

We Have Good News to Proclaim!

- I. **News of peace**
- II. **News of good tidings**
- III. **News of salvation**

So when did you get up this morning? Are you one of those families that has torn wrapping paper lying about the living room floor by 6:00 AM or you sleep in and wait until 10:00 AM or like our household, you wait until after church? I know some of you have opened gifts last night already because you told me, you have some of those gifts here or you have been excitedly telling your friends about the new toys you received or the new electronic gadget. It's fun to share good news about gifts you have received, isn't it? But isn't that always true about good news? It creates an excitement inside that just needs someone to tell. Ask any parents who found out they were expecting a new baby – they have to tell someone and it pains them not to. Ask a new grandparent about their new grandbaby – it's doesn't take but a second and they've already pulled out the pictures from their wallet or purse or on their cell phone. A person who receives a promotion or a raise can't wait to tell someone and go out and celebrate. Ask a student who unexpectedly passes a test and needs to run to tell mom or dad. Good news is hard to keep in. It burns inside of us and it needs to come out.

The same was true in the days of the kings of Israel. When a battle was won, a messenger would run to the next man to convey the news. Watchmen were placed on the pinnacles of the city walls above the city gates of Jerusalem waiting to catch a glimpse of a messenger coming from the battlefield to proclaim victory. Especially if there had been bad news of defeats in the past, the people of the city were so happy to hear the good news of victory!

From our lesson in Isaiah 52 this morning, the prophet describes this type of scene for us as he is given a glimpse into the future of God's people. The northern tribes of Israel had been defeated by the Assyrians in 722 BC. The southern tribes would be taken into captivity in 586 BC, about 100 years after Isaiah lived. Through his prophet, the LORD pictures the news of the defeat of the Babylonian army and the ability of God's people to return to Jerusalem. God's words are fulfilled when the people return to Jerusalem after 70 years in exile. Even though they received one bad message of destruction after another, the LORD runs to his people to tell them good news, that peace and deliverance was coming! These words also apply to us today. They tell of the good news that is proclaimed to all that their sins have been paid for and salvation is ours – that reality that we celebrate today. Listen again to Isaiah 52:7-10.

How many of you have beautiful feet this morning? No I'm not talking about a new pair of shoes or a fresh pedicure, but feet that are beautiful because they have brought good news to someone. And I'm not even talking about sharing the good news of a little baby on the way, or a raise or a recovery from sickness, I'm talking about good news as it pertains to the news God has given us to share: **News of peace, news of good tidings and news of salvation.**

News of peace. *Shalom* – this is the Hebrew word that Isaiah wrote. It is still used today as a standard greeting of "hi" or "hello." When a messenger came from the battle field it would refer to the truce or surrender that signified the end to the conflict. War had ceased! Certainly we would be ecstatic if a Soldier burst into our sanctuary this morning and shouted, "The war is ended on all fronts! All of our troops are coming home!" But the news of peace that we as Christians carry is even greater. It is a peace that surpasses all understanding because it is a peace that only God can bring. It is the end of the enmity between Satan and the offspring of the woman. It is the end to the hostility that our sin creates in our relationship with God. It is

the end to the threat of repercussions because of our sin. It is the peace the angels proclaimed to the shepherds, "Peace on earth!" It wasn't the serenity of a calm evening and a peaceful manger. It was the peace that God's anger would be appeased by the blood that flowed through this baby's veins.

When you ask people, "How are you?" and they answer, "Fine," how many really are just "fine"? Even for those of you here this morning. Inside we and others lack peace. We are worried about the in-laws who are coming to visit. You're concerned about not having any money in January because of how much you spent in December. We are still grieving over a loved one who died. We are disquieted in spirit over our relationship with God because we know that it is lacking. We are still haunted by past sins. We all need peace. Could you use good news of peace? God gave this peace in the flesh of the baby Jesus. Jesus came to tell you the good news, that there is no need to worry because your heavenly Father knows your needs and he came to restore access to God through the shedding of his holy blood. This is good news that will last beyond any present we unwrapped or are about to.

We have good news to proclaim: News of good tidings. *Tov* in the Hebrew – the general word for good things as opposed to evil things. Everyone likes good news and never likes to make the decision between hearing the good news or bad news first. It's a joy to hear good news and easy to pass on. It's good news when you get what you want for Christmas. It's good news when you get a raise or are given a clear bill of health. Interestingly enough, news is good only when the opposite or bad is considered. If I didn't get what I wanted that would be bad news, if I failed instead of passing, that would be bad news. If my illness is still around and not gone, that is bad news.

So it is with the news God gives. We will only understand and appreciate what God has done for us today in sending his Son, if we only first realize and appreciate what the alternative could have been. He could have allowed our sins to separate us from him for an eternity – instead, he came to us. This is the heart of the Gospel message: good news. Shouldn't the message of Jesus in the manger be the first response off our lips when people ask what we got for Christmas? "I got a Savior this Christmas. How about you, what did you get?" For Jesus is the source and center of all news that is good!

We have good news to proclaim: News of salvation – The Hebrew word is *I'shua* – Joshua – Jesus. Although the name for God's Son hadn't been revealed at the time of Isaiah, in essence Isaiah is saying, "*How beautiful are the feet of those who proclaim Jesus.*" For we know that the one who is called Jesus is the one who would "save people from their sins." That's what the angel Gabriel told Joseph. The Apostle Paul tells us that people need to hear about Jesus to be saved. Romans 10:12-17 *2 For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, 13 for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." 14 How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? 15 And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!" 16 But not all the Israelites accepted the good news. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our message?" 17 Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.*

The news we have about Jesus brings eternal salvation to all. No wonder God calls the feet beautiful of those that share this news.

You may be relieved that this morning your Christmas shopping is done and you can check off another year of gift giving. Not so fast. God has given you a reminder today that he has given to you a gift of good news – news of peace, news of good tidings and news of salvation. This news is for all, but will only be heard if we share it. It is God's gift to the world and our gift to give to the world. We have good news to share. To which soul will God use your feet to bring it? Amen.

Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times and in every way. (2Thessalonians 3:16)