

**Holy Cross, Daggett and St. Mark, Wallace Lutheran Churches, Michigan**

**December 25, 2013**

**Isaiah 52:7-10**

*How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, "Your God reigns!" Listen! Your watchmen lift up their voices; together they shout for joy. When the LORD returns to Zion, they will see it with their own eyes. Burst into songs of joy together, you ruins of Jerusalem, for the LORD has comforted his people, he has redeemed Jerusalem. The LORD will lay bare his holy arm in the sight of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth will see the salvation of our God.*

Do you know the legend of the Greek man Pheidippides? It goes something like this: The Persian army had invaded the country of Greece in 490 B.C. The army of Athens had gone out to fight against the invading Persian army. The two armies met on the plain of Marathon. Pheidippides is famous because the legend says he ran from the plain of Marathon to the city of Athens to report an Athenian victory over the Persian army.

This good report would have made Pheidippides and his run famous in Athens, but I don't think it would have been enough to make him a legend who we talk about today. Pheidippides became legendary because he collapsed and died right after he reported the good news that Athens had won. It is amazing isn't it? Pheidippides gave his life to share the good news of victory with the Athenian people. It is the stuff legends are made of.

Pheidippides' story reminds me of our lesson today. Isaiah tells us about messengers who bring good news. He says these people have beautiful feet since they proclaim a message of peace. **"How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, 'Your God reigns!'"** The message of God's reign brings peace, joy and comfort to our hearts.

How can God's reign bring all of these blessings? Isaiah goes on, **"Listen! Your watchmen lift up their voices; together they shout for joy. When the LORD returns to Zion, they will see it with their own eyes. Burst into songs of joy together, you ruins of Jerusalem, for the LORD has comforted his people, he has redeemed Jerusalem. The LORD will lay bare his holy arm in the sight of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth will see the salvation of our God."**

God's reign here on earth brings peace which the world cannot give. It brings us peace which cannot be bought with gold or silver. It isn't a peace between warring nations since the peace God brings is lasting and eternal. What is the peace God's reign brings? It brings us peace between God and men. Christmas is the day we celebrate the beginning God's peace plan. He begins the peace process by sending his one and only son to be one of us and share in our humanity.

Our other two lessons describe this wonder. Hebrews says, **"In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe."** The author to the Hebrews tells us Jesus is the messenger of good news. He is the messenger of the news he has come into this world to save the world.

The apostle John helps us understand the content of Jesus' message. John tells us Jesus' message is a message of salvation which comes directly from God. **"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."**

The fact God became man is amazing, but this fact is only the beginning of Jesus message here on earth. Jesus came to bring the message of good news. The good news he brought is that God himself had come

into this world to die for the sins of the world. Think about this once. The whole theme and direction of Jesus' mission was to come and tell us about the good news of his death. Who could have ever thought of someone's death bringing salvation of the world?

Compare the legend of Pheidippides to the story of Jesus. The legend of Pheidippides says he ran back to Athens and with his dying breath he proclaimed a Greek victory over the Persians. Jesus, by comparison, ran the race of life and with his dying breath proclaimed, **"It is finished."** These words tell us God has accepted Jesus' payment for our sin. They tell us of Jesus' victory over sin, death and the devil is complete and nothing more is needed to gain our salvation.

Jesus proved God accepted his sacrifice for sin and that he had won victory over his enemies when he rose from the dead. Compare this to Pheidippides. Pheidippides proclaimed victory, died and stayed dead. Jesus proclaimed victory, died and rose from the dead. This is the wonderful message he came into the world to proclaim. This is the wonderful message which Christmas is all about. It is all about the message of how Jesus became man to set us free.

It is the message which caused Isaiah to proclaim, **"How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, 'Your God reigns!'"** This message comforts us. It reassures us. It lifts our spirits because it tells us the true meaning of Christmas. It tells us God has sent his son to remove the curse of sin forever.

This glorious promise leads us to respond. **"Listen! Your watchmen lift up their voices; together they shout for joy. When the LORD returns to Zion, they will see it with their own eyes. Burst into songs of joy together, you ruins of Jerusalem, for the LORD has comforted his people, he has redeemed Jerusalem. The LORD will lay bare his holy arm in the sight of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth will see the salvation of our God."** Amen.