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St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749
Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
January 23, 2022
3rd Sunday after Epiphany

Scripture Lessons: 1 Corinthians 12:1-11 John 2:1-11

Hymns: 550:1-13,5,6,9; 23; 477; 50:1-2

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

Sermon Text: Isaiah 62:1-5

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.

⁴ You shall no longer be termed Forsaken,
Nor shall your land any more be termed Desolate;
But you shall be called Hephzibah, and your land Beulah;
For the LORD delights in you, And your land shall be married.

⁵ For *as* a young man marries a virgin,
So shall your sons marry you;
And *as* the bridegroom rejoices over the bride,
So shall your God rejoice over you. (NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

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

In Christ Jesus, God our Savior, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: Epiphany -- the glory of the Lord revealed! --

In our gospel lesson this morning we had the statement made in connection with Jesus' first miracle "*This beginning of signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and **manifested His glory**; and His disciples believed in Him.*" (John 2:11) At the wedding feast in Cana of Galilee Jesus had changed ordinary water into excellent wine, saving the day for the bridal couple who had run out of wine. Some might think that as spectacular as this miracle was, it wasn't such a great emergency calling for the Lord's intervention. That may reveal a lack empathy on our part, while on the other hand it demonstrates so clearly how Jesus cares for us in all our problems of life, even those that are not life threatening. What is especially noteworthy for us is that this was a manifestation of Jesus' glory, and that the response it evoked was that "*His disciples believed in Him.*"

(John 1:11)

How does Jesus make a manifestation or public display of His glory today? And what impact does that have on the world? What spiritual impact does His display of glory have on us? These are the questions that are answered by our text, a Word of the Lord that was revealed hundreds of years before Jesus was born, and yet speaks to the manifestation of His glory among us.

THEME: Jesus' Glory Is Revealed in His Church.

We need to remember that Isaiah's job was primarily a messenger of impending judgment. Judgment was going to come upon the land of Judah, upon the city of Jerusalem because of the unfaithfulness of the people in worshiping other gods, and their immoral behavior, and their adamant refusal to repent. Indeed, they saw no need to repent. They still claimed they were the people of God. There was nothing for the Lord to boast about in this filthy city, filthy in their sin and idolatry. And yet it is with a picture of this city that --

I. The Glory of Christ's Righteousness Is Revealed.

In abundant grace the Lord declared:
*“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. (Isaiah 62:1-2)*

The Lord is the God of our salvation. Again and again we are reminded that He does not want to see the sinner die, but that the sinner would turn from his ways and live. Time and again the Lord promises grace and deliverance. The Lord loved His people in spite of the filth of sin that overwhelmed His people. And so, He declares through Isaiah that He is not willing to sit back and say nothing; He is not willing to sit back and do nothing and watch everlasting perdition come upon Zion and Jerusalem.

He acts. He speaks out for their good and blessing. He promises and grace and salvation until that powerful gospel produces the desired result. The Lord is watching for the brightness of righteousness to shine, and the wonder of salvation to burn as a bright lamp. However, there is no power or source of righteousness within the sinner. *“All our righteousnesses are like filthy rags!”* (Isaiah 64:6) Even at our best we are not anything to show off and display.

This is where Christ and His righteousness comes into the picture. Having turned away from the physical city of Jerusalem, the Lord speaks here of a future Mount Zion and a spiritual Jerusalem as the city of our God. This passage speaks of the beauty of the New Testament Church as the people of God. The righteousness that adorns us is the righteousness that has been credited to us by grace through faith in Jesus. It is *“not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us.”* (Titus 3:5) According to His mercy and His grace we are made clean of sin. Jesus fulfilled all the righteous requirements of the law to present before God the perfect obedience that is necessary for **our** salvation. Jesus, who is true God is righteous and holy before God with a righteousness that is **sufficient for all**. His righteousness

alone avails before God for it is pure and undefiled. This is the righteousness of the Church, the righteousness of all who believe. Though we have sinned times without number, Jesus' blood washes our sins away. Though we have turned away from the Lord, and walked the dark paths of sin, God in His grace has called us to repentance and faith and adorned us with the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

It is this righteousness of Christ that is seen in the Church both by God and **by the world**. How can that which is spiritual be seen by the world? It is by fruits of the Spirit which are present in our hearts and in our lives. We are made new creatures in Christ Jesus. And yes, righteousness shines and burns as brightly as a lamp in a dark room. We live in a dark world and the contrast is clear, and the righteousness of those who believe shines brightly to the praise and glory of our Savior Jesus Christ.

This is a light shining in a dark place. Spiritually the world is in darkness, and it is a darkness that deceives the world. In their blindness they cannot see their own way to righteousness and life, and yet the Light that is Christ, that light that shines within our hearts, and radiates throughout our lives is seen, and what is seen is Jesus' righteousness. The world takes note, and Christ is glorified as we shun the sinful ways of the world and walk as children of light.

In our text the Lord speaks of calling His people by a new name. As we delve into this, we find that

II. The Church Is Displayed as the Lord's Precious Possession.

The next verse of our text turns the picture just a bit that we might see the wonder of God's grace as revealed by the Lord.

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

What this verse brings to mind is the royal tradition of crown jewels. It is as old as kings being upon the earth. The king wears his golden crown, with precious jewels adorning the crown, all meant to impress those who come before him with the splendor of this display of wealth and power, which of course is meant to reflect the monarch's glory. That was what the people of Israel

were supposed to be for the Lord, and for a time they did show the Lord's glory so that the nations surrounding them feared them because all could see how the blessing of God rested upon them. But then they turned away from the Lord and adopted the sinful practices of the world, and in turn God delivered them to judgment.

Isaiah prophesies of a new time in which God will display His own special people as a king wearing the crown jewels, or displaying a glorious diadem, that all may know His glory. So, the Lord declares, "**You shall be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord.**" (v.3) Look at the grace that has come to us sinful beings that God has made us His saints, the jewels of salvation that show His glory to the world. He holds us in His hand as His prized possession.

It all begins with the Father's grace. He saw us in our sin, just as He saw the people of Israel in their sin, and what a state we were in! It is described with the words **Forsaken**, and **Desolate**, as we read in our text.

*"You shall no longer be termed Forsaken,
Nor shall your land any more be termed Desolate;
But you shall be called Hephzibah, and your land Beulah;
For the LORD delights in you, And your land shall be married.
⁵ For as a young man marries a virgin,
So shall your sons marry you;
And as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride,
So shall your God rejoice over you." (v.4-5)*

Forsaken and Desolate: these are honest evaluations of the spiritual wasteland of the world, the spiritual wasteland that Israel had become, the spiritual wasteland that **we also were** by nature.

Only the Lord could change that, and He did it by the grace that is revealed in Jesus Christ. Now we get to the new names that were alluded to a little earlier in our text: the people of God are to be called **Hephzibah** and its land **Beulah!** Hephzibah means "**My delight is in her.**" Beulah literally means **married**. However, in this context the Lord makes it clear that this is describing how desirable it shall be to be a part of this land, a part of the country that is the Lord's. Think of the picture of Jesus as the bridegroom

and the Church as Jesus' bride. This is the land, the people, the nation that has become desirable, that people should desire to be a part of this possession. This is the country that the Lord claims as His own!

The Apostle Paul speaks of the New Testament fulfillment of this grace of God in his epistle to the Romans where we read: *“that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory, ²⁴ even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?*

²⁵ *As He says also in Hosea:*

*‘I will call them **My people**, who were **not My people**,
And her **beloved**, who was **not beloved.**’*

²⁶ *“And it shall come to pass in the place where it was said to them,
‘You are not My people,’*

*There they shall be called **sons of the living God.**”* (Romans 9:23-26)

That is the grace that has come to you and me. God chose us to be His vessels of mercy, and He prepared us beforehand, bringing us the gospel, opening our hearts by the power of the Holy Spirit and calling us to faith. This is the beauty of the righteousness of Jesus Christ, *“who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.”* (Titus 2:14)

The closing words of our text are truly amazing, *“As the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, So shall your God rejoice over you.”* (v.5) Sometimes we read our Bibles and an expression like this goes right over our heads. Think about the scene of a wedding, and how that bridegroom, head over heels in love, looks with anticipation for his bride to walk down the aisle adorned in her beautiful white wedding dress with all that goes with it, and when she walks down the aisle toward him, he just simply glows with joy, with pride that this woman is to be his bride, his wife!

Take that picture and remove all the imperfections that come with being human, and then ascribe that joy and pleasure to our Lord Jesus as He beholds His bride, the Church! This is how He gazes upon us as we are adorned in the white robes of His righteousness.

“As the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, So shall your God rejoice over you.” (v.5) That is the glory of Jesus as it is revealed in us His Church. May God the Holy Spirit endow us with wisdom and strength that we may always live up to that saving glory of Jesus Christ, and glorify Him continuously all our days in all our ways.

AMEN.

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