

“My Soul Shall Exult in My God”

Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11

As I told you last week, if you want to know who Jesus Christ is, and what God’s plan of salvation has always been, read the book of Isaiah. Isaiah spent his entire ministry preparing people for the fulfillment of God’s plan of salvation. In today’s Old Testament lesson, Isaiah tells us what God will accomplish by sending His Son into the world, and we hear what God has already done for His people.

When the Lord’s Christ, His anointed One comes, He will preach good news to the poor. That is, He will preach the Gospel, the Good News of salvation to those who are troubled on account of their sin, to those who live in terror of judgment, to those who are in need forgiveness. Isaiah prophecies that the Christ will come and proclaim freedom and comfort that is meant for all people. It is His desire that all people are clothed in the garments of salvation.

If you read the “Word from Martin Luther” this week, you will see that his read on this is that Isaiah proclaims that the Christ will come and will make the spiritually poor and afflicted very strong in the will of God, so that they may know that all things turn out for them according to the will of God.¹ Paul expresses this in his letter to the Romans, “All things work to the good.”

¹LW 17:330

God and God's will are obviously very puzzling for us to figure out. We often have trouble seeing the "good." But then, figuring out the complexities of God is something that we neither have the duty nor the ability to accomplish. We make a mistake when we try to understand God from the top, all at once. If we attempt to understand the fullness of His majesty and glory, we will be overwhelmed. In our contemplation of God, we need to begin with the things that we can understand. There was a baby born in Bethlehem, wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.

We kid ourselves when we believe that we can intellectually understand the fullness of God. Our inquisitive minds love to speculate about God's divine glory and majesty. If the presence of God extends beyond the border of the universe and the universe is ever-expanding, how far beyond the borders does God extend? We could ask questions like that all day.

The one that seems to constantly come up in Bible class in one form or another is: "Why are some saved and not others?" As St. Paul says: "Who has known the mind of the Lord? [1Cor. 2:16]. It is not within our capability to know or understand why God has done the things He has done.

Throughout the years, people have even asked many silly questions about God, such as: "Could God create a rock so big that He could not lift it?" or "How many angels can dance on the head of a pin?"

Many people get sidetracked and distracted from learning the important things about our Lord. Martin Luther writes that we need to be content with what God has chosen to reveal about Himself. Do not be

concerned with the hidden things of God. They are hidden for a reason.

Luther said: “When...we become involved in speculations about divinity...we...become investigators of His majesty at our peril. As for you, be content with the God incarnate. Then you will remain in peace and safety, and you will know God. Cast off speculations about divine glory...You stay with Christ crucified, whom Paul and others preach.”²

As I said before, in our contemplation of God, we need to begin with the things that we can understand. There was a baby born in Bethlehem, God Incarnate; God took on flesh and was wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger. It is in the incarnation, in God becoming man, that we are able to approach an understanding of God.

We understand a child in the womb of its mother. We understand a child being born and wrapped in a blanket. We understand a child growing to maturity and becoming a man. We understand a man who bruises when you strike Him, who bleeds when you pierce Him, who dies when you crucify Him.

We come to an understanding of God only when we focus on the humility and weakness of Christ the servant, not when we attempt to philosophically speculate on the fullness of the glory of our Lord and Creator. We cannot begin to understand God without focusing on His merciful and gracious character. The Son of God was sent into this world to suffer and die so that you and I can be clothed in the garments of salvation and covered with the robe of righteousness.

Again, Martin Luther tells us: “We should busy ourselves...with

²Ibid.

knowing and considering this man. Then you will know that He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life (John 14:6). So He set forth His weakness that we may approach Him with confidence.”³

We talked about this in Bible class just this last Sunday. If God only revealed His divine majesty and power, it would be too much. We would be terrified and overwhelmed. Therefore God has chosen to present Himself to the world in a way that we are capable of handling. He speaks to us in words written down by prophets and evangelists. He came in weakness as a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes.

The book of Hebrews states: “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and grace to help us in our time of need” [Heb. 5:15-16].

Because of the cleansing that you received in your Baptism, you are able to approach that throne of grace and know that Christ has taken away all of your sins and carried that burden for you.

If you desire to understand God and witness His true character, look to the words of the prophet Isaiah and with confidence confess your faith in what Christ has done for you: “I will rejoice greatly 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 a robe of righteousness.” Amen

³Ibid.