

Christmas Eve—Isaiah 52:7-10—The Messenger of Good News

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Our Text:

(Isaiah 52:7-10 ESV) “⁷ How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, “Your God reigns.” ⁸ The voice of your watchmen—they lift up their voice; together they sing for joy; for eye to eye they see the return of the LORD to Zion. ⁹ Break forth together into singing, you waste places of Jerusalem, for the LORD has comforted his people; he has redeemed Jerusalem. ¹⁰ The LORD has bared his holy arm before the eyes of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.”

I. Introduction

- A. The imagination in fictional stories allows us to see unmatched strength in characters that gives us courage. We can make them bare the arms and flex their muscles in some pretty amazing ways in fictional stories. They are useful tools because they give us various stories of people in grave danger with no obvious way of escape. We read on and on to see what will happen. One of our favorite fiction series is the Wingfeather Saga by Andrew Peterson.
 - 1. As you get into the story, each chapter leaves you with this desire for what seems to be a rescue from an impossible situation.
 - 2. One after another, the characters find themselves in ever-increasingly difficult spots but they continue to trust in their Maker above.
- B. While fiction is fun to read, we all read and participate in the real story of the world.
 - 1. In fact, the world is in a very desperate and impossible situation. Evil seems to grow darker and darker. Death awaits us all whether through cancer or car wrecks.
 - 2. But unlike fiction stories, there is a judgment on the other side of death. We must give an account for what we have done in this life.
 - 3. The great news is, God is not only the Judge but the Savior too. That’s what our story is about tonight—the messenger of Good News—Good News that we can be saved from the judgment to come.

II. Main Point

- A. The main point is the good news that comes: The Real Victorious King who reigns will return.

III. Outline

- A. The Messenger
- B. The Watchmen
- C. The People of the Desolate City

IV. Exposition

- A. Isaiah makes use of a hymn to express some amazing and glorious images for us to see. This image of the messenger is absolutely fascinating.
 - 1. First, we must get the scene into focus. The characters of this story are God, the messenger, the watchmen, and the people of the ruined city.
 - 2. The desolate city must be imagined as a city that has been besieged and on the verge of destruction. We are forced to see this not so much as an army surrounding the city but as a city who’s army has gone out into battle.
 - a) And really, that army is God alone!
 - b) They are—let’s just say—defenseless if he does not win.
 - 3. The image of such a scene can be noted from 2 Samuel 18 where King David was awaiting news from his soldiers.
 - a) His son, Absalom, had turned against his father and lead the people away.
 - b) In this scene, the watchmen stand waiting for news about the battle with Absalom.
 - c) Two messenger eventually come with good tidings.
 - d) This is the image we have here too.
 - 4. Verse 7 opens with the messenger being spotted crossing the mountains.

- a) This is not a group of stragglers dragging themselves home after a defeat.
 - b) No, this is a messenger running swiftly to deliver good news.
 - (1) The messenger is described in five very similar ways.
 - (a) But first let's get this sign of relief from the watchmen who sees the messenger coming and says, "How beautiful are the feet of the one coming across the mountains with good news."
 - i) The picture is that of phone ringing in the waiting room after a surgery. That family member who has been waiting for that update might say, "How beautiful the ring of that phone."
 - (1) We know the ring isn't that beautiful but the sound of it gives hope.
 - (b) Now the messenger is described as—
 - i) Who brings good news.
 - ii) Who publishes peace.
 - iii) Who brings good news of happiness.
 - iv) Who publishes salvation.
 - (1) All of these are different ways of saying the same thing.
 - (2) The news is so good that it is worth saying many ways!
 - (c) In other words, the messenger bring news to the watchmen on the wall of the besieged city that victory has been accomplished.
 - i) This image is that of "the Greek warrior running from Marathon to Athens in 490 B.C. with the message, "Rejoice! We conquer."
 - (1) "He had to get word back to his people, so they would not surrender to the defeated Persians." (Ortlund 348)
 - (2) To bring that into perspective for us is the news about the resurrection of Christ.
 - (a) Our greatest enemy is sin and death and the resurrection is our victory.
 - (b) Yes. The cross was the payment but the resurrection was the messenger of good news that victory over our sin and death was accomplished.
 - (d) The final description of the messenger in Isaiah 52 is this—
 - i) He who says to Zion, "Your God reigns!" That means he is victorious!
 - ii) If God reigns, then salvation, rescue, peace, happiness will follow his reign.
 - iii) Salvation depends completely on God. He must win the decisive battle against our sin.
 - iv) And he has, by sending his only Son at Christmas to die the death we deserved.
- B. When the messenger cries out that God reigns, the watchmen on the wall respond.
 - 1. Only the watchmen who are standing on the wall of the besieged city can see and hear the messenger. The ruined and broken people await news from the watchmen.
 - a) Verse 8 begins by saying, "Listen!" To the hungry, half-starved to death citizens, this is the easiest command to obey. What else can they do? They cannot save themselves.
 - (1) The way the watchmen spread the news of victory is through singing.
 - (a) They break out into songs all at the same time!
 - (b) There is no more appropriate way to communicate victory than praise.
 - i) To enjoy God and his victory over sin is the highest praise to God.
 - 2. You know the reason why the watchmen sing for joy because you have heard the messenger already but you cannot imagine what this victory means for the desolate city.
 - a) Notice there in the middle of verse 8—For eye to eye they will see the return of the LORD to Zion.
 - (1) This expression—eye to eye—is not meant how we use it as in agreement. But rather, this means they will look upon the face of YHWH when he returns.
 - (2) You have to remember, exile was happening in the book of Isaiah but they needed hope to endure exile—endure real life. 70 years lay ahead of them. Desolation, ruin, and destruction were their lot.

- (a) Good news of future salvation is meant to give hope to those who have failed miserably but are banking on the incredible mercy of God to win the victory that they could not.
- C. We've seen the lone messenger deliver the good news of victory to the watchmen on the wall. Their singing of victory songs now bleeds over into the desolate city. How will ruined people respond?
 - 1. Verse 9 begins with two commands—Be joyful and shout for joy.
 - a) This is like someone giving you access to inexhaustible bank account and then telling you to go spend it.
 - b) The entire desolate city breaks forth in singing—together because that's what ruined people do when they hear victory has been won and the victorious King is returning.
 - (1) Singing together signals to us all that they all had the same need and the same hope.
 - (2) The victory of salvation brought about by God alone is exactly what everyone needed but could not do for themselves.
 - (3) Notice there in the middle of verse 9—for the LORD has comforted his people.
 - (a) This is primary message of Isaiah. Judgment has come but comfort has come too.
 - (b) Not comfort from the immediate consequence of sin, but comfort knowing that salvation is coming. The end is coming. Someday the battle will end and they and we will be gathered to our God who reigns forever.
 - (c) The next sentence says—he has redeemed Jerusalem.
 - i) The source of the comfort is the fact that they have been redeemed.
 - ii) There is the promise of a payment by God himself—in Christ—to satisfy the justice of God.
 - (1) In Christ by faith, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.
 - 2. This final verse exhibits God's determination to secure this victory before the eyes of all the nations who plan to oppose him to the very end.
 - a) Notice there in verse 10—The LORD had bared his holy arm before the eyes of the all the nations.
 - (1) The baring of his arm is like rolling up your sleeves for battle. God throws off his robe, so to speak, and reveals his power before the nations that rage against him.
 - (2) They—the ends of the earth—will see the salvation of our God.
 - 3. One final thing to say as we too wait for this final salvation.
 - a) Imagine getting engaged to the perfect person. You have found the ONE.
 - b) You make your promise to each other and seal it with a ring.
 - c) But the date of the marriage is 25 years away.
 - (1) How will you endure until that day?
 - (2) The way you endure is by keeping your eyes on the one you will someday marry.
 - (a) You don't go looking around for another.
 - (b) You don't explore your options.
 - (c) You remain true to the one who made the promise to you.
 - d) We—the church—his Bride—are waiting for the day when we will marry the Bridegroom—Christ.
 - (1) The person praising God for what he or she does not yet possess is the person who truly believes the promises of God.
 - (2) Salvation is coming. Christ is coming. He came on Christmas some 2000 years ago and he will return when all of his sheep have come into the fold.
 - (3) But may we be a people who display our faith in the victory of God as we enjoy him and praise his name until he comes.