**Isaiah 52:7-10 (1st of 3 devotions)** December 25, 2022

Pastor P. Martin **Faith Lutheran Church, Radcliff, KY** Christmas Day

*[I suggest this reading be read at the end of the devotion.]*

Dear Friends in Christ,

**In Praise of What Beautiful Feet Bring**

 There are some things, some illustrations the Bible uses, that I just don’t get. I hear them and I think, “Now what is that supposed to mean?” The first sentence of this reading is one of those pictures. ***“How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news!”*** Why does Isaiah think that guys on mountains have beautiful feet? I just don’t even know what to think about that. And while those guys run, ***“[The] watchmen lift up their voices.”*** Strange stuff.

 Let’s go to another Bible event that can help us understand. It was back in the life of David. He was king, but there was a rebellion, and it was looking like the rebels might just pull this one off! David wanted to lead his troops into battle, but they objected. *“Even if half of us die, they won’t care; but you are worth ten thousand of us. It would be better now for you to give us support from the city.”* “Are you guys calling me old?” That last part isn’t in the Bible, but it had to flash through the seasoned warrior’s mind.

 So King David “supported” them from the city. Back then even a king had no up-to-the-second status reports, so King David fidgeted with his buttons and wore out the carpet. “What’s the news from the front? What’s the news from the front?”

 Finally, *“while David was sitting between the inner and outer gates, the watchman went up to the roof of the gateway by the wall. As he looked out, he saw a man running alone. The watchman called out to the king and reported it. The king said, ‘If he is alone, he must have good news.’”* Imagine all the city a-buzz over news from the front. Imagine the people crowding to the city gate hoping to overhear the messenger’s words. Imagine how impatient David was, “Tell him to hurry up!” The messenger arrived. Gasping for air, he spoke news—of victory! A great shout went up. (2 Samuel 18) Later in life, when David relived that moment, I’ll bet he thought, “When that messenger came over the mountain pass, I just thought, ‘He has the most beautiful feet in the world!’”

 When our Isaiah reading talks of beautiful feet and mountain passes and watchmen and messengers, we have to enter an ancient scene like that one. Isaiah the prophet looks forward to Christmas Day like a watchman standing on the city walls. The stakes are high. The situation is dire. Will our short time in this world end with the condemnation our sins deserve? By our own strength we are lost. To quote Isaiah from elsewhere, *“all our righteous deeds are as filthy rags.”* In the meanwhile we live through this sin-cursed world, and things happen that make us wonder if all is not lost. Our eternal inheritance becomes such a dim hope that we almost forget about it.

 Speaking centuries before Christ’s birth Isaiah consoles God’s people living through times every bit as bad as ours. “Messengers will come ***who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say… ‘Your God reigns!”*** He tells them that soon, though they sit in ruins they will have reason to burst into song. And in a way perhaps not even exactly understood by the prophet himself, he reveals that ***“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.”*** That is what we are seeing when we peek into the stable and see a baby wrapped up in a manger. We see the Lord rolling up his sleeves, ***“laying bare his holy arm,”*** as Isaiah says it, getting down to the business of saving us.

 What wonderful news! Now what? Can we treat Christmas like the other 364 days of the year? Can we just go back to what we were doing? No! There will be time for that tomorrow. Today is a day set apart. It is not a holiday, it is a holy day. Today, we ***“burst into songs of joy… for the Lord has comforted his people.”***

 *[Read the text, then sing Hymn 353, Joy to the World]*

 *Isaiah 52:7How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, “Your God reigns!”*

 *8Listen! Your watchmen lift up their voices; together they shout for joy. When the Lord returns to Zion, they will see it with their own eyes. 9Burst into songs of joy together, you ruins of Jerusalem, for the Lord has comforted his people, he has redeemed Jerusalem. 10The 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.*