

Advent III
December 13-14, 2008

Jesus Brings You a Season of Joy

Text: Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11

The evangelist shocked his audience when he said, *“Heaven is my home, but I’m not homesick.”* He was not only living for this life and forgetting about heaven. He was reflecting upon the truth that God wants us to enjoy what he has provided us with here on earth. There is an old Jewish proverb which reinforces this idea: *“In the judgment, a man will be held accountable for every blessing he refused to enjoy.”*

In this season of joy, there is much for you and me to take in and appreciate. While there is a certain amount of rush and hassle, we do take time to be a little more patient, more tolerant and more caring. Some of this is of course motivated by the “trimmings” of the season. How could we not be with the celebrations, the food and the company. Much of this is secular or social in nature however. As Christians our joy goes much deeper than that however. This joy can be a constant because it is rooted in the arrival of our Savior Jesus Christ.

Isaiah speaks the words of Jesus himself in our text this morning(evening). Jesus indicates that this is the case as appears in the synagogue in Nazareth quoting this passage and speaking of Himself as the fulfillment. God’s timing has come about and with the promised coming of our Savior we are in the-

JESUS BRINGS YOU A SEASON OF JOY

I. It is good news for you

II. It is time to give God praise

III. Your salvation is sure

I.

What great news this was to a captive nation. There would be a time when they would be back in God's good graces. The Messiah Himself was announcing "the year of God's favor". What a delightful season that would be. Each of us probably has a favorite time of year. There are people I know who absolutely go all out doing this season in decorating and buying gifts for other people. They can't get enough of the Christmas season.

There are still others who love Spring, Summer or Fall. I don't too many who love Winter except those from the northern states or the mountains who love or make their livelihood on winter-time recreation. Yet in the Old Testament there was a time that was special or set aside, it was the Jubilee year. It was a year of celebration and a year that was to be holy to the people. Fields would rest and were not to be worked because it was a year of freedom and liberty.

There is definitely that imagery here. The message that the Messiah brings is God coming to the rescue. Whatever the hurt of his people God had a solution. While it had an immediate fulfillment for the people of Isaiah's day it pointed forward to the appearance of Jesus Christ. Through Him God would provide the ultimate comfort, healing and security it would certainly be a time of joy. **2**

II.

This past week was a little better than we expected. This weekend is almost balmy. It was a real change that God provided for us. It was refreshing and quite a relief.

Such a contrast is also evident in verse three of our text when God promises a change for His people. This is reason for great joy. There would be crowns of beauty, oil of gladness and garments of praise instead of garments that marked sadness and despair.

As we go to that first Christmas we know that Mary felt joy over Jesus. In her life there was now a great joy which came from knowing that God was allowing her to have a special part in the redemption of the world as the mother of the Christ child. Her joy would be expressed in the words of Luke 1:39-45 which know as the Magnificat.

On the night of Jesus' birth the angels felt joy when they sang, "*We bring you good news of great joy,*" they said. Why? Because this One whose birth they heralded was to become the Savior of the world. Simeon and Anna felt joy over Jesus in the Temple. Why? Because of the hope which the promised child brought to them in the midst of their problems.

This points us to God's season of joy. The end of verse three says of God's people, "*They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the LORD for the display of his splendor.*" The joy that Christ brings is not limited or walled in by how we might feel during this season, because for some this is not a happy season or this Christmas is especially sad. The joy that Christ gives to us is that we are claimed by God and firmly rooted for which is reason for the praise of God.

III.

In Scotland and Wales, there used to be a custom to take down all the Christmas greenery on January 6, which was known as old Christmas day. It was thought that to fail to remove the decorations by that day would bring bad luck. Our difficulty, of course, is not getting rid of Christmas promptly but in keeping some of it permanently. When the halls are no longer decked with holly and the Christmas bills come in, we must still hear “*Joy to the World*” ringing in our hearts.

We do that when we remember Jesus Christ as the center of the season. A unique feature of Christmas, although often clouded by commercialism, is that the songs of the season speak of the real reason for our celebration in this season of joy. What a wonderful opportunity that is for you and me to bring that joy into the lives of people who are without that hope and joy.

The joy of the season is that Jesus has come to us. He comes to us not only at Bethlehem but also in Word and Sacrament as we celebrate this morning. We too receive joy and deliverance with the assurance that are sins are freely forgiven in Christ Jesus. As surely as plants grow so shall God’s salvation be seen through His church for all the world the see. This announcement lit up the sky on the first Christmas and it lights in our lives for others to see in this *Season of Joy*. Amen.