

The First Sunday After Christmas—Isaiah 61:10-62-3

“God Covers Treachery with Righteousness”

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I. Introduction

- A. Isaiah is full of promises of the coming Messiah that we use during Advent and Christmas.
 - 1. For example—(Isaiah 7:14 ESV) Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.
 - 2. And—(Isaiah 9:6-7 ESV) ⁶ For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. ⁷ Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.
 - 3. And—(Isaiah 11:1-2 ESV) ¹ There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit. ² And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.
 - a) These promises have given the church unshakeable hope over the years.
 - b) They mainly speak of this child's birth we celebrate at Christmas.
 - c) We are given these amazing clues into his identity when he comes and Jesus fulfills them all.
- B. However, our passage this morning goes beyond his birth to explain what the birth of this Messiah would accomplish.
 - 1. That means, Christmas isn't over. The birth was only the beginning of the amazing gift of Christmas.
 - 2. While growing up and even much of my adult life, I have experienced a real letdown after Christmas morning.
 - 3. We had worked and planned and decorated for this celebration only to feel like it ended suddenly in a sea of empty boxes and torn wrapping paper.
 - a) Everyone sort of goes off to do their own thing now that the anticipation is over.
 - b) If you dare to go shopping, the stores have mostly moved on to Valentines Day and Christmas is in the rearview mirror.
 - c) I don't want Walmart determining how I feel about Christmas.
 - d) I want to enjoy it and celebrate this glorious event to the fullest—and certainly that doesn't mean I have to leave my Christmas tree up year around but I might.
- C. So, I want us to consider what the birth of Christ was promised to accomplish for us and to continue celebrating this amazing work of salvation God had planned and delivered on.
- D. To celebrate Christmas means we are celebrating not only the birth of Christ but admitting that we are in desperate need of a great Savior because we are great sinners.

II. The Main Point

- A. The main point of our passage is this—God Covers Our Treachery with a Garment of Righteousness

III. Outline

- A. The Certainty of Praise
- B. The Reflection of Righteousness
- C. The Reality of Redemption

IV. Exposition

- A. Let's begin with the certainty of Praise

- 1. I like to fix things. My pappaw could fix anything and I watched him for years fix the unfixable. So, I love the challenge of fixing things.
 - a) But the reality is, I can't fix my sin. Even my pappaw couldn't have fixed me. I am among the unfixable and so are you.
 - b) This text points out something that is wrong with God's people. I see the same tendencies in me and in every church and that is our praise is dull.

- (1) I catch myself just going through the motions of worship instead of enjoying every second of this gathering.
- (2) I see myself slipping back into old habits instead of growing in holiness.
- (3) I don't know you all but I can imagine these problems exist here too.
- (4) I see it everywhere and I want very much to fix it but this is a work that only God can do and he will.
 - (a) And yet, God uses means to fix these things. He uses the gathering of his people like this. He uses fellowship and praying and singing and preaching to accomplish this work through the power of the Holy Spirit.
 - (b) This text of scripture promises that God's people will rejoice in the LORD and that he will cause righteousness and praise to sprout up before the nations, therefore I rest in the Sovereign Lord to accomplish what the gift of Christmas was meant to do.

2. There in verse 10 we hear—I will greatly rejoice in the LORD and my soul shall exult in my God.

- a) This text does not say—you ought to rejoice.
- b) It says—you will rejoice—because God has done something.
- c) This sermon will not be—come on, rejoice harder but rather look again, look longer, let yourself be helped by seeing and savoring what God has done.
- d) In other words, what Isaiah is communicating to us is the certainty of rejoicing.
 - (1) It's certain because God is certain. He always accomplishes what he sets out to do.
 - (2) Before we look at what God had promised to accomplish, ask yourself—do I greatly rejoice in the Lord? Does my soul exult in my God?
 - (a) One way to evaluate yourself is to look at what do not merely what you think of yourself.
 - (b) Our outward actions usually give us clear evidence of where our heart really is.
 - i) What does the evidence say?
 - ii) Is your heart warmed by the certainty of rejoicing in the Lord?
 - iii) Is your heart dull or cold? If so, yield to the Lord this morning and pray that God would thaw your heart by his amazing grace.
 - iv) One way that can be done is by seeing in this passage what God promised to do for his people.

3. Notice there in verse 10 why we have the certainty of rejoicing—because the LORD has clothed me with the garment of salvation; he has covered me with the robe of righteousness.

- a) As you likely know, God spoke words of judgment against Israel through Isaiah.
 - (1) If we were to start from the beginning of Isaiah, my guess is that our text this morning would be quite shocking because before we hear the certainty of rejoicing, we hear the certainty of exile.
 - (a) God says through Isaiah in (Isaiah 1:2-4 ESV) ² Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; for the LORD has spoken: "Children have I reared and brought up, but they have rebelled against me. ³ The ox knows its owner, and the donkey its master's crib, but Israel does not know, my people do not understand." ⁴ Ah, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, offspring of evildoers, children who deal corruptly! They have forsaken the LORD, they have despised the Holy One of Israel, they are utterly estranged.
 - i) God says that cows and donkeys know their owner but his people do not him.
 - ii) Chapter one goes on to explain that their worship was in vain.
 - (1) Here's a relatable example—(Isaiah 1:15 ESV) When you spread out your hands, I will hide my eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not listen; your hands are full of blood.
 - (2) They were raising their hands in worship but their hands had blood on them.
 - (3) But while God was stating his charges against them, he also promised to clean their bloody hands.
 - (a) He promised in (Isaiah 1:18 ESV) "Come now, let us reason together, says the LORD: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool.

- b) But how? The old covenant had been renewed many times at this point, and they still could not keep it. How was God going to wash their sins away?
 - (1) I think our passage this morning was anticipating something unbelievably amazing coming.
 - (2) Though the people of God had failed to keep the old covenant, God was going to fix the problem decisively.
 - (3) Let's get our heads around verse 10—I will greatly rejoice in the LORD because he has clothed me with the garments of salvation.
 - (a) How can I help you see this amazing thing?
 - i) Have you heard people say things like no pun intended?
 - ii) A pun is a wordplay that uses multiple meanings of a word that sounds the same.
 - (1) For example—if I were to ask if you could fix my flat, do I mean my apartment or my tire?
 - (a) Or what about the word shady vs. shade.
 - (b) Shade can mean protection from the sun.
 - (c) But shady means dishonest.
 - iii) Isaiah uses a word like that. The pun is intended. It is no accident.
 - (1) The same root of garment also means treachery.
 - (2) Israel has acted treacherously. They have betrayed God. They were traitors of the covenant.
 - (3) (Isaiah 24:16 ESV) But I say, “I waste away, I waste away. Woe is me! For the traitors have betrayed, with betrayal the traitors have betrayed.”
 - (4) Here is what is so amazing about this wordplay—the very root that names Israel's unfaithfulness now names the means of her salvation.
 - (5) In other words, God has covered up their treachery with a garment of salvation.
 - (a) Can God do that? Imagine for a moment that you are the parents of Uriah.
 - (b) King David took his wife, Bathsheba. Committed adultery. Murdered Uriah. And God just forgave him.
 - (c) If you are the parents of Uriah, do you think that is justice?
 - (d) Maybe you hear that and say—well, I haven't committed adultery or murder. When God covers my sin, it's not that bad.
 - (e) What about simply taking a bite of an apple like Adam and Eve?
 - (f) It says there in our verse 10 that God covers the unrighteous with righteousness.
 - (g) God had already done this in the Garden of Eden to point us to this text someday—(Genesis 3:21 ESV) And the LORD God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them.
 - (h) What God does here looks treacherous too, right?
 - (i) How can he forgive sinners like us and remain a just God?
 - (j) The answer in Isaiah was chapter 53.
 - (k) This is very important to see because this is what brings about the certainty of rejoicing.
 - (l) Speaking of the suffering servant, Isaiah writes in (Isaiah 53:1-6 ESV) ¹ Who has believed what he has heard from us? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? ² For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him. ³ He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. ⁴ Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. ⁵ But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. ⁶ All

we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

- (m) Who is the suffering servant? Was it not the child born on Christmas?
- (n) There's an amazing reality that we continue to rejoice over because that suffering servant is Jesus. The Son of God came and clothed himself in flesh so that he can pay the penalty for our sins as Isaiah 53 promised.
- (o) That's how God's justice is upheld. He pays the price himself for our sins so that he can justly show us mercy.
- (p) Do you see that? That is why rejoicing is certain because God has worked decisively to take away our sins in the cross of Christ.
- (q) He will cover our unrighteousness with Christ's righteousness.
- (r) By faith, our sins are forgiven AND we are counted righteous. That's justification.

4. That's what the next two illustrations are getting at in verse 10—as a bridegroom decks himself like a priest with a beautiful headdress, and as a bride adorns herself with jewels.
 - a) The bridegroom is not a priest but he is dressed like one.
 - (1) Just like the "I" in verse 10 is not righteous but he is clothed with righteousness.
 - b) The bride does not have her own jewelry. Like in the story of Abraham sending his servant to find a wife for Isaac, the servant gives Rebekah the jewelry Abraham sent with him.
 - c) The jewelry is not her own like the righteousness is not her own. And yet, God clothes his people with it!
5. The next two illustrations in verse 11 add a new dimension.
 - a) Let's think about what many of us do at Christmas. We put up a tree and adorn it with ornaments.
 - (1) Now, some of us use an artificial tree that we bought at Costco or we buy a real tree that was cut down.
 - (a) Both are dead. Neither of them sprout ornaments. We put them on the tree.
 - (b) They aren't fake but they are certainly not like fruit on a tree.
 - (c) Fruit comes from within the tree. We do not hang apples on an apple tree.
 - b) So here's the next two illustrations—(Isaiah 61:11 ESV) For as the earth brings forth its sprouts, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to sprout up, so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise to sprout up before all the nations.
 - (1) God's work of salvation not only covers us with Christ's righteousness but this great act of salvation will cause us to bear fruit of righteousness.
 - (2) In other words, Christ's righteousness is not merely Christmas tree ornaments but fruit coming from within.
 - (3) Just as the earth sprouts plants and trees so too God will cause us to sprout righteousness.
 - (a) The first illustrations explain what justification is.
 - (b) The second two explain what sanctification looks like.
 - (c) To say it differently—given righteousness leads to lived righteousness.
 - (d) This is what happens when we are born again.
 - (e) We who were dead in our trespasses and sins, God made alive in Christ.
 - (f) We are given the Holy Spirit and that amazing act of salvation bears fruit of (Galatians 5:22-23 ESV) ²² love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control.

B. That gets us to our second point—the Reflection of Righteousness.

1. This work of salvation has a purpose—to display God's glory in and through his people.
 - a) We were created to be image bears of God. The treacherous act of Adam marred the image of God in us.
 - b) God's work of salvation restores that image through Christ's death and resurrection.
 - c) Our lives will reflect that gracious work of Christ to the world.

- (1) Jesus said this in (Matthew 5:16 ESV) let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.
 - (a) We are trophies of God's amazing grace and the people we encounter ought to see just how amazing God is when treacherous sinners like us sprout forth righteousness.
 - (b) Many of them have seen our unrighteousness but now that God has clothed us with the robe of righteousness and he will cause us to bear fruit of righteousness the world will see that our God is amazing. Indeed, this amazing salvation will result in rejoicing in the Lord before the nations.
 - i) Did you catch that? God will cause righteousness and praise to sprout up before the nations.
- 2. For Isaiah, he will not stay silent about this hope that is to come.
 - a) "Isaiah speaks because Sinai could condemn treachery but could not cure it—and he waits for the Suffering Servant who would make salvation blaze like a torch."
 - b) Isaiah does not say, God might do this but rather God will cause this to happen.
- C. Let's wrap this up with this amazing imagery of the new reality of redemption.
 - 1. There in verse 2 God promises that the nations shall see your righteousness and all kings your glory, and you shall be called by a new name that he mouth of the Lord will give.
 - a) This is a pattern we see throughout the Bible.
 - (1) Abram is renamed Abraham which means he will be the father of many nations. That happens because of a Son Abraham who is Jesus. This amazing good news we have seen in Isaiah was meant for all nations—people like us.
 - (2) Jacob which means cheater became Israel which means one who contended with God.
 - (3) Simon become Peter...Saul becomes Paul and so on.
 - b) The gospel gives us a new beginning and even more important—hope of eternal life.
 - c) In Isaiah, the new name shows up in verse 4 of chapter 62—(Isaiah 62:4 ESV) You shall no more be termed Forsaken, and your land shall no more be termed Desolate, but you shall be called My Delight Is in Her.
 - d) Jesus promises a new name for us through the Apostle John in (Revelation 3:11-13 ESV) ¹¹ I am coming soon. Hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown. ¹² The one who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God. Never shall he go out of it, and I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down from my God out of heaven, and my own new name. ¹³ He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'
 - 2. The reason God can clothe traitors with righteousness and give enemies a new name is because his Son was nailed to the cross and rose from the grave.
 - a) If you have been born again, you are a trophy of grace in the hand of the Lord.
 - b) I invite everyone to come to Jesus in faith and repentance and he will clothe your unrighteousness with his righteousness and your righteousness will go forth as brightness and your salvation as a burning torch.
- D. Conclusion
 - 1. God will not be silent.
God will not rest.
God will not fail.
 - 2. He will take traitors and clothe them.
He will take shame and turn it into beauty.
He will cause praise to sprout before the nations.
 - 3. And when that happens, silence will be impossible.
 - a) "I will greatly rejoice in the LORD."