



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.mzluth.org

December 25, 2022

Pastor James Enderle

The Festival of the Nativity of Our Lord

First Lesson/Sermon Text: [Isaiah 52:7-10](#)

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 98

Second Lesson: [Hebrews 1:1-9](#)

Gospel Lesson: [John 1:1-14](#)

Rejoice! The Savior is Born!

Welcome to worship today at Morrison Zion Lutheran Church. We exist to glorify God. We have set out to do this by gathering around the Gospel so that we may grow in the Gospel and go to others with this Gospel.

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from Jesus Christ, our Lord:

One of the things that people like to do around the holidays is have debates or arguments about their favorite Christmas movies. In the 7th and 8th grade class on the last day before Christmas they were having a bracket tournament and they were putting up every Christmas movie against the other. There are so many out there. There are people who think Die Hard is a Christmas movie and those who don't. There are those who love the old Grinch and some that like the new Grinch. There are so many of those Christmas movies out there. It's that holiday season. It's that time of the year and there is story after story about this season and about this time.

Today as we look at God's Word, we're going to look at a section of Scripture from the Old Testament, from Isaiah. And even though we're not looking at the traditional lesson (maybe from the Gospel or even any of those from Luke or how Mary lays Jesus in the manger), I think we are going to be able to see the true story of Christmas. We are going to see what the story of Christmas is all about by looking back at Isaiah and seeing what was promised and what God would do. We can also see it by looking back at history and where things were and what God planned to do. In a sense, the story of Christmas and what God did and what Jesus came to do is a story about the whole history of God and man. So as we look at Isaiah, don't just think of it as another prophecy. This is the story of Christmas. This is who God is and who we are and what God has done for us.

As Isaiah starts out, it's at that section: ***How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation...*** Why was it necessary for people to come and bring good news, to proclaim good tidings, to proclaim peace? A little bit later in Isaiah, in Verse 9, it says:

Burst into songs of joy together, you ruins of Jerusalem. What had happened? What had happened to the people and to the nation of Israel?

We know that the nation of Israel at the time of Isaiah was not doing very well. They were being defeated and taken off into captivity. But this is nothing new for the people of Israel because what led them to this situation? What led them to this situation was failure and betrayal. The story of Christmas begins with the story of betrayal and failure.

In all those Christmas movies, there is that plan that you see. My wife likes those kind of cheesy Hallmark ones. You see that plan laid out where you know what the characters are going to do and how it is going to happen. You can kind of write the script as it goes.

For us and for all people, it's kind of true as well. As Israel was facing this, what they had brought upon themselves was because of their failure and their betrayal against God. It's the story that had happened over and over again. It's the story that happens over and over again today in our world. In history, think about it from Eden, to the Exodus, to Elijah, Elisha, and on to Isaiah.

In Eden, God made this perfect place for Adam and Eve and what did they do? They failed to listen to God's love and His commands. They betrayed Him. They thought "God, you don't love us and we're going to listen to the devil and do what we think is best to make ourselves god." Down through history as rebellion and rebellion and people straying from God's Word and then even as God comes to save in the Exodus. What happens? They come out and what do they do? They rebel and complain. "God, why have you brought us out into the desert to die? It was better for us to be slaves in Egypt than to be out here wandering in the desert." Then they get to where Moses goes to collect the Ten Commandments and what do they do? They begin worshiping other gods. This is what happens on and on and on as God brings them into the Promised Land and shows them and helps them defeat their enemies. What do they do? They continually go to other gods—failure and betrayal.

What do we see around us and in our lives? We often think we can do it on our own. People look to mankind and say "Look at the things that we can do!" We see wars and strife and broken relationships. We see failure and betrayal all around us. We know that sin has taken over and is in each and every one of us. The problem is not something far away and out there. The problem is inside each and every one of us. We have to start the story there because without it, why is there a need for good news? Why is there a need for peace and good tidings? We have to know the situation in order to actually hear the good news.

That's really what the story of Christmas is all about. It's about good news—those who come sharing peace and God's tidings. The story of Christmas is really the story of

God's love; God's love to send a Savior to redeem us and to fix the problems. We know that so often we want to focus on the wrong things.

In all those movies you go back to, so often the Christmas stories are about love. Romance is lost and maybe there is some betrayal and people have to find themselves. So often people on Christmas want that romantic Christmas story about love, but we know that the real Christmas story is about God's love. God's love shown by what He has done. This is what Isaiah is really about—looking at a God who comes to proclaim peace and says, ***"Your God reigns!"*** Your God is there for you. For those who are weeping and are in this destruction have joy and redemption." In Verse 9 it says the Lord has come to comfort His people.

We know so often on Christmas we think about that baby in a manger. What greater picture of God's love—that Jesus chose to leave heaven, to leave perfection and to come be among us, to be one of us, to be Emmanuel ("God with us"). This is God's love. From the minute of betrayal in Eden God promised His love. God's love is all around us and is shown so clearly on Christmas—that God would make this plan to redeem us in a way that we could never imagine.

I think another part of all of those Christmas stories that we see as well is that idea of redemption. So often the people have to go through this story art to find themselves and to make things right. They dig down and they learn their lesson and they find out how they can change themselves and redeem themselves and fix things. The story of Christmas surely is one of redemption. But people are really focused on the wrong thing. People know that Christmas and the holiday seasons are really important. The world and our country pretty much shuts down at this time. Everyone goes home and it's just a special time. So the world kind of stops and says it's such an important time. But are they focused on the wrong things?

So often in those stories we're focused on the person and redeeming themselves. But are we not seeing where that redemption really comes from? The story of Christmas is a bigger story. The story of Christmas is the story of God's redemption; God's redeeming work to save you. It's not a story of how we can pull ourselves up or learn the lesson that we need to do to change and to make it up to everyone else. We can't do it! Our sins are too great! So what has God done?

The story is shown so clearly in Isaiah. What Isaiah is really talking about is that the Lord Himself will go and do it. Verse 10: ***The LORD will lay bare his holy arm in the sight of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth will see the salvation of our God.*** We can't do it! No person could do it! We need God to be our Savior. We need that little baby to come as God—true man and true God—to live for us.

What is so fascinating about using Isaiah on Christmas day is that we speak about the joy and the good news that comes, but you know what follows right after this in the Book of Isaiah? If you're familiar with [Isaiah 52 and 53](#), in those sections we hear about that great Suffering Servant. How can we not connect Jesus and that plan of salvation to what He is going to do? How God put all the iniquity on Him, that Great Exchange of all of our sins going on our Savior that we have failed, that we go astray, but our Lord has redeemed us. We see that God's plan and His mercy is so good. It's so good that it's redemptive work for you but what is made clear in our readings is that it's not just for you and for me but for the whole world.

Notice, ***The LORD will lay bare his holy arm in the sight of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth will see the salvation of our God.*** And as our Gospel Lesson spoke about that Light that has come into the world. Over and over again in that Gospel Lesson it speaks about the love that God has for the world. On Christmas, we hear about God's plan, God's redemptive work to save us, but there is something else that is really special about it.

Isaiah starts by talking about: ***How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation...*** Do we know who gets to be those people with beautiful feet? We do. As we know that God has redeemed us and that His love is for us, it's also for all of those around us. As so many lose their focus on Christmas and are distracted by all the other stories and all the other things, as this world kind of comes to a stop and focuses on Christmas, we get to share that peace and joy and good news—the good news that Jesus died for them. No matter what sins they have committed, their God loves them and forgives them. What better news?

As we focus on so many things and as family and friends come and go, we know shortly, in a few days, things will return to normal. The holiday season goes on, but God's love remains. That true story of Christmas, the true story of God's redemptive work and His love for us, it remains with us. It's the story of God and us, the story of Jesus come to be among us, the story that you are redeemed and loved and forgiven. Amen.

And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. [\(Philippians 4:7\)](#) Amen.