

"The Eternal Sermon of the Son of God"

Isaiah 61:1-3

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Advent 3 B

Pastor Michael L. McCoy

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church of Emmett, Idaho

Grace, mercy and peace to you in the Name of the LORD our God; that is, in the Name of the Father and of the † Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Dear Baptized,

It is our blessed privilege to believe, teach and confess that Jesus Christ is true God, begotten of the Father from eternity and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary. The eternal Son of God. There never was when He wasn't. Before Abraham was, Christ is. Before the creation of the universe and the archangels and all the company of heaven, Christ is. As with the Son of God, also with the Holy Spirit and the Father. Three persons. One God Who always is.

In the Divine counsel of these three in eternity, the Son is called forth to be the Redeemer of the world. From all eternity up unto the "in the beginning" of Genesis, if we may use such a phrase to understand these matters from our time-bound perspective, the Son of God is sent to proclaim the message of salvation, pardon, forgiveness and redemption. From Genesis 1 to Isaiah 61 the LORD God is with His people. His Word has been one of Law that always accuses the old adam and of Gospel that bestows grace, mercy and peace. In Isaiah 61, the Son of God – that is, the Christ, which is the Messiah – preaches a sermon.

Now, this particular sermon was delivered centuries before the Son of God would be incarnate by the Holy Spirit and delivered of Mary in the little town of Bethlehem – hundreds of years before Jesus, the Son of God, would stand in the Jordan while the Holy Spirit descended upon Him – before the Mount of Transfiguration when the Father spoke from heaven, telling the disciples to listen to His own Beloved Son – before Jesus preached from His vantage points both the Sermon on the Mount and the sermon from the cross – before the Risen Christ showed His nail-pierced palms to His fearful disciples and preached, "Peace, peace." Centuries before "a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be enrolled . . . and all went to be enrolled, each to his own city" (Luke 2), the Son of God preached the Good News through His servant, the Prophet Isaiah. On this Third Sunday of Advent, please listen to a portion of the Messiah's message as recorded in Isaiah 61:1-3. In doing so, you will hear . . .

. . . "The Eternal Sermon of the Son of God"

"The Spirit of the LORD God is upon Me, because the LORD has anointed Me to bring Good Tidings to the afflicted; He has sent Me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; to grant to those who mourn in Zion - to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle

of praise instead of a faint spirit; that they may be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified.”

Thus far the Word of the LORD our God.

Dearly Beloved, please know that there is but One God and One Christ. Thus there is but one Gospel . . . one message of Good Tidings of great joy which is for all the people, and although it's been said many times, many ways, the eternal Good News is that the justification of the sinner before God is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone, the Incarnate Son of God Who has come to grant us forgiveness of all our sins.

So hearken the ears of your souls this day as the Son of God speaks – as the Christ proclaims – as the Messiah preaches – as the Anointed One announces His Glad Tidings to you. “The Spirit of the LORD God is upon Me, because the LORD has anointed Me to bring Good Tidings to the afflicted.”

The afflicted are those with afflictions and they be us – thee and me – and the afflictions are many and they be ours – thine and mine. Among them are a broken heart – both the kind that forces old men to have surgery in the morning as well as the kind that causes young women to weep at night. There are those who are being held captive in a prison cell – as was Joseph in Egypt and Silas in Philippi in days gone by and those unnamed ones today and tomorrow – as well as those souls chained with the fetters of guilt and iron shackles of shameful sins weighing upon them like a wet pall – as were King David and Mary Magdalene of years ago and many of you here today and tomorrow.

And speaking of palls, the afflicted include those who mourn the deadly separation of a grandma, a daughter, a husband, a family or more, whether such separation be due to death, as of Uriah and Bathsheba thousands of years ago, or Erna's family today, or your family some tomorrow, or due to a disappointment that causes a parting of ways – as in the sickening, incestuous hour of Amnon and Tamar in Old Testament times, or the Corinthian congregation in New Testament times, or even among the faithful flock of these latter days and the ones to follow.

There is grieving whatever the source, and the tears are salty and one day follows the next with the adornment of ashes sifting down from the top of one's head, and one night blends into another with the flavor of ashes in the mouth. Such were the days of Job when his children died in a devilish, natural disaster, and the dreadful days when, following the diabolical order of a mad fiend, “a voice was heard in Ramah, wailing and loud lamentation,” (Matthew 2:8) for the reason that the boys of Bethlehem were no more, and the 1.5 million days this year when the unborn are denied Holy Baptism, and their mothers must enter eternity with such notches carved into their souls. Truly our spirits faint at the remembrance of but a few afflictions in this foregoing litany of sorrow, woe, sickness and death. Is there hope for them? Is there any hope for us?

Into just such a world, centuries before Jesus was baptized by John, the Christ preached the sermon written down for the Church by the Prophet Isaiah. Listen to the first part of the eternal sermon of the Son of God. He says, “The Spirit of the LORD God is upon Me, because the LORD has anointed Me to bring Good Tidings to the afflicted.” That means that the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit desire you, the afflicted, to hear that there is Good News for you, and for those moms. The Father sent the Son and the Holy Spirit anointed the Son to bring Good Tidings to the afflicted. This Gospel is intended for all, but especially for you and particularly for me.

Now, in this eternal sermon of the Son of God, the message is not only about Jesus, the message is Jesus. The Son of God was sent to bind up the broken-hearted. This is accomplished, not by Jesus saying it's okay and everything will be better in the morning, but by dying on the cross and having His heart pierced in your place. This Jesus did for the binding up of and for the healing of your broken heart.

The Son of God said that He is sent to proclaim liberty to the captives and the opening of the prison to those who are bound. That's you; that's me. In order for our souls to be freed from the curse of the Law and the accusations of Satan, Jesus is lashed to the whipping post and is whip-lashed in our stead. By those bloody red stripes and the opening of the wounds on His back, we are healed. The iron bars of sin and guilt are no more and the gate to heaven is opened. And even if one must be incarcerated in a prison of this world's making, one is free, just as in the Philippian jail the Freedom Song of Silas was not bound, but had free course and was preached to the joy and edifying of Christ's holy people, thus becoming the message of hope for those who had no hope.

In His eternal sermon, the Son of God said, "The Spirit of the LORD God is upon Me, because the LORD has anointed Me to bring Good Tidings to the afflicted; He has sent Me . . . to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God." One does not have to wait, for it is written that we are to "seek the LORD while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near" (Isaiah 55:6). "For He says, 'At the acceptable time I have listened to you, and helped you on the Day of Salvation.'" Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the Day of Salvation" (2 Corinthians 6:2). Dearly beloved, there's no time like the present when Jesus is present.

The sermon of the Only-Begotten Son of the Father continues with the glad tidings of great joy, "The Spirit of the LORD God is upon Me, because the LORD has anointed Me to bring Good Tidings to the afflicted; He has sent Me . . . to comfort all who mourn; to grant to those who mourn in Zion - to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit." Jesus stands with two sisters at the gravesite of their brother. They, along with all those assembled there, are weeping. This simply will not do. So Jesus takes their weeping upon Himself and weeps in their place and in their stead. He takes their death and He gives them His Life, speaking the Word that Death may not deny. "Lazarus, come forth" (John 11:43) and the tomb ties that bind the dead are loosed and Lazarus lives.

At Jesus' Word, the stench of death gives way to the oil of Joy to the world. The festive garland of gladness replaces ashes of sadness. He sends a substitute for Isaac and Abraham's sets aside his knife with shouts of praise and thanksgiving. God's Good News is not only preached from the cross amidst tears of anguish that pierce the hearts of God and man, but is replaced with the Hallelujahs of Easter morning – that they which sow in tears of sadness may reap with shouts of joy. Behold, the silent Word in the manger is pleading and the silent Word in the tomb is resting, all in anticipate of Christ's Ascension to heaven and ours in a day or two from now; that is, when the faithful departed and the faithful waiting are joined together in body and soul, and are congregated never to be asunder again.

Until that day, the eternal sermon of the Son of God continues to be proclaimed to His Church. The Good Tidings of great Joy which is intended for all the people, God born in Bethlehem and crucified in Calvary is the Risen Redeemer Who binds up your broken heart in Baptism; proclaims His pardon and liberty to faithful captives in the Absolution; preaches the year of the LORD's favor from the

mouths of His pastors in the One message of forgiveness, and comforts the faithful as they attend the Supper wherein our souls are fed at His Table for the remission of sins . . . at this Wedding Banquet where angels, archangels and the whole company of heaven, including our loved ones who have departed this world in the Christian Faith, even now feast with us and we with them.

For now, this is spoken that you and I and all the faithful remnant “may be called oaks of righteousness;” that is, those who stand in the Righteousness of God, which is Christ’s Righteousness granted unto us. That makes us the “planting of the LORD.” All of this is in order that the LORD God Almighty “may be glorified.”

God, indeed, is glorified in Himself, but we pray in our petitions that He may be glorified in us. How is this done? When we believe that we are righteous and justified, not on account of any works of our own, but on account of the merits of Christ. This is the article of faith upon which we either stand or fall – and therefore, God is glorified when, in faith, we continue to receive from Him that which Jesus has earned for us, and then, in response to this Good News, we respond by standing in the truth in faith towards Him and in fervent love toward one another.

Dearly Beloved, the truth that you and I and all the repentant faithful are forgiven of all our sins in the Name of the Father and of the † Son and of the Holy Spirit, well, this continues to be the Good Tidings of the Eternal Sermon preached to us by the Son of God; namely, by “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Revelations 13:8). So listen once again to the Christ:

“The Spirit of the LORD God is upon Me, because the LORD has anointed Me to bring Good Tidings to the afflicted; He has sent Me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the year of the LORD’s favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; to grant to those who mourn in Zion; that they may be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified.” Amen.

May the peace of God that surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, now and forever. Amen.