

Sermon Title: “Keeping Silent?”

December 27th, 2020 – 1st Sunday in Christmas

Text: Isaiah 61



Theme:

What's in it for me?

Sermon Text:

Grace and Peace to you from our Lord, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Merry Christmas. It feels good to say that, doesn't it? Here we are in the first Sunday of the Christmas Season and we have some great texts for today. If you're like me, you're already tired and the easy thing to do would be to dust off the sermon I gave last year about Simeon and Anna, and don't get me wrong, I think there was a great message in there, but I have to ask the question, "Is that really what God wants you to hear, this year?" Looking over our lectionary for today, I think that our Old Testament Lesson is timelier and more relevant.

Our Old Testament text today picks up where we left off just a couple of weeks ago when we issued a call to Pastor Greg Strand. Remember, that in this text Jesus is speaking through Isaiah. Here Jesus is speaking to His Father as He says that He will rejoice in His Father and that He has been clothed in righteousness. We see this happen when Jesus is Baptized, on the Mount of Transfiguration, and as He is praying prior to His arrest on Maundy Thursday. God has already glorified His name, and He does it over and over again. Jesus then uses that same language of the bridegroom, priest, and the bride. We know that He is both our High Priest and Bridegroom, and that we, the Church, are Christ's bride. It's amazing that all of this is revealed around 700 years before Jesus was born!

Now here is where it gets interesting, Jesus is saying that He will not keep silent for Jerusalem's sake. He will act. Jesus will do something. He's not sitting on the sideline waiting for a more opportune time. We of course know now what this means, Jesus died on the Cross to rid us of our sin. We are the new Jerusalem and because of Jesus' sacrifice we have a new name, something that Paul hits in our Epistle for today; "sons of God." He uses "sons," because only sons could receive an inheritance. So, because of Jesus' sacrifice in Jerusalem, we

Christians, have been given a new name, “God’s adopted Sons,” and have been given an inheritance with Christ.

Just as this text promised, the Church started in Jerusalem, but spread world-wide. The world saw what people were willing to do for one another and care for one another in a way not seen before. Most of our institutions of caring, hospitals, schools, foster care, and other social services started with the Church. Those Christians saw injustice during their days, and they did something about it.

Now it’s our turn. Like it or not, we live in a Post-Christian world, where we struggle to remain relevant. The world knows all about what we are against, but very little about what we are “for,” and it’s increasingly more difficult to get anyone to even listen to explain it. Now with the Coronavirus, with all of the restrictions, like the ban on congregational singing, it’s even more difficult. So, what are we supposed to do?

Like Jesus, we should not keep silent. When we see wrong, we need to speak up, but how we do it will determine if we make any headway or not. Luther’s guidance to always put the best construction on everything is wonderful advice. We have to meet people where they’re at, not where we’d like them to meet us. Finding common ground and developing friendships goes a long way to sharing the Gospel. Instead of bluntly telling people that they are going to hell, get them to do most of the talking. Ask questions and guide them to logical conclusions. Most people think of themselves as kind and caring people, so find common ground. People are more willing to listen to you when they think of you as an authentic friend. You don’t have to be Mother Theresa; you just need to be yourself.

The world has a distorted view of what a Christian is supposed to be. Not every Christian is a member of the Westgate Baptist Church, Jerry Falwell, or Mother Theresa. Sure, Mother Theresa was a great Christian who worked tirelessly to care for the poor. But like you, she was a sinner too. All of these guys are sinners too. Instead of pretending to be someone you’re not, be authentic. The Church is the only place where the members are unworthy to join, so Jesus imparts His righteousness upon us, just as He promises in our text for today. Don’t cover up your failings, admit to them, then explain how Jesus has helped you get past them by Grace.

Christmas and Easter marked a new beginning for God’s people where we got a fresh start. Now that we are cleansed from our sin, we get to act. We get to speak. We get to share

that good news with a world that desperately needs to hear it. I would imagine that it will be well in to 2021 before we are able to put this virus behind us. The emotional scars of this could last well beyond the restrictions. All of this provides an opportunity for us to be relevant again. The Church needs to do what it does best, caring for those who nobody cares about; the poor, the sick, the lonely. When we do that, not only will we be relevant again, but we will refocus on why we're here. All it takes is a prayer to get started, then maybe a phone call.

When we do that, we will be doing the same things that Jesus did. So, this is your call to action. Don't be silent.

In Jesus name,

Amen.

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Quotations from Scripture come from:

Various Authors. *The Lutheran Study Bible*. Concordia Publishing House. Kindle Edition.