

The Servant of Isaiah: The Servant Has Beautiful Feet  
Isaiah 52:7-10  
March 16, 2016  
6<sup>th</sup> Wednesday in Lent

*How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, "Your God reigns." The voice of your watchmen—they lift up their voice; together they sing for joy; for eye to eye they see the return of the Lord to Zion. Break forth together into singing, you waste places of Jerusalem, for the Lord has comforted his people; he has redeemed Jerusalem. The Lord has bared his holy arm before the eyes of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.*

Most people don't think of feet as beautiful, and the image of beautiful feet in tonight's text is not meant literally. In the ancient world, where people rarely wore shoes, their feet tended to be beaten up and cracked, gnarled and dusty.

We see a little of that reality in the account of the woman who washed the feet of Jesus with her tears and dried them with her hair. Jesus pointed out to his host, Simon the Pharisee, that he had not offered Jesus the courtesy of washing His feet when He arrived. That would have been a welcome comfort in a place where everyone went about more or less bare-footed, or wearing those skimpy sandals we see on the feet of the people in the pictures of that region.

The thing that made the feet in the reading beautiful was the good news they carried. The prophet meant that the message was wonderful and so the messenger was received gladly. People would be delighted to see those feet approach. How beautiful, or as some translations say, how lovely are the feet of him who brings good news.

And what marvelous good news the Servant brings. He announces peace, happiness, salvation, redemption, and proclaims that our God reigns. This evening our theme is, "The Servant Has Beautiful Feet."

The Servant has beautiful feet. In other words, he is the messenger of the wonderful announcement of salvation. The news is good because it **is** the Gospel. What could be better news than the announcement that God has taken your sins off of your shoulders and paid the penalty himself? That's the good news which, in Greek εὐαγγέλιον (*euangelion*), is the single word we translate into English as *Gospel*. The freely bestowed grace of God, taking sin and death out of the way and pouring life and salvation on everyone who believes.

Isaiah says that the Servant announces peace. The peace He brings is two-fold: peace with God, and the peace of faith. Peace with God is established with the crucifixion of Christ in our place. We lost that peace with God when Adam and Eve plunged the world and all of mankind – which at that point in time consisted of just them – into sin, corruption, and death. That brought the wrath of God and his horrible, just decree down

upon us all.

With sin taken away and punished, God should no longer be seen as the wrath-filled deity in the sky, because he now declares himself to be our loving heavenly Father. Adam and Eve were frightened in the presence of God after the fall because they knew his judgment against sin. They knew that the person who sins will die.

But now, the cause of God's righteous anger has been done away with, his wrath quenched, and that ancient judgment met and fulfilled by the vicarious suffering of the Servant on our behalf. Therefore, we have peace with God.

That peace results in peace with others and peace within ourselves. *If God is for us, who can be against us?* (Rom 8:31 ESV). With God on our side and declaring us to be his holy children, no one can effectively stand against us. His power and his good will are fighting for us!

More than that, with God on our side what do we have to fear? Therefore, we have peace – the peace of faith – because the love of God assures us that he will keep us safe and guide us through whatever may come. That is the message of peace the Servant brings.

Not only do we have peace, we have happiness. Sins forgiven bring happiness, particularly if you are troubled by your sins. Also, the love of God and the resulting confidence in his blessings brings happiness.

The happiness the prophet speaks about, however, is the happiness of the one who is looking for salvation and finally sees it in the Servant, because it is the Servant who announces salvation. It's his work and his proclamation – his news, if you will. He brings and proclaims the end of death and the divine promise of abundant blessings in everlasting life. This news works happiness in those that understand it and believe it.

The salvation of God isn't like those man-made stories about the wise old being who faces the end of life, and the end of existence, with a quiet resignation achieved by years of preparation. That sort of story is popular with people who don't believe in life after death. They want to believe that life just ends, and that's the way it should be. When we have filled our cup with life and experiences, we should be satisfied and let it all go with peace of some sort.

However, reality is different. Death is the enemy. We humans are never done with seeing or hearing. Our bodies grow old, but on the inside we never reach a point where we wouldn't like just a little bit more life, especially if we could have that extra life while we are young and strong and fit enough to enjoy it. Most of us remain children at heart, even if our bodies grow old and painful.

Besides, we don't just drift peacefully away into oblivion. On the other side of that door called "death" there is continued existence. The hell that awaits the unbelieving sinner is

described by Jesus as: *Where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched* (Mk 9:48 ESV); and *In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth* (Mt 13:42 ESV). There is something about that reality the human spirit instinctively knows and recognizes and fears. If death were simple oblivion and non-existence, it wouldn't trouble us so much.

The salvation which the Servant announces is the rescue from that hell into a life of peace, joy, and glory with the Lord forever. There we will have that "just a little bit more", but we will have it eternally. We will live forever in complete peace and joy.

The good news of the Servant is that this is possible because the Creator of all things is your God, and it is his good will to share all of this with you. Isaiah reports that the Servant, says to Zion, "Your God reigns!" He has the power to accomplish his will, and his will for you is good.

The Servant not only wins this salvation, he also announces it and presents it before the whole world: *The Lord has bared his holy arm before the eyes of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God* (Is 52:10 ESV). That proclamation began with Jesus' teaching and healing ministry, and the work he did in his passion and crucifixion. That proclamation continues today through the Church, in the faithful preaching of faithful pastors, and by the faithful confession and witness of his holy people.

When you live out your faith, and when you confess it before others, you, too, have beautiful feet. It doesn't matter if the world around you sits up and takes notice or not. What's important is the faithful confession of Christ and of the salvation which he has won for us. When you speak the Gospel in any form, the Servant continues to proclaim through you.

The salvation of God brings the comfort and the joy of his people. That's why Isaiah prophesies: *Break forth together into singing, you waste places of Jerusalem, for the Lord has comforted his people; he has redeemed Jerusalem* (Is 52:9 ESV). Those who hope for forgiveness and rescue from death and hell have the comfort of knowing that the Lord has done it. The prophet says: *he has redeemed Jerusalem*. He has redeemed his holy Church as the New Jerusalem, and we have been redeemed.

Tonight, as in every worship service of every Christian Church that proclaims the pure Word of God, the Servant once again announces the good news of redemption and salvation. Therefore, he has those beautiful feet of the One who brings wonderful news of good things, or as Isaiah said it in tonight's text: *How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation*.