

Advent: You Who Bring Good Tidings – Isaiah 40:9-11

Introduction – Jerusalem, condemned in her unbelief and idolatry, is given words of comfort (v1). The object of that comfort would be preceded by a messenger crying out in the wilderness (v3). When this happens, she in turn is to declare from the highest places to the cities of Judah that God has come (v9). But she is not simply to bring a message. She is to point to a Person. The message has come in the form of a child. The Word became flesh.

The Good Tidings of Zion – “*Good tidings*” is translated “*euangelion*” in the LXX, the first use of the word, Gospel, or Good News, in the OT. To be an evangelical is to have good news of a remade and transformed world because a Savior has come. And the context in which this Good News has come is the bad news of the imminent exile of Judah, an illustration of the depravity of all mankind.

“Behold, Your God!” – This is what Zion is to cry out. There needs to be loud singing. This is the gospel that is to be proclaimed from the highest places to reach down into every lower kingdom and humbled heart. This is not a declaration of a theological concept administered to us from on high. It is the declaration of the Incarnation. Look! He has come! The Savior of the Nations has come! Joy to the World, the Lord is Come! Hark, the Herald Angels Sing “Glory to the Newborn King!”

Bold, Loud Voices with No Fear – Throughout history, both before Christ came (consider the prophets Isaiah or Jeremiah) or after Christ came (consider Stephen and the many Christian martyrs since), it has been dangerous to declare the Person of this Good News. And Jesus warned us to beware of men (Matt 10:17), that we would be hated by men for His sake (Luke 21:10), that we should expect tribulation (John 16:33). But He also said, “...*but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.*” What compels a Christian to proclaim the gospel with boldness? It is his right fear of God (Luke 12:4-5). It is his confidence in the power of the gospel (Rom 1:16). Perhaps mostly, it is the love of Christ which compels him (2 Cor 5:14).

Strong Arm/Tender Arm – Verses 10-11 unpack for us what it is that makes Jesus coming such Good News. In it he twice notes our Savior’s arm with two very different illustrations.

Mighty Warrior – Jesus would come with strength; His arm would rule. That is, “*His own arm brought salvation for Him*” (Isaiah 59:16). His reward and His recompense would be before Him. In other words, His work, His delivering, His saving would be efficacious. And not just to a few shepherds, not just to three wise men, not only to a smattering of Jews and a handful of Gentiles. He asked for the nations (Psalm 2:7-9) and He rules over them (Psalm 2:10-12). Personally what does this mean for you? Jesus, your Deliverer, has rescued you from the shantytown of the old Adam’s sin, and placed you in the glorious City of God, a polis which is going to cover the earth.

Tender Shepherd – The Incarnation also celebrates the care of our Savior over us like a shepherd over his sheep. Isaiah would know Psalm 23 and v11 guides us through the same thoughts as that Psalm. He feeds us, gathers us up in His arm, carries us in His love, and leads us with wisdom of our personal needs. Psalm 23 adds that He feeds us even in the very presence of our enemies, and that when we are in the darkest part of our lives, He is carrying us, leading us, at those very times.

Warrior-Shepherd – Because “*behold, your God,*” that is, because of the Incarnation, we know that Jesus has compassion on us in our trials, firsthand compassion. And because He was without sin, we know that He has the ability to lead us safely through real-life, earthy, flesh and blood difficulties and temptations (Heb 2:17-18, 4:15-16).

Celebrating the Incarnation, “Behold, Your God!” – Do you realize how surreal Christmastime is? While we have lost much of the public celebration of the birth of Christ, this is still a time when you can find yourself wishing anyone “Merry Christmas.” You sing of the birth of the Savior in a shopping mall or grocery store, right there in front of everyone. You put up lights and give gifts and you declare that you doing so “because it’s Christmas.” Christmastime is a time to practice being very bold and confident about the Gospel. Compelled by the love of Christ, fearing God and not man (when it is admittedly easier), and finding your enjoyment of the One Who came to earth enlarged by your ability and opportunity to declare it to others – this is the gift of the season of Christmas.

A Worldwide Optimism, If Only for a Time – Christians all become optimistic, if somewhat unconsciously and if only for this short part of the year, at Christmastime. We put out our faith practically and incarnationally because we believe it is for the whole world, we believe there is no reason for our neighbor not to join us, we believe in the strong and tender arm of One who succeeded and is succeeding in His reign. And we sing about it (the highest form of speech) openly, publicly, over and over.

Personal Reflection and Receiving – Has God rescued you from the race unreconciled with God? Do you know the Warrior-Shepherd? Has His arm both delivered you and cared for you? Do you recall the gift of your eyes being opened – not of your own doing, but through His amazing love? Covenant children, even if you do not remember a day you did not believe, do you realize what an incredible gift that is? Merry Christmas. Go tell them, “*Behold, Your God.*”