

Lectionary Readings: Isaiah 61:10-62:3; Psalm 111; Galatians 4:4-7; Luke 2:22-40

Sermon Title: *Christmas Every Day*

Prayer: *Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of [our] heart[s] be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, [our] Rock and [our] Redeemer. (Psalm 19:14)*

Salutation: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. (Ephesians 1:2)

Text: The Word from God through which the Holy Spirit comes to stir our hearts for the First Sunday after Christmas is from our Old Testament Reading: Isaiah, chapters 61 and 62.

Introduction: Dear friends in Christ, though the hustle and bustle of this Christmas season may have been scaled down by the covid pandemic at hand. Yet, the Christmas tree had to put up, there were gifts that had to be purchased, Christmas cards written out, and to top it off Christmas dinner had to be prepared.

Everything seemed like a rush. However, by most accounts the glitz and glamour of this happy holiday are gone for another year. Soon, the lovely Christmas tree will be bare. No more lights. And depending on your choice of tree:

- You may take the tree down branch by branch and store it in a box.
- Or the tree will blow in the wind as it twists and turns on the curb, waiting to be tossed into the back of the garbage truck.
- Or if you're like me, the Christmas tree will be wildlife habitat, until it succumbs to the fire of the burn pit.

In any event, it's over for another year – or is it?

Today, we hear the great prophet Isaiah, the evangelist of the Old Testament, as he peers into the future. He brings the *Good News* of the soul-saving Gospel, and with it he brings us the word: RATHER THAN A *LETDOWN* AFTER THE FESTIVITIES, CHRIST'S ARRIVAL *LETS US CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS EVERY DAY*.

I. What do I mean by that statement? First of all, does the first part of our text sound familiar? Listen to this part of the Old Testament Reading again:

“I will greatly rejoice in the LORD; my soul shall exult in my God, for He has clothed me with the garments of salvation; He has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself like a priest with a beautiful headdress, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. For as the earth brings forth its sprouts, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to sprout up, so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise to sprout up before all the nations” (Isaiah 61:10-11).

Recognize it? You might. Because this was also a portion of our Old Testament Reading just two weeks ago. The difference is that then we were looking *forward* to Christmas. Now we're looking post-Christmas. And so, we may be feeling a post-Christmas letdown.

However, Isaiah says in our text:

- *“I will greatly rejoice.*
- *“I shall exult.”*

Furthermore, we hear:

- The bridegroom is just *getting* himself decked out for the big day.
- The bride is just *putting on* her jewels.
- The wedding is coming up.
- Even the earth itself, the garden, is sprouting with anticipation.

So, everyone can hardly wait. That’s the way we felt when we heard these words back on the Third Sunday in Advent.

In Isaiah’s wedding imagery, sometimes after the wedding’s over, there’s a letdown:

- Certainly, for the parents of the couple as they slump over in their chairs, exhausted and wistful about their babies being all grown up and gone forever from their bedrooms upstairs.
- Perhaps a letdown for the guests as they wake up, not nearly so ready for another day of celebration.
- Maybe even for the bride and groom as they discover it’s not all a party. There’s a lot to learn.

In any event, that was Advent. This is post-Christmas. Yes, a letdown.

Now we know troubles never take a holiday:

- Debt, particularly during January when the Christmas credit-card bills appear in the mailbox.
- Depression for some.
- The relatives have gone home.
- It’s back to work, back to the routine.
- The kids are back in school and college, though in many cases virtually this year.

Yes, the signs that the celebrations are over. A sure sign of letdown.

And so, these may be times we’re weary and worn out, nerves frayed:

- We snap at loved ones.
- Our tongues are so sharp they can cut through steel.

And all the peace on earth, goodwill toward fellowman is packed up again in the attic. So, it’s back to:

- Gossip from malicious tongues.
- Profanity soiling our lips.
- Backbiting and bickering, even within Christian churches.

The pains we could numb with brightly colored packages and dreams that this year having the family together would solve everything are back. And they hurt as much as they did in October:

- Old grudges.
- An unfaithful spouse.
- A friend who sued you.

Yes, letdown.

On Christmas Day, we sang “*Joy to the world.*” But has anything about the world really changed? Or is it all back to being the sinful, depressing, disappointing way it was before? Again, letdown?

II. Now before you despair, hear *once more* the inspired words of Isaiah: “*I will greatly rejoice in the LORD; my soul shall exult in my God, for He has clothed me with the garments of salvation; He has covered me with the robe of righteousness.*”

Hear that? This isn’t just an Advent, Christmas-coming-up text. This is a Sunday-after-Christmas text too. Now that Christ has come, God *has* done something. He has:

- Clothed us with garments of salvation.
- Covered us with the robe of Jesus’ righteousness.

And because that *has* happened, *now* we *will* rejoice, exult. Therefore, the celebration is just starting! No *letdown*. Christ’s arrival *lets us* celebrate! Thus, it’s Christmas today! And every day!

The celebration really couldn’t start until now, until Christ came. It’s as St. Paul wrote in today’s Epistle: “*When the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of woman, born under the Law, to redeem those who were under the Law, so that we might receive adoption as sons*” (Gal 4:4-5).

You see, when the fullness of time came, then Jesus:

- Took our burden upon Himself
- Kept the Law perfectly in our place.
- Took the punishment of our Lawbreaking upon Himself on the cross.

Though we may have celebrated Christmas in a much scaled down manner this year with family and our extended families in our churches, yet we did celebrate. And the celebration doesn’t end.

You see, with Christ’s coming, the wedding doesn’t end with throwing rose petals. The wedding continues for the whole, endless marriage:

- For the turban the groom wore in Isaiah’s day.
- For the jewels brides wear then as now.

The Head of the Church, Christ, has adorned His Bride, you and me, with the one jewel of great price – the *Good News* of the Christmas Gospel.

For which, we wear the royal robes of righteousness – forgiveness of all our sins – spun for us by Jesus on that cross. Thus, we are decked in the garment of salvation – eternal life in heaven – placed on us in our Baptism. No letdown here. Rather, this lets us celebrate every day.

You may be familiar with the TV reality show: *Gold Rush*. The show depicts various family run mining companies, mostly in the Klondike region of Dawson City, Yukon, Canada. The objective of course is to strike gold.

We strike gold every day, clothed in the rich garments of Christ’s forgiveness, when the jewels of Christ are delivered to us in His Word and Sacrament. You see when we confess our sins:

- Those harsh words.
- That gossiping.
- That bickering.
- Betraying our loved ones.
- Carrying grudges.

We are again, every day, washed clean in the bloody cross of the Babe of Bethlehem. So, when we feel the letdown of family gone, of debts that *don’t* go away, of work and routine and life that we wish would just change *some* way, we are again reminded that Immanuel came to be God with us every day.

In the comforting words, our text says: “*You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the LORD, and a royal diadem in the hand of your God*” (62:3).

There’s no letdown here. For Christ being born to be among us, lets us celebrate forever.

Simeon in our Gospel Reading had waited all his life for Christmas. And then, Mary and Joseph finally bring the Baby into the temple. It’s the moment he has been anticipating for years.

Simeon takes the Christ Child in his arms, and there’s no *letdown*. He prophesies: “*Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace*” (Luke 2:29).

Conclusion: Indeed, dear friends in Christ, Simeon’s eyes had seen the salvation he’d been waiting for and all the world needed. There’s:

- No disappointment.
- No letdown.

Therefore, let us celebrate Christmas every day!

In the name of ✠ Jesus, Who forgives all your sins. Amen.

To God alone the Glory!