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**CHRISTMAS EVERY DAY**

**Sermon for the 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday after Christmas, 2020**

**Isaiah 61:10-62:3**

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is the First Reading from before, Isaiah 61:10-62:3: <sup>10</sup> **I rejoice greatly in the LORD. Let my soul shout with joy in my God! For He has clothed me with garments of salvation. He has wrapped me in a robe of righteousness, like a bridegroom who puts on a splendid head-dress, such as a priest wears, and like a bride who decorates herself with her jewels.** <sup>11</sup> **For, as the ground makes its sprouts come up, and, as a garden causes its seedlings to sprout up, so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise to sprout up before all the nations.**

<sup>62:1</sup> **For Zion's sake I shall not keep silent, and for Jerusalem's sake I shall not remain quiet until her righteousness goes forth like a bright light, and her salvation burns brightly like a torch.** <sup>2</sup> **The nations will see your righteousness and all the kings your glory. You will be called by a new name, which the mouth of the LORD will designate.** <sup>3</sup> **Then you will be a splendid crown in the hand of the LORD, and a royal headband in the palm of your God.**

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

The hustle and bustle of another holiday season, the hurrying around, the racing and chasing to the shops, the waiting in the long lines at the checkout, the buying of that perfect gift for that special person, the decorations to put up, the trees and tinsel, the lights on the tree, the

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preparing for family get-togethers, and the squeals of delight as gifts are opened, is now over. We have 12 months to catch our breath, before we do it all again.

Soon, the lovely Christmas tree will be bare. There will be no more lights. If a real Christmas tree was used, it will soon wither away and die, before being thrown away. If an imitation tree was used, it will be packed away and placed in the cupboard for next time. It's all over for another year - or is it?

The great prophet Isaiah, peers into the future, bringing the Good News of the soul-saving Gospel, and with it he tells us that, rather than feeling a bit *deflated* after the Christmas festivities, the arrival of Jesus Christ lets us celebrate Christmas every single day.

He says, <sup>10</sup> **I rejoice greatly in the LORD. Let my soul shout with joy in my God! For He has clothed me with garments of salvation. He has wrapped me in a robe of righteousness, like a bridegroom who puts on a splendid head-dress, such as a priest wears, and like a bride who decorates herself with her jewels.** <sup>11</sup> **For, as the ground makes its sprouts come up, and, as a garden causes its seedlings to sprout up, so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise to sprout up before all the nations.**

Do these words sound familiar? Do you recognise them? These words are a portion of our Old Testament Reading a couple weeks ago on the Third Sunday in Advent. The difference is that back then we were looking *forward* to Christmas. Now we're looking *past*. Maybe now, we feel a little let down.

Isaiah says, **"I rejoice greatly in the LORD. Let my soul shout with joy in my God!"** In our text, the bridegroom is getting himself decked out for the big day, while the bride is putting on her jewels. The wedding is coming up. Even the earth itself, the garden, is sprouting with anticipation. Everyone can hardly wait. *That's the way we felt when we heard these words back a few weeks.*

But sometimes after the wedding is over, there's a letdown. Certainly it is like this for the parents of the couple as they slump over in their chairs, exhausted and wistful about their babies being all grown up and gone forever from their family home. Perhaps the guests are feeling a bit letdown as they wake up the next morning, dreary eyed and still half asleep. Maybe even for the bride and groom as they all of a sudden discover it's not all a party; there's a lot to learn now that they are husband and wife. That was Advent. This is post-Christmas. *What a letdown.*

The troubles we all experience never take a holiday. If any of you used your credit card to pay for Christmas gifts and so on, you will be receiving a bill in January. Now you have to pay back that debt. There may also be a feeling of loneliness. For some, the celebrations are over. The friends or relatives have gone home. It's back to work, back to the same old routine. *What a letdown.*

It's been a tough year, and perhaps we looked forward to Christmas to bring some joy into our lives - some feeling of wonderment that this time of year brings. Perhaps we looked forward to the customary getting together with family and friends for a Christmas meal and fellowship. But that's behind us now, and all of a sudden, we find ourselves wearied and worn out, with our nerves frayed, and so we snap at loved ones, and our tongues are so sharp they can cut through steel. All the peace on earth and goodwill toward our fellowman is packed up again and thrown in the cupboard, while we go back to the sins that so often enslave us. We find that even though we may have found time to relax and enjoy the season, all our problems come flooding back, and we hurt just as much as we did before. Old grudges come forth, and we remember someone who has let us down or broken our trust. *What a letdown.*

Over Christmas, we sang "Joy to the world," but has anything about the world really changed? Or is it all back to being the sinful, depressing, disappointing way it was before? Nothing but a complete letdown.

Well, hear *once more* the inspired words of Isaiah: "**I rejoice greatly in the LORD. Let my soul shout with joy in my God! For He has clothed**"

**me with garments of salvation. He has wrapped me in a robe of righteousness....**" Hear that? This isn't just an Advent, Christmas-coming-up text. This is a Sunday-after-Christmas text too. Now that Christ *has* come, God *has* done something. He has "**clothed (us) with garments of salvation,**" and "**wrapped (us) in a robe of righteousness.**" Because that *has* happened, now we *shall* rejoice. The party is just starting! There is no *letdown*. Christ's arrival *lets us* celebrate! It's Christmas every single day!

The celebration really couldn't start until now, until Christ had come. It's as Paul wrote in today's Second Reading: "*However, when the time had fully come, God sent out His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law,* <sup>5</sup> *to redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive adoption as His sons,*" (Gal. 4:4-5). When the fullness of time had fully come, Jesus, taking our burden upon Himself, kept the Law perfectly in our place, taking the punishment of our Law-breaking to the cross, thus earning for us the righteousness that a just and holy God properly expects and demands.

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 Christ's coming, the wedding doesn't end; *the wedding continues for the whole, endless marriage.* For the "**splendid head-dress**" the groom wore in Isaiah's day, for the "**jewels**" brides wear then as now, the Head of the Church, Christ, *has adorned His Bride,* you and me, with the one jewel of great price, the Good News of the Christmas Gospel. We wear the royal "**robe of righteousness,**" that is, the forgiveness of all our sins, spun for us by Jesus on that cross. We are decked in the "**garments of salvation,**" eternal life in heaven - placed on us in our baptism. There is no *letdown*. This lets us celebrate every day.

We are rich, and we are forever thankful, because the jewels of Christ, the rich garments of Christ's forgiveness, are delivered to us in His Word and Sacrament. When we confess that we have sinned – all those harsh words, that gossiping, that bickering, betraying our loved ones, carrying grudges, and the list goes on - we are again, every day, washed clean in the blood 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 has come to be God with us every day. **“You will be called by a new name, which the mouth of the LORD will designate,”** our text says, and **“a splendid crown in the hand of the LORD, and a royal headband in the palm of your God.”** There is 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 today in our Gospel, 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. He says, *“Now, Lord, You are letting Your servant depart in peace, as You have promised,<sup>30</sup> because my eyes have seen Your Salvation,<sup>31</sup> which You have prepared in the sight of all the peoples,<sup>32</sup> a Light to bring revelation to the Gentiles and the Glory of Your people Israel”* (Luke 2:29-32). Simeon's eyes had seen the salvation he'd been waiting for and all the world needed. With the eyes of faith, Simeon sees more than a baby in his arms; he sees a Saviour dying on the cross; he sees salvation for all people, both Israelite and Gentile. There was no disappointment, no letdown.

So let the celebration begin! Celebrate Christmas every day! Our Saviour has come to us, and continues to come to us, every single day. Trust in Him, and we too shall see our salvation. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep Your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

#### PRAYER FOR FIRST SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

Father in heaven, we praise You that when the right time came You sent Your Son to be the Light of the world and to gather Your redeemed people. We thank You that You have adopted us as Your children through Him, and that You invite us to call You: “Abba, Father.” Enable us by Your Spirit to live as Your loving and obedient children, doing Your will with a glad heart and a pure mind. Give us strong faith and love, that people may see that the focus of our lives is not earth but heaven.

Dear Father, show us Your mercy. Deliver us from all evil. Rescue us from all that we deserve because of our sins. Protect us in the hour of temptation. Hold us with Your fatherly hand, and lead us from the restless ways of the world to green pastures and still waters.

Let Your grace rest on us that, young or old, we may grow strong in the Spirit, be filled with wisdom, and increase in the things that please You. Shine in mercy on all who feel the need of Your mighty aid. Brighten lives filled with darkness, and bring joy into homes filled with sorrow or suffering. Give the light of Your truth to those who rule in our land and elsewhere. Fill with Your wisdom all who are in positions of influence in our society so that godlessness, superstition, and ignorance may be removed from us.

Establish the reign of the Prince of peace over the nations of the earth. Bring all to the obedience of the holy Child. Grant that the light of His life, teaching, ministry, passion, death, and resurrection may shine on every land.

We pray for the sick, the wounded, the hurt, the troubled, and the fallen, especially in our congregations. Grant them whatever they need: health of body, strength of faith, firmness of hope, and, above all, the assurance of salvation.

Hear us, O Father, and direct and govern our hearts that, by Your grace in Jesus Christ, we may be ready to depart in peace and enter everlasting life, according to Your promise, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

## **FIRST SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS**

Isaiah 61:10-62:3

<sup>10</sup> I rejoice greatly in the LORD. Let my soul shout with joy to my God! For He has clothed me with garments of salvation. He has

wrapped me in a robe of righteousness, like a bridegroom who puts on a splendid head-dress, such as a priest wears, and like a bride who decorates herself with her jewels. <sup>11</sup> For, as the ground makes its sprouts come up, and, as a garden causes its

seedlings to sprout up, so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise to sprout up before all the nations.

<sup>62:1</sup> For Zion's sake I shall not keep silent and for Jerusalem's sake I shall not remain quiet until her righteousness goes forth like a bright light and her salvation burns brightly like a torch. <sup>2</sup> The nations will see your righteousness and all the kings your glory. You will be called by a new name, which the mouth of the LORD will designate. <sup>3</sup> Then you will be a splendid crown in the hand of the LORD and a royal headband in the palm of your God.

Galatians 4:4-7

<sup>4</sup> However, when the time had fully come, God sent out His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, <sup>5</sup> to redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive adoption as His sons. <sup>6</sup> Moreover, because you are sons, God has sent out the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, the Spirit who cries, "Abba! Father!" <sup>7</sup> Therefore, you are no longer a slave but a son.

Moreover, since you are a son, you are also an heir, through God.

Luke 2:22-40

<sup>22</sup> When the time of their purification according to the Law of Moses had been completed, they took Him to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord <sup>23</sup> (as it is written in the Law of the Lord: "Every first-born male will be called 'holy to the Lord'"). <sup>24</sup> They also went to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the Law of the Lord: "a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons."

<sup>25</sup> Now there was a man in Jerusalem by the name of Simeon. This man was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the Consolation of Israel and the Holy Spirit was on him. <sup>26</sup> The Holy Spirit had revealed to him that he would not die until he had seen the Christ of the Lord. <sup>27</sup> Moved by the Spirit, he went into the Temple. When the parents brought in the Child Jesus to do for Him what was customary according to the Law, <sup>28</sup> Simeon took Him in his arms,

blessed God and said: <sup>29</sup> “Now, Lord, You are letting Your servant depart in peace, as You have promised, <sup>30</sup> because my eyes have seen Your Salvation, <sup>31</sup> which You have prepared in the sight of all the peoples, <sup>32</sup> a Light to bring revelation to the Gentiles and the Glory of Your people Israel.”

<sup>33</sup> The Child’s father and mother were astonished at the things that were being said about Him. <sup>34</sup> Then Simeon blessed them and told Mary, His mother, “Look! This Child is appointed for many in Israel to fall and to rise; and to be a Sign that is spoken against, <sup>35</sup> that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed. A sword will also pierce your own soul.”

<sup>36</sup> Moreover, there was Anna, a prophetess, a daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old. She had lived with her husband for seven years after her marriage. <sup>37</sup> This woman had been a widow for as much as eighty-four years. She never left the Temple but worshipped night and day, fasting and

praying. <sup>38</sup> Just then she came up to them, gave thanks to God and kept speaking about the Child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem. <sup>39</sup> When Joseph and Mary had done everything required by the Law of the Lord, they went back to Galilee, to their own city of Nazareth.

<sup>40</sup> The Child grew and became strong, being filled with wisdom and the grace of God was on Him.