

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth
Sunday, December 25th, 2022
Rev. Gerry Gallant

Christmas Day
Christmas Day
Isaiah 62: 1-12

Welcome

Announcements

Music Ministry: "O Come All Ye Faithfull" by Rob Noyes

Call to Worship

All God's people—
 Boys and girls, women, men:
Come and worship!

Shepherds, Magi, saints, and angels:
Come and worship! Come and worship!

All who need the Savior, all who long for comfort:
Come and worship, come and worship Christ, the newborn King! AMEN!

Prayer of Adoration and Invocation

O Immanuel,
 O Wisdom from on high,
 O Lord of might,
 O Branch of Jesse's stem,
 O Key of David,
 O Bright and Morning Star,
 O King of nations,
 We rejoice and are glad
 on this bright Christmas morning,
 for truly you have come,
 full of grace and truth.
 Even now, come into our hearts again.
 Show us the path of knowledge.
 Comfort us in our mourning.
 Save us from our sin.
 Open wide our way to heaven.
 Turn our darkness into light.

End our sad divisions
 and be our King of peace,
 so that every creature in heaven and on earth
 will join in a chorus of praise,
 and shout with joy to you, our Lord. Amen

Opening Hymn #141: “Good Christians, All Rejoice”

Good Christians, all rejoice
 with heart and soul and voice;

now give heed to what we say:
 Jesus Christ is born today,
 ox and ass before him bow,
 and he is in the manger now.
 Christ is born today;
 Christ is born today.

now you hear of endless bliss:
 Jesus Christ was born for this.
 He has opened heaven's door,
 and we are blest forevermore.
 Christ was born for this;
 Christ was born for this.

now you need not fear the grave:
 Jesus Christ was born to save,
 calls you one and calls you all
 to gain the everlasting hall.
 Christ was born to save;
 Christ was born to save.

Call to Confession

Today we celebrate that Jesus, our Lord,
 came to earth as a human, just like us but without sin.
 He came so that we who sin may be freed from sin.
 With the peace that comes from knowing Jesus came,
 let us confess our sins and be forgiven.

Prayer of Confession

**God of grace and truth,
 in Jesus Christ you came among us
 as light shining in darkness.
 We confess that we have not welcomed the light,
 or trusted good news to be good.**

**We have closed our eyes to glory in our midst,
 expecting little, and hoping for less.
 Forgive our doubt, and renew our hope,
 so that we may receive the fullness of your grace,
 and live in the truth of Christ the Lord.**

Assurance of Pardon

I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people.
 Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you;
 he is the Messiah, the Lord

The Lord's Prayer

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.
 Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
 Give us this day our daily bread.
 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.
 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the Evil One.
 For Thine is the Kingdom, the power, and the glory,
 Forever and ever. Amen.**

Music Ministry: "Do You Hear What I Hear" by Trish Warren

Children's Hymn #148: "It Came Upon a Midnight Clear" (V 1,4,5)

It came upon the midnight clear
 That glorious song of old
 From angels bending near the earth
 To touch their harps of gold
 To all the earth, goodwill and peace
 From Heaven's all gracious King
 The world in solemn stillness lay
 To hear the angels sing.

And ye beneath life's crushing load
 Whose forms are bending low
 Who toil along the climbing way
 With painful steps and slow
 Look now, for glad and golden hours
 Come swiftly on the wing
 Oh rest beside the weary road
 And hear the angels sing

For lo! the days are hastening on,
 by prophets seen of old,
 when with the evercircling years

shall come the time foretold,
 when peace shall over all the earth
 God's promised splendours fling,
 and all the world take up the song,
 which now the angels sing.

Children's Lesson

Prayer for illumination (Congregant Prepared)

Music Ministry: "Sing We Now of Christmas" by Susan Parsons

Scripture

Isaiah 62:1-12

62 For Zion's sake I will not keep silent,
 and for Jerusalem's sake I will not be quiet,
 until her righteousness goes forth as brightness,
 and her salvation as a burning torch.
²The nations shall see your righteousness,
 and all the kings your glory,
 and you shall be called by a new name
 that the mouth of the LORD will give.
³You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the LORD,
 and a royal diadem in the hand of your God.
⁴You shall no more be termed Forsaken,
 and your land shall no more be termed Desolate,
 but you shall be called My Delight Is in Her,
 and your land Married;
 for the LORD delights in you,
 and your land shall be married.
⁵For as a young man marries a young woman,
 so shall your sons marry you,
 and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride,
 so shall your God rejoice over you.

⁶On your walls, O Jerusalem,
 I have set watchmen;
 all the day and all the night
 they shall never be silent.
 You who put the LORD in remembrance,
 take no rest,

⁷ and give him no rest
 until he establishes Jerusalem
 and makes it a praise in the earth.
⁸ The LORD has sworn by his right hand
 and by his mighty arm:
 "I will not again give your grain
 to be food for your enemies,
 and foreigners shall not drink your wine
 for which you have labored;
⁹ but those who garner it shall eat it
 and praise the LORD,
 and those who gather it shall drink it
 in the courts of my sanctuary."

¹⁰ Go through, go through the gates;
 prepare the way for the people;
 build up, build up the highway;
 clear it of stones;
 lift up a signal over the peoples.
¹¹ Behold, the LORD has proclaimed
 to the end of the earth:
 Say to the daughter of Zion,
 "Behold, your salvation comes;
 behold, his reward is with him,
 and his recompense before him."
¹² And they shall be called The Holy People,
 The Redeemed of the LORD;
 and you shall be called Sought Out,
 City Not Forsaken.

Music Ministry: "What Child is This/Child of the Poor" by Trish Warren and Susan Parsons

Sermon

Christmas is a glorious reminder of the wonderful plan that God has for his people. Long ago God made the promise to bring his people to him through redemption. God promised to restore His relationship with his people and make them like Him in their righteousness. Even though mankind had turned against him, and still continues to do so in their sin and rebellion against him, yet Christmas is a reminder that God still stands true to His promise in seeking to bring His people back into His family. Christmas is one of the ways that God constantly calls out to his lost peoples.

In the scripture we are looking at today, we will see God calling out to his people and telling them of the promises that he will fulfill in His own time. This was a great comfort to the people of Judah, to whom Isaiah originally gave this prophecy, and it should be a comfort to us because of the eternal promise which is described.

It begins in the first five verses with God himself saying that he will never give up on His people. He will continue to reach out to His people for their sake, not for his own benefit, but for the benefit of His people. God promises that he will continue to reach out to them, continue to seek them until the day that her righteousness goes forth like brightness and her salvation like a burning torch.

This is a promise that God is still fulfilling every day in the lives of every human being that is alive. God has always been working and will always be working in the lives of people. Truthfully, we may not always recognize his work. God is working for our salvation and righteousness. When we look out into this world we are often not concerned about our salvation and righteousness, we are often focused on our own greatness and comfort. So, when we do not have that greatness and comfort, we feel like God is not with us, however, in his bringing us to righteousness and salvation God may have to take us through times of weakness and discomfort.

Day and night God is seeking His people. Day and night God is at work in our lives, listening to our prayers and seeking to bring us to salvation. God reaches out to everyone in this world directly and indirectly bring His people to salvation through His son Jesus Christ, the one who has paid the debt we owe for our sinful nature and the one who has brought us back into relationship with God.

For those who are brought back into relationship with God there are promises that God makes. He promises that His people will have their righteousness recognized by all nations and all kings would recognize their Glory when his kingdom comes.

God says that his work in people will not be hidden in his Kingdom. There will come a day on which the whole world will recognize God and his people will be set apart in this world. They will have been transformed by his salvation, recreated into a new being and therefore they will be given new names, much in the same way that God renamed Abram, Jacob, Simon, and Saul. These new names will reflect the new condition and new character that God's salvation has created in His people.

Not only we His people have new names they will be greatly transformed by the work of God. Under God's care his people will be transformed into something beautiful, that is simple described as a Royal crown or Diadem. These both indicate the greatness of God's work in the lives of those that receive his salvation. In his care and under his rule people will be reformed into something beautiful. The blessings of God will fall upon those who place their faith and trust in Him and believe in His promises.

Another indicator of the blessings of salvation is given in verse four and five, where we are told that God's people will no longer be 'forsaken,' and their land will no longer be 'desolate.' Instead, you shall be called 'my delight is in her' and your land 'married.' The lives of those who find salvation will be radically different than it was here in this life. Those who can set aside their own desires and give everything to Jesus will become his bride.

This is a purposely chosen metaphor. The conditions of choice, commitment, joy, and covenant are all implied in the terms of marriage. When people give up on the ways of this world and fully commit to God, He delights in that relationship.

God's people will no longer be forsaken and desolate, but instead be a delight to God, in fact it says that God will rejoice over them. The description that is used is one that I think almost everyone here can understand. God will rejoice with great joy over the bride. If you are ever at a wedding, when the bride enters in all of her pomp and majesty, take one moment and look at the groom, they will be in awe of their soon to be wife, no matter how long they have known each other, or how long they have been planning the marriage, he is in awe of her in that moment, and to be honest the love and joy that he has in that moment never really ever leaves. This is the joy that God has when his salvation falls upon us.

This is what is being described when God says that 'my delight is in you,' it is the ultimate form of rejoicing. God wants all of His people to know that regardless of the things going on in this world, that we are eternally His in the coming kingdom.

In verses six through nine we are reassured that God will not forget his promises. God tells of his watchmen, his chosen people in this world who intercede both on his behalf and on the behalf of His people. These are people placed upon the walls, spiritual and representative, that God uses to protect his people. These people are called by God to constantly call out to God and remind him of his promises and the needs of His people in prayer. They are called to never be silent, but instead to be restless in their prayer and God's purpose in their lives.

This is a reminder for all of us of the importance of prayer in our lives. We are called to continuously be in prayer, in direct communication and relationship with God, praising and thanking him for the things that he provides in our lives, and asking for the things that we need and the guidance he can give. It is a reminder that even when things do not seem to be going in the ways that we want, we are not getting any greater or getting much comfort, that we are called to be in prayer, because God is at work in our lives. We need to be praying for our salvation because God has promised that he will bring us into Zion and His people.

It is also a reminder that we should always be prayerful about the things we undertake for God's kingdom. Whether it is an event at the church, or outreach or even just the evangelism of a friend or family member or just in our day-to-day life and work. We should be praying for God to be attentive to our labors and that he would grant us some measure of success. It is God through the Holy Spirit that changes people and brings them into His kingdom, and we cannot do it without His presence. We need to remember that everything we do should be for the

Glory of God and His kingdom, and with Him we will be profitable in our labors when He so deems.

Which is why God promises His people that they will never again see the fruits of their labors taken away. In the Old Testament Israel had broken its covenant with God over and over, and God had allowed the enemies of Israel to reap the benefits of all of their labor. In the eternal Kingdom, God's people will no longer break the covenant as they will be formed anew in righteousness and salvation, and this means that the blessings of the covenant relationship with God will be fully restored. God's people will not lack for anything in the Kingdom of heaven.

In the kingdom of Heaven, God's own people will reap the benefits and blessings of their covenantal relationship with God. The blessings of the eternal Jerusalem will be given freely to those who have righteousness and salvation, those who are in relationship with God because of their repentance and faith and trust in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour. People will recognize that all of these blessings come from God and God alone.

Right now, there are people in this world who take all the credit for the blessings that they have received from God. There are people who believe that they are successful, rich, popular, or powerful because of their own doing and this is where the sin of pride often takes root in their lives. They believe if they work hard enough, or scheme hard enough that they can have anything that they desire in this world. They either do not know or forget that every blessing we have is a gift from God. All of our talent, intelligence, wisdom, skill, success... everything that we are right down to the very breath of air we are breathing is a blessing, a gift, from God and we should be thanking him for that blessing.

In His eternal kingdom God's people shall sing out his praise day and night as they recognize the blessing of their salvation, redemption, and relationship with the One True Living God.

There is one more call to action that is given to believers in this world, a call to prepare the way to Christ for the people that walk in this world. Having promised to bless the work of His people, God then calls for His people to 'prepare the way for the people.'

God calls for his people to go out and help others find the way to his great promises, to build up the highway. God wants all of us to go forth and speak of his promises to others. Helping them to discover his joy instead of being tied down by the ways of this world. We are to remove the stones, the stumbling blocks from the path and make it easier to walk upon. This is to speak clearly and truthfully about the path to salvation, not to bend the scripture or debate the meaning of words, but to be clear and honest about what the bible says so that people can remove sin from their lives and set themselves apart from the world as God has called them to do.

As God's people we are called to come together, in praise and worship of Him. We are called to go forth in the world and speak about him in our daily lives, with everyone we meet in

everything we do as a living example of Christ in our lives. It is this consistent being set apart from the world and set apart from the sin that dominates the world and our culture that will help others see the truth of who God is and help them to find their way to him and the Joy that he can bring into their lives.

We are told by God in verse eleven that our salvation comes, and our reward is with him. Jesus came once and he will come again, of that we can all be assured. God has not forgotten his people, even when they have forgotten him. God has not forgotten our deeds, and he promises that our faith in him will be rewarded. Eternal life will come for the faithful, they will be set apart in judgement as well, their debt of sin paid by the blood of Jesus Christ. Yet here he also tells that for those who do not come to Christ their debt will need to be paid, they will need to pay for their rebellion against God.

The final verse of Chapter sixty-two speaks of some of the ways that life will change for those who have found salvation in the Lord. There are four terms used to describe our relationship with God for eternity.

The First is we will be called Holy People, God's people, not people of any nation, tribe, or language, not divided by geography, skin color, by judgements of morality like who is good or bad, or in any other way that humans attempt to classify people. There will only be two ways that humans are looked at in the time of Judgement, God's people and not God's people.

This is because His people are the redeemed of the Lord, our debt owed by all of our sins in life will have been paid fully by Jesus Christ and we will walk with the Lord as sons and daughters, our relationship with the father redeemed, repaired by the one whose birth we celebrate today. Our lives delivered from the destructive nature of sin into the healing relationship of Christ.

Finally, we God's people will be sought out and no longer forsaken. We will live with dignity, righteousness, and holiness. Sought out by God and others living in a place that is no longer forsaken by God because of its rebellious nature and sinful ways. We will live in eternal joy in the kingdom of heaven, and it all starts here on earth by giving your whole life over to Jesus Christ as your Lord and Saviour.

This is the promise that the Lord gave to the people of Judah 2700 years ago and it has been coming true ever since. Jesus Christ was born seven hundred years after the prophet Isaiah told King Ahaz that Immanuel would be born. Every promise that God has made to his people in the Old Testament and the New Testament has come true and we can live in this world safe and secure in the knowledge that God's promise of eternal life for His people is true.

So, as we wait for the time of the New Jerusalem, the time of His eternal Kingdom, we should be doing all he has asked of us in this world. Go forth and live your lives set apart from this world, showing the changes that your faith is making in you to everyone you meet in the way

you speak and the way you act, and rest assured that on the day of judgement you will stand with God's people in his eternal Kingdom.

Let us pray,
We praise you, the one true, living God,
who fills the whole universe with life, love, and meaning.
We praise you for your tremendous love
which flows to us and into our lives in Christ.

It was your love, like that of the prodigal son's father,
that meant you simply longed to welcome us home.
Jesus' birth in Bethlehem was a sign
of the depths of your love
and that he was born as a baby just as we are;
we now know there is nothing
that will make you stop loving us.

Lord, it is your love that takes the people we are
and makes it possible for us to be transformed
into the people we are meant to be.
We praise you for your love which sets us free
from everything that holds us,
from everything that squeezes real life out of us,
and brings us out of darkness
into the glorious light of the Father's presence.
We praise you for reaching out for us
and welcoming us home
and for making us your sons and daughters.
We praise you for the rest, refreshment, and hope
with which you promise to fill our lives.
We praise you for the assurance that we will share
in the joyful celebration of your creative love
and fill the universe with your glory.

Because of Jesus' birth in Bethlehem
we can know what it means to be loved by you
and through your life, death, and resurrection
we can have assurance of your touch of grace upon our days.

We praise you here, we praise you now,
we will praise you everywhere we go, as long as we live.
We will praise you eternally
in ever-increasing joy and worship,
with Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Music Ministry: “Hark the Herald” by Rob Noyes

Invitation to Offering

Offering

Presenting our tithes and offerings is an act of worship. I want to encourage you to write a cheque and drop it in the mail to the church using your envelope, if you have one. (St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church, PO Box 161, 1 Drummond St W, Perth, ON K7H 3E3). We also have another option for you for giving and that is you can make an e-Transfer. This note from our treasurer:

E-transfers are now accepted. Please note the new email address for this purpose only. standrewspert offering@gmail.com If you have an Offering Envelope #, please include it in the message section of the INTERAC transfer page you fill in. If you wish any part of your donation to go to a specific fund (e.g., Presbyterian Sharing) please mention this in your message.

Offertory Prayer

(Congregant Prepared)

Closing Hymn #136: “The First Noel” (V 1,3,5)

The first Nowell the angel did say
was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay,
in fields where they lay keeping their sheep,
on a cold winter's night that was so deep.

Refrain:

Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Nowell!
Born is the King of Israel.

And by the light of that same star
three wise men came from country far;
to search for a king was their intent,
and to follow the star wherever it went. (Refrain)

Then entered in those wise men three
full reverently upon their knee,
and offered there in his presence
their gold and myrrh and frankincense. (Refrain)

Pastoral Prayer

Eternal God, we bow before the mystery of your incarnation.

You have chosen weakness to confound the strong
and poverty to send the rich empty away.
We remember the millions in our world today
who are hungry, who receive no hospitality—
all with whom your Son has become one by being born in a manger.

Merciful God, we call upon you
for all who have fled their homes in the darkness of night.
We remember the millions in our world who have been made refugees,
who have sought asylum in lands not their own,
who are displaced, homeless, landless, or lost—
all whose experience you have made your own in the life of your Son.

Loving God, our hearts are heavy
with the sufferings of this world.
We remember the many victims of political power and greed:
the innocent killed in war and violence,
all those who are tortured or put to death,
those who languish in prison and camps,
those missing or taken hostage—
all whose lot your Son shared by being born when Herod was king.

Gracious God, you placed yourself in the care of Mary
to show to the world your will to save.
Give us grace to follow her example:
to become instruments of your grace,
servants of your will, and channels of your love.
May it happen to us as you have willed.

O God of peace, you fill our hearts with hope at every Christmastide,
for we remember again that this is the world you have loved.
May hope, peace, and joy fill our hearts this night. Amen.

Benediction

May Jesus Christ, the sun of righteousness,
who comes with healing in his wings,
fill you with the joy and peace that passes all understanding.
The blessing of God almighty, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
be upon you and remain with you always. Amen