

Sunday 27th December 2020

Bible reading: Isaiah 61: 10 – 62:3

Delighting God

“I delight greatly in the LORD; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of his righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels”. V10

“I am overwhelmed with joy in the Lord my God”...

Observation

Isaiah is overwhelmed with joy because he is dressed in salvation and righteousness, like a groom or a bride in wedding clothes. The Lord will show justice to the nations and everyone will praise Him. The nations will see God's righteousness and glory.

Application

When we see God's glory we should be overwhelmed with joy. When we think of our relationship with God, joy should fill our souls.

When prayer or Bible study or worship become a chore, a ritual to be endured, then we have lost the plot. Joy is meant to be a centre piece in the Christian life.

God has dressed me in the garment of salvation. I once was lost and dead in my sin. Then, miracle of miracles, Jesus reached down to me from the cross and brought cleansing and forgiveness. He walked out of the tomb and brought me resurrection life.

My life has meaning because I am in Christ. I am overwhelmed with joy at what God has done in me.

Joy is different to happiness. Happiness is fleeting- it literally depends on what is happening. Joy is eternal because it is a gift from God. Even in the greatest trial or the saddest moment, joy will be there waiting to bubble up to the surface like a spring of water. I am saved in Christ, so I will rejoice.

Christmas Every Day!

The hustle and bustle of this hectic Christmas season, the racing and chasing to the mall, waiting in the long lines at the checkout counter, buying those gifts to make sure you cover everyone, decorations to put up, trees and tinsel, lights on the tree, preparing for family get-togethers, the squeals of delight, “Oh, it's perfect!” . . . and now it's over! There is a bit of a letdown. Was it worth the effort, all these cultural expectations for Christmas?

Soon, the lovely Christmas trees will be bare, and at the curb (for those of you who still use the live tree). No more lights. It will blow in the wind as it twists and turns on the curb, waiting for the garbage truck!. The extra cooking, and the over catering is done! We will be eating leftovers for a week! It's over for another year—or is it?

The great prophet Isaiah, the evangelist of the Old Testament, peers into the future. He brings the Good News of the soul-saving Gospel, and with it he brings us the word: Rather than a letdown after the Festivities, Christ's Arrival Lets Us Celebrate Christmas Every Day.

Isaiah says, “I will greatly rejoice.” “I shall exult.” In our text, the bridegroom is just getting himself decked out for the big day; the bride is just putting on her jewels. The wedding is coming up. Even the earth itself, the garden, is sprouting with anticipation. Everyone can hardly wait.

But sometimes after the wedding's over, there's a letdown. Certainly, for the parents of the couple as they slump over in their chairs, exhausted and melancholy that their babies are all grown up and gone forever from their bedrooms. This is post-Christmas. It can be a Letdown.

Troubles never take a holiday. Debt, particularly during January when the Christmas credit-card bills appear in the mailbox. Depression. The relatives have gone home. It's back to work. The kids are back in school. For all it's, back to the routine. Letdown.

These may be times we're weary and worn out, nerves frayed. We snap at loved ones and all the peace on earth, goodwill toward fellowman is packed up again in storage until next year!

The pains we thought we could subdue with brightly coloured packages, and dreams that this year having the family together would solve everything are back. And they hurt as much as they did before

During Advent, we sang "Joy to the world." But has anything about the world really changed? Or is it all back to being the sinful, and disappointing the way it was before—is this a letdown?

Well, hear once more the inspired words of Isaiah: *"I delight greatly in the Lord; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of his righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels"*.

This is the Sunday-after-Christmas text. Now that Christ has come, God has done something—clothed us with garments of salvation, covered us with the robe of Jesus' righteousness. And because that has happened, now we will rejoice. The party is just getting started! No letdown. Christ's arrival lets us celebrate! It's Christmas today!—and every day!

The celebration really couldn't start until now, until Christ came. It's as Paul wrote in Galatians 4:4-5: *"But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship". When the fullness of time came, then Jesus took our burden upon himself, kept the Law perfectly in our place, took the punishment of our Lawbreaking upon himself on the cross"*.

We celebrated Christmas in our homes with family and friends; we celebrated with our extended families in our churches; but the celebration doesn't end. With Jesus Christ's coming, the wedding doesn't end with throwing rose petals; the wedding continues for the whole, endless marriage. The Head of the Church, Jesus Christ, has given His Bride, you and me, the one jewel of great price, the Good News of the Christmas Gospel. We wear the royal robes of righteousness—forgiveness of all our sins—made for us by Jesus on that cross. We are decked in the garment of salvation—eternal life in heaven—placed on us in our belief and acceptance of Jesus and subsequent baptism. No letdown! This lets us celebrate every day.

Back in 2015 the Schmitt family, treasure hunters from Sanford, Florida. Finally, struck gold after more than a decade of searching. Their discovery off the Florida coastline was worth \$1m in gold artifacts from a three-hundred-year-old Spanish shipwreck.

We strike gold every day when the jewels of Jesus Christ, the rich garments of Jesus Christ's forgiveness, are delivered to us in His Word and through prayer. When we confess up to our mess ups—those harsh and angry words, carrying grudges, the unforgiveness—we are again, every day, washed clean in the blood of the cross of the Babe of Bethlehem. When we feel the letdown of family gone, of debts that don't go away, of work and routine and life that we wish would just change some way, we are again reminded that Immanuel came to be God with us every day. "You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the Lord," our text says, "and a royal diadem in the hand of your God" (62:3). No letdown. Christ being born to be among us lets us celebrate forever!

Dear old Simeon had waited all his life for Christmas. And then when Mary and Joseph finally bring the baby into the temple. It's the moment Simeon has been anticipating for years. He takes the Christ Child in his arms, and there's no letdown. "Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace" (Lk 2:29). His eyes had seen the salvation he'd been waiting for and all the world needed. It should be that way for each and every day. No disappointment. No letdown. Let the celebration begin! Christmas every day!

The Robe of Righteousness is first and foremost a Gift

In Luke 15 we find the story of the prodigal son. It is a wonderful back ground story that Jesus used not only to talk about the Father's Love but also to reveal to us a little more about our Robes of Righteousness.

Most of us know the story. The youngest son wants his inheritance and so begs and pleads for it until his father agrees to his request.

He then goes out and wastes everything. He spends it all on what the Bible calls wild living. Translation of that we know to be; excessive drinking, committing all kinds of immoral acts and other sundry things. He got so caught up in his life of sin that by the time sin got through with him, he had wasted all of his inheritance. And his only friends, if they were in fact his friends, were a bunch of pigs who didn't even want to share their pig slop with him.

Ravi Zacharias is correct when he says: *"Sin will take you farther than you want to go, keep you longer than you want to stay, and cost you more than you want to pay."*

This young man knew that he had blown it. But he still knew the family business and believed that he could be a good enough worker to be hired so he started walking back to ask for a job. Perhaps his father would be kind enough to give him a job so that he could at least have some bread to eat and a place to sleep at night. He had been a hard worker before and he knew he could at least do that.

Well, as you read the story you know that the Father does more than that. He interrupts his son's well-rehearsed speech and gives him back three things that were only given to sons – a ring, a robe and a pair of shoes. The father was interested in having him come back as a hired hand, but as who he was – His Son.

That Story is Our Story – It is the Story of All Humanity. We all have been down the path of sin – we all have ended up in all kinds of different sins – lying, stealing, treating others badly, saying the wrong things and in general just disobeying God.

In other words, we all have broken more than one and more than once God's Laws. There is no one here today that has not sinned. Maybe in our minds we have not sinned much, but the question is not quantity nor quality but actuality – we all have sinned and are short of the Glory of God. That is a fact.

But rather than throw us away our Heavenly Father does the exact opposite. Our Heavenly Father is like this Father in our Story who runs out to meet us, greet us and welcome us home. We find that our God is One who accepts us not as a hired hand but as a son and daughter. We find a God who loves us, rescues us, redeems and restores us.

And He gives us a new robe to wear. A new robe called a Robe of Righteousness – or a Robe of Right Standing. A robe that signifies that we have been Born Again; that we have received His Mercy and Grace and have been transformed from the Inside Out.

It is a Robe that we cannot earn, nor do we work for in order to keep it. Salvation is a gift from God. From its beginning to its end salvation is a gift of God's Grace. It is the birthright of us being Born Again. God does not give us a Robe of Righteousness because we earned it like a hired servant, or because we do servant like things afterwards. Our Robe of Righteousness – Our robe of being born again is 100% gift.

There are no hired servants in God's Kingdom. There are only sons and daughters. We cannot earn, or nor can we be worthy enough to earn the right to wear a robe of salvation; a robe of right standing or a robe of righteousness.

Our robes – these robes of salvation and holiness are ours because of grace; pure grace. Not grace earned because we can't earn grace. Our robes are grace robes; and they have always been grace robes and will always be grace robes.

- The reason you are saved and I am saved, is that Our LORD JESUS paid our debt of sin on the Cross of Calvary.
- The reason you are saved and I am saved, is because of Jesus' broken body and shed blood.
- The reason you are saved and I am saved, is that we have been born from above through the power and presence of God's Holy Spirit.

And it is because of all of that we can wear God's Robe of Righteousness. Because of that we can have right standing before Our LORD. Because of that we can enter into His House with thanksgiving and praise. Because of Him; because of Jesus we are saved, we are being saved, and we will be saved.

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, thank you for the gift of salvation. All my sins are gone, cleansed by you blood. Help me to remember this when the world overwhelms me. And Father if there are any here today that have not been born again by the Spirit of God and received this gift of grace in the robe of righteousness. May they today invite Jesus to be their Lord and Saviour. Amen.