

“Finally, Some Good News”

I suspect that all of us are a little leery when it comes to the news today. Journalism seems a bit suspect – and we question what we read, hear and see. Fake news – partisan news – bad news. We’re sick and tired of it. We don’t trust it. We don’t believe it. And more and more, we simply shut it off.

Today the Prophet Isaiah comes to us – as a newsman of sorts. Did you hear the language used? Bringing good news – publishing peace – bringing good news of happiness – publishing salvation – the headline reads, “Your God reigns.”

The news and publications have never sounded so good – especially in light of what we are being fed in these days. That’s great stuff, Isaiah – but do we trust him – do we believe the news – or do we shut it off? Is it simply, “too good to be true”?

Through the Prophet Isaiah, the Lord announces and reveals to us, the very essence of Christmas. He breaks the story of “the return of the Lord to Zion” – as the Messiah, the Savior, is born in Bethlehem.

St. John expands on the story. This One born in Bethlehem and laid in a manger – is none other than “the Word made flesh.” The Son of God, who was with the Father “in the beginning” – and through whom all things were made – has now come into His own creation – the eternal God, now dwelling in time.

True God becomes true man – to take our place. The God/man Jesus lives a life of perfect obedience to the Father’s will – in place of the disobedient. The God/man Jesus then fulfills every Word of God – including, and especially, those which speak of the punishment and wrath which sin deserves.

The highest and most Holy One – lowers Himself. The innocent, sinless One – becomes sin for us. He takes the sin of the world into His flesh – that He might be the object of all of God’s wrath at sin – and then pay the penalty for sin – death. The God/man Jesus is rejected, He is beaten, He suffers, He dies – in your place, “for you.”

Fake news? Don't like it? Too good to be true? Hard to believe? Don't trust it? Shut it off – or drown it out with something else, anything else?

This report of the Incarnation – of God taking on human flesh and blood – offends our reason. How can this be? That doesn't make sense, doesn't seem possible.

The description of the God/man Jesus coming to take our place – stokes our guilt. After all, if what the Bible says is true – then what does that say about me?

It says that I am a sinner. That my disobedience, my rejection, my rebellion – is the cause of death for God's beloved and only-begotten Son. It means that I am a sinner in need of salvation – and that I cannot save myself. And so, it is very tempting to shut it off – to stay away from such reporting.

I wonder if that is why some people stay away from church – and I'm not just talking about those who have no church – but even members of our own congregation. Is the truth of God's Word just too much to handle?

Is that why Christmas Eve service is so much better attended than Christmas Day? Sure, there are a lot of people who attend Christmas Eve to see the children – and, it is Christmas morning, after a potentially late night. But does it also have to do with the cold, hard facts?

Christmas Eve allows you to sing the great hymns – to enjoy the decorations – to be with your brothers and sisters in Christ – without the, "in your face" of the "God made flesh" of Christmas Day.

Christmas Eve allows you to be with your family in God's house – without the uncomfortableness of the Lord's Supper on Christmas Day – not just another reminder of the Incarnate Son of God who is present in our midst – but also the reality that one can partake of the Lord's Supper unworthily, to their harm – and therefore, a family member might not be able to partake.

Rather than deal with the heart and soul of Christmas – of God coming in the flesh to suffer and die for sinners – some keep God at arm's length – they control what message will be reported to them – they prefer the virtual, or symbolic, over the truth and essence of this "good news of happiness" which is Christmas.

Dearly beloved, I am so glad you are here this morning. For those who might be watching on livestream – or watching and listening to the recording days from now – don't misunderstand, we are truly glad that you have this opportunity to hear what God has to say to you.

God has sent me to bring to you the “good news” of Christmas – the birth of Jesus Christ, God's own Son in the flesh, “for you.” God has appointed me to publish this good news of His salvation. To all with ears to hear, the Lord wants you to know that He comes to you – and that's a good thing – truly, “good news of happiness.”

The devil is so deceiving – using our sin against us – all in order to keep us away from Jesus. The truth is that our sin is the reason not to stay away – it's why we come to church, hear God's Word, and receive the Lord's Supper. The good news published for you consumption today, and every day – is that Christ Jesus has come “for you” – and for me – to save sinners.

Yes, He is born, He suffers and dies because of us – but He gladly and willingly does this – in order to redeem us, to resurrect us, and to ascend us to heaven. This is the Lord baring His holy arm – coming in the flesh, into our world – to work salvation.

The good news is that He doesn't come and give us sinners what we deserve – but rather what He always desires for us. He desires us to live with Him, in peace – God and sinners reconciled. He desires you to hear, receive, and live in this “good news of happiness” that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

So, come! Don't shut it off. Don't tune it out. This good news of salvation is for you, and for all people. As Isaiah says – “all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.” What the shepherds saw in the manger – what Mary saw at the cross – what the disciples saw when locked behind doors that first Easter --- is what you will see one day.

When Christ comes again, to take you to heaven – you will see that this good news reported to you, is TRUE. God delivers this good news to you in these days – so that you may spend all your days together with Him, singing for joy – in this life, and then for all eternity. This is most certainly true.