

Pastor T.C. Arnold  
5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter  
Isaiah 12:1-6  
May 14<sup>th</sup>, 2017

With anticipation... our hearts become either eager or afraid... or even both eager and afraid. We might think that if we throw a party, will people show up, will they like the food, will they have a good time? And, at the same time we are eager for our friends and family to get there. We want to impress them, we want them to enjoy the party, so we are a bit afraid. Yet we can't wait to see our friends again, our family that has been away for so long. The anticipation is killing us.

Now, as far as "anticipation" of what is yet to come is concerned, we see how that works quite clearly even in the structure of the Church-year. Today's sermon text is from the prophet Isaiah the twelfth chapter. This text is found in three different places during the Church-year depending on what lectionary one uses. Each time this text "anticipates" – looks forward to, maybe with all eagerness and even a bit of trepidation, an announcement of Christ's work in joy. This text is used on 3<sup>rd</sup> the Sunday in Advent (three-year lectionary series) where it goes along with the Gospel text that anticipates the birth of Jesus on Christmas ("The Lord is at hand" – says John the Baptizer). Then again this Old Testament text is used on the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Lent (three-year lectionary series) anticipating Easter. Yes, during the penitential, somber season of Lent there is a Sunday called Laetare which means "Rejoicing". This text anticipates the joys of Easter.

Today, even in the joyous season of Easter, we anticipate with this text once again. This time we anticipate Pentecost. We hear in the Gospel text for today that the Lord will not leave us unattended after His Ascension into heaven. *"Now I am going to Him who sent me, yet none of you asks me, 'Where are you going?' ... 'But I tell you the truth: it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you.'* The "Helper" is the Holy Spirit and we anticipate today His coming at Pentecost. We look forward to that day in the Church-year. But for you and me today – Christians living in the year of our Lord 2017 on a day in May that also includes the remembrance of how much mothers mean to us, we rejoice that the Lord is with us already, strengthening our lives, forgiving our sins, claiming us as His very own children and reminding us of the love of mothers and their Christ-like example in our lives.

The "joy" that Isaiah anticipates in chapter twelve comes after eleven chapters of preaching about repentance and punishment. You could maybe call it a little "respite" in the Gospel message of life for believers in the midst of all the words of law and condemnation. The entire twelfth chapter is only these six verses we hear in the text for today. It's interesting to note that, as joyous and glad as Isaiah and his people were, they began their song of thanksgiving and praise by confessing their sins. It wasn't an "All-out" confession, so to speak, like the publican in the temple who lowered his head and beat his chest with a tearful tone pleading, *"God be merciful to me, a sinner."* But it was a confession nevertheless. They realized that God had been angry with them. Their words, *"I will give thanks to you, O Lord, for though you were angry with me, your anger turned away, that you might comfort me"* realizes that they need the Lord's forgiveness because of their sins.

Today we do that here in Church. We do that as we approach our God in a "Confessional" manner. We are sinners who approach God and ask for forgiveness. But living the life of a penitent sinner does not mean – we go on sinning for six days a week and then on the seventh we come here and get cleaned up so we can go back to sinning the next week. That's not the idea. We live "daily" in God's forgiveness and contrition. We are to live daily as Christians in repentance and forgiveness. This is to be our life every day. We see what the world hands us according to our sins. Sin has brought on us all that which we find much less than desirable in life. Sin has caused this world the plight it now sees. Sin brought the imperfection into this world that we now live in. Sin means that you will have headaches because of the stress other people are causing in your life. Sin is the reason why your life hurts and each day seems worse

than the previous. Sin is the reason why you cry and the reason why bad things happen to good people. Sin brought it all into this world and you have to live with it. You have to fight it. You have to experience the results of such a fallen world where everything seems to be getting worse and worse by the day.

This past week, I preached to a bunch of sinners... I mean, pastors in Nebraska at a conference about preaching, teaching and pastoral care during the days of Luther and the Reformation in reflection of the 500 year Anniversary. One of my sermons focused on the text of Romans chapter 10 which says, "*Beautiful are the feet of those who preach the Good News.*" Then I told them that all pastors have ugly feet. How is it possible for you to have beautiful feet? The only way the feet of the preacher is beautiful is because of the Good News. It makes ugly feet beautiful.

Isaiah actually talked about beautiful feet before Paul did in Romans. He said, "*How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news...*" We get the picture of a young Israelite trudging over a mountain on a long journey away from slavery and back home to freedom. He has hope because of the Good News... God has remembered His people. He has a blessed reunion with His motherland. His feet are dirty and ugly from the journey, but they are made beautiful because of the covenant made between God and His people.

Standing on their own, the preacher's feet are just as ugly and sin-stained as your feet. I don't have to look at your feet to know that they are ugly. They take us to places we shouldn't go. They carry us away from the places we should be. They hold up this sin-laden body that tells lies from its mouth, hurts our neighbor with its hands and, instead of bending our knees and kneeling before the altar of our Lord, is more prone to bow at the pleasures of the world. Our ugly feet hold up all that.

But here is the good news for you and for me. Neither my feet nor your feet could ever be as ugly/dirty as our Savior's... that took a journey into the Jerusalem on Palm Sunday... with what seemed to be feet that were adorned and kept clean and beautiful on a beast of burden. But yet those feet got a bit ugly when he kicked over the tables of the money changers and tracked through the material left on the ground by those animals that were being bought and sold. They ascended to that upper room where He would wash the feet of His disciples, but yet we see that Jesus did not wash His own. Then, to the garden they go, the dirty garden, then the even uglier Palace of the High Priest, then on to all the ugliness and dirt before Pilate, all the ugliness to His scourging... and now those feet start to accumulate the blood from his back and from His head dripping down from that crown of thorns. Now those ugly/dirty feet must carry a cross on the way to Calvary. Now those feet climb that hill and are fastened to that dreaded tree. Ugly, dirty and bloody are those feet... for a reason... so that your feet will be clean and beautiful.

For these reasons Isaiah speaks not only to troubled Israel but also to troubled Christ Lutheran Church "attenders." We are troubled people in our sins. But in the words of Isaiah which come by way of that Helper – the Holy Spirit – today, we know where we stand with our faithful God. We hear these words for us: "*Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not be afraid; for the Lord God is my strength and my song, and He has become my salvation.*" We are troubled today in a troubling life and in a troubling world. But the life that our Lord has perfected by His blood has no trouble. That life lasts forever and is ours by grace through faith. That life has been won for us and we can say with Isaiah, "*Sing praises to the Lord; for He has done gloriously.*"

So with eager anticipation we watch and we wait... With eager anticipation we shout for joy because of the joy given to us in Christ Jesus. We have joy and we are made clean by the blood of the lamb. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.