should appreciate about the gifts we have received from our Father in heaven. Of course when it comes to Christmas gifts His was and always will be the best. His gift brings a blessing to us that can't be surpassed either in quality or duration. And it was most certainly well thought out and planned in advance.

Centuries before Jesus was born in Bethlehem Isaiah wrote in our text of -

THEME: The Christmas Blessing of Christ's Righteousness.

This is one of those gifts that you didn't know you needed until you received it. Then we found that indeed it was the **perfect** gift, the perfect **fit** for we now find ourselves --

I. Adorned in the Robes of Christ's Righteousness.

One of the things that we all anticipate is the response to a gift. Don't we all enjoy an enthusiastic response to the gift we give? It is exactly that sort of response that Isaiah describes in his prophecy.

Isaiah 61:10 "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."

You open this Christmas gift from the Lord and what do you find but the most beautiful garments you could ever imagine. In the manger in Bethlehem the Lord presented you with the garments of salvation. This is the gift that we really needed! Even if many people don't realize it, our own righteousnesses aren't appropriate to display before the Lord. One dare not appear before the Lord crying out, "Look at me," when all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags. (Isaiah 64:6) **We are unclean, truly revolting!** But this gift from the Lord in Jesus the Babe of Bethlehem was **designed** to take care of that and cover over any and all imperfections.

Designer clothing indeed. These are the garments of salvation! The Son of God became incarnate, Jesus came into the world to fashion these garments of salvation with

His perfect, sinless life in which while under the law He perfectly and completely fulfilled all the law's demands. Add to this the robe of righteousness, and we are covered in glory and majesty beyond imagining. Yes, we are accustomed of thinking of the robes of Jesus' righteousness as being those robes that were dipped in the blood of the Lamb, and yet present us before the Lord in righteousness and purity forever, FOREVER!

Now Isaiah foretold the response of the child of God upon opening this gift from the Lord. It is faith that opens and takes possession of this gift, and it is faith that "*rejoices with joy inexpressible and full of glory!*" (1Peter 1:8) That is what Isaiah wrote of 6 centuries before Jesus' birth and the excited response of faith that filled the hearts of the shepherds, and 26 centuries before you and I were born again of water and the Holy Spirit, and so adorned with the garments of salvation. We could characterize the believer's response with a **WOW!** In all capital letters. Every Christian woman might declare "I am as beautiful as a bride, and every Christian man, "I am adorned as a bridegroom!" For that spiritual beauty we praise the Lord! Again this Christmas we have sung our praises with great joy and rejoicing, "**Joy to the world! The Lord Has Come!**"

This was no accident either that you opened the gift that God had prepared. Many in this world, even many Christians have this thought stuck in their minds that it is an accident of birth that you are Christian. Nothing could be further from the truth. It was an integral part of God's plan for this gift of salvation that -

II. Christ's Righteousness Has Spread through all the Earth.

Our text presents this truth with yet another picture to help us understand this gift of grace.

Isaiah 61:11 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.

There are a lot of different things that we take by faith that are part of God's plan. Some may be able to describe how these things happen, but really to understand the why? That is found with God's power and grace. Seed sown in the ground is one of those things. If you want a plant to grow you start with planting the seed in the ground; seed that the Lord has provided with the wonders of His creation. And according to the wonders of that creation in which He decreed that each seed will bring forth plants according to its kind, so it happens. And that is the way it happens across the globe!

So the Lord has spread the seed of the gospel of Christ across the globe and it is sown in the hearts of men and it sprouts and grows according to the Lord's will. It is all according to His grace and power that this has happened. It was all part of God's plan of salvation that this salvation would spread throughout the world. And we are the evidence of the wonder of this grace. We live more than two thousand years after Jesus' birth in Bethlehem, and thousands of miles distant, and yet this is not immaterial to us, but rather a part of the fabric of who we are and how it is that we are saved.

In our text the Lord expresses His intent for the scope of this salvation going out into the world.

Isaiah 62:1-2 For Zion's sake I will not hold My peace,
And for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest,
Until her righteousness goes forth as brightness,
And her salvation as a lamp *that* burns.

²The Gentiles shall see your righteousness,
And all kings your glory.

You shall be called by a new name,
Which the mouth of the LORD will name

Everything that God had planned and directed for the people of Israel had this as its purpose that the Savior would be born from among the people of the Jews! This wonder of Jesus' birth would be Israel's greatest glory! This glory of salvation in Jesus the Babe of Bethlehem would shine brightly throughout the world!

And so we, the people of the gentile nations have seen the glory of Israel, and have rejoiced in our Savior's birth and we are called by a new name: the Chosen Generation, the People of God, the Elect of the Lord, and quite simply, Christians, true Christ believers who follow where our Savior leads.

The last simple verse of our text expresses a great truth concerning our God, the God of our salvation. That is -

III. This Righteousness and its Spread is God's Crown of Glory.

Look back over your life. Is there anything that you may have done or accomplished that stands out that you would say, "I did that, and that matters?! Maybe we wouldn't be willing to make such a claim about our lives, but what about God? Look around you, look at you, and the wonder of creation found in the world as well as in our own bodies. It is truly amazing, astounding what God in His wisdom and power accomplished! We should praise the Lord for we are "fearfully and wonderfully made." (Psalm 139:14) There is a lot to marvel at in God's creation.

What this last little verse of our text is teaching us is that this is **not** the thing that stands out to God as His **greatest** work. His creation isn't His greatest glory. What stands out for the Lord, what the Lord holds out and wears as His crowning achievement is YOU as a redeemed child of God. He saved you. He redeemed you with the

blood of Christ. He worked faith in your hearts, and He has made you His child and an heir of everlasting life. That salvation is what the Lord in heaven above sees and KNOWS to be His greatest and most glorious accomplishment.

And that, my friends in Christ, is what we celebrate this and every Christmas, and what we will sing about for all eternity, right with the angels who appeared to the shepherds in the hills outside Bethlehem.

And so we sing in the words of Martin Luther:

“This is the Christ, our God and Lord
Who in all need shall aid afford;
He will Himself your Savior be
From all your sins to set you free.

“He will on you His gifts bestow
Prepared by God for all below,
That in His kingdom, bright and fair,
You may with us His glory share.

“My heart for very joy doth leap,
My lips no more can silence keep;
I, too, must sing with joyful tongue
That sweetest ancient cradle song:

“Glory to God in highest heaven,
Who unto us His Son hath given!
While angels sing with pious mirth
A glad new year to all the earth.” (The Lutheran Hymnal
85:4,5,14,15)

AMEN.

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