**Christmas Through the Eyes of Isaiah**

**The Scope of the Good News**

**Isaiah 52:7-12**

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We are finishing up our Christmas series today, Christmas Through the Eyes of Isaiah, looking at the Old Testament book of Isaiah. Today’s message, The Scope of the Good News, is from Isaiah 52:7-12. Isaiah speaks to those who are in exile in Babylon and promises a time when God will free them and give them a bright future that extends beyond the nation to include the whole world. The message of Christmas is that in Jesus, God promises us a bright future.

The first six verses of chapter fifty-two describes Israel in exile under Babylon and Isaiah paints a bright future when Jerusalem will never be invaded again and calls them to live faithfully as the people of God (52:1-2). They are in exile not because God is too weak but because their sin is too great an issue to be ignored (52:3-4). Exile has brought shame upon God’s name so he is going to vindicate himself for his own glory and the good of his people (52:5-6). But the picture Isaiah paints here is much greater than thier historical situation, it points to a greater fulfillment through Jesus.

**The Good News Brings Great Joy (7-8)**

Isaiah pictures messengers, those who have been in exile in Babylon, coming over the mountains surrounding Jerusalem with good news of military victory, God has defeated the Babylonians! This good news is first described as peace, the absence of war but more positively, peace points to human flourishing that encompasses their relationship with God, their relationship with each other, their relationship with other nations, and their relationship with the land. It is the picture of God restoring what was lost because of sin. God is forgiving their sin and will bless them so they flourish as God’s people under his reign. The good news is further described as good news of happiness, salvation or deliverance. God is going to save them or deliver them from their enemies. Salvation is God healing and restoring the image of God in humanity. The image of God was distorted in humanity when they refused God’s rule in their lives and salvation is God graciously restoring that image in the lives of his people. That is why it is called good news of happiness. I don’t know a single person who does not want to flourish in life. But either they don’t know how or they are not doing it well. Then Isaiah sums up the good news as your God reigns! God has freed his people because he reigns. It is not as though he has not been reigning; he has been reigning in the discipline of his people for their sin. But now God is reversing their fortunes. The watchmen on the wall are the first to hear the messengers and they start celebrating God’s deliverance. The Lord is returning to Zion, the place the temple once stood. God is returning to dwell with his people. They are celebrating because this was welcomed news.

**The Good News is God Reigns (9-10)**

Then God’s people, discouraged and defeated because Jerusalem is in ruins, are called on to celebrate with the watchmen because God has comforted his people. This comfort is described as having redeemed Jerusalem. Redeemed means God has reclaimed or taken back his people. Where the city was in ruins it will flourish because God reigns for the good of his people. God’s presence will be with his people and he will provide for them and protect them. God will vindicate his reputation and he will display his goodness to his people. Then Isaiah tells us that this work of redemption will extend beyond Israel (10). The Lord has exerted his one of a kind power to deliver his people for all the nations to see and the result is that the entire earth will see the salvation of God (Isa 49:6)! God is going to display his glory to his people and the result is that the deliverance of God will spread to the nations, to the ends of the earth. When the angel announced the good news of Jesus’ birth to the shepherds, it was good news of great joy for all people. What was this good news? Today, in the city of David a Savior is born who is Christ the Lord (Luk 2:10-11).

**The Good News Creates New People (10-12)**

In response to the good news, God calls his people to leave Babylon. But this call back to Jerusalem is a call to come to Jerusalem as a redeemed people. As a people who have not just been delivered from Babylon but delivered from sin (11). The return to Jerusalem is a journey of faith in the promises of God. God is calling them to repent, to turn away from their life of sin, and turn toward God in faith and follow him, to flourish as the people of God, on their return to Jerusalem. He pictures them as a kingdom of priests, a holy nation set apart for God. They will not have to rush out of Babylon as they did in the Exodus because God will protect them as they leave.

The words of Isaiah spoke of a deliverance through the Medes and the Persians so that Israel would be allowed to rebuild the temple and Jerusalem but his words find a greater fulfillment in Jesus. The angel brought goods news of great joy or happiness that will be for all people, a Savior is born, a Deliverer, who is Christ the Lord (Lk 2:10-11). The watchmen were people like Simeon who longed for the consolation or the comfort of Israel (Lk 2:25-26). Jesus came to Jerusalem in his earthly ministry (Mt 21:4-9) to proclaim his reign but was rejected and crucified outside of walls of city. The enemy he defeated is much greater than Babylon, Satan, who God defeated at the cross (Jn 12:31; Col 2:15). Jesus’ reign was confirmed at the resurrection so that he is now Lord (Acts 10:36; 1 Cor 12:3). Those who come to him for salvation or deliverance, both Jews and Gentiles, are called a chosen race, kingdom of priests, a holy nation, a people who have been reclaimed and who now proclaim the good news as his messengers (1 Pe 2:9-10; Rom 10:15).

The good news restores human flourishing. Our flourishing is freedom from the penalty of sin; freedom from power of sin in our lives now (1 pet 1:14-16; Tit 2:11-14); and ultimately, freedom from the presence of sin in eternity. As disciples, followers of Christ, we are pilgrims on a journey to the New Jerusalem (Rev 21:1-8;22-27; Heb 13:14), messengers proclaiming the good news to those who will welcome it.

Life Group Questions:

1. Why was Israel in exile?
2. What was the purpose of exile?
3. What is the counterpart for us today?
4. How is God’s discipline in our lives for our good?
5. Why is the Good News news of great happiness?
6. Why should we be the happiest people alive?
7. How do you cultivate joy and happiness in God?
8. Are you flourishing as a Christian? Why or why not?
9. Do you find it a struggle to share the good news?
10. How can we help each other share the good news?
11. How does God describe our bright future?