

**ST. LUKE EV. LUTHERAN CHURCH-WELS
SERMON BY PASTOR ANTHONY E. SCHULTZ
JANUARY 17, 2010 EPIPHANY 2 SERIES C ISAIAH 62:1-5**



For Zion's sake I will not keep silent, for Jerusalem's sake I will not remain quiet, till her righteousness shines out like the dawn, her salvation like a blazing torch. The nations will see your righteousness, and all kings your glory; you will be called by a new name that the mouth of the LORD will bestow. You will be a crown of splendor in the LORD's hand, a royal diadem in the hand of your God. No longer will they call you Deserted, or name your land Desolate. But you will be called Hephzibah (*my delight is in her*), and your land Beulah (*married*), for the LORD will take delight in you, and your land will be married. As a young man marries a maiden, so will your sons marry you; as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so will your God rejoice over you.

People of God – rescued from the flaming lake of fire in hell by the innocent blood of the very Lamb of God:

Austin Forman lives in a place called Boston Bar, British Columbia – near Vancouver. Do you know where that is – Vancouver, British Columbia? It's just north of Washington State. Austin had gone with his 1 ½ year old golden retriever--out into his snowy back yard to get more firewood – to heat their home. All of a sudden – Austin's Golden Retriever leaped over their lawnmower – to put herself between Austin and a cougar that wanted to have Austin for supper! Austin ran to the safety of his home – and yelled a cougar is eating my dog! That's what it looked like – the cougar had the dog's head inside its mouth! If you own a dog you are not surprised at all! Dogs will do that! They will not only put themselves in harm's way – they will – without hesitation – give their life to save their master! What a pale, *pale* picture of Jesus' forgiving love. Jesus didn't risk his life. Jesus sacrificed his life – died a tortured death to save us. Jesus did that because he loves us with an unconditional love. Today God's Word is priceless comfort:

The LORD Delights In Us!

- 1. He has restored us**
- 2. He has made us his own.**

The part of God's Word we are concentrating on – is from the scroll of the Prophet Isaiah. With Jesus' permission we will read from the scroll of the prophet Isaiah some 14 times in the 52 Sundays that are this Church year. 17 and even 23 times in the other cycles of the ILCW Series. That's a lot! There are some 66 chapters in the scroll of Isaiah. It's pretty easy to remember – chapters 1 through 39 are mostly – not exclusively – but mostly law. Chapters 40 through 66 are mostly – not exclusively – but mostly Gospel. It's easy to remember that division – when Chapter 40 begins with the words, "**Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her hard service has been completed, that her sin has been paid for, that she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins.**" Isaiah 40:1,2 This is powerful Gospel comfort! Every Christmas we read from Isaiah, "**For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end...**" Isaiah 9:6,7a Every Lenten season we read, "**But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities;**

the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.” Isaiah 53:4-6 Vivid law and gospel is through and through the scroll of Isaiah.

The part of Isaiah we are concentrating on today – is from chapter 62 – getting near the end of the 66 chapters. This is Hebrew poetry – not with a rhyme – but repeating a thought – saying the contrasting/opposite – or going up steps – explaining more and more and more and more! Chapter 62 begins, **For Zion’s sake I will not keep silent, for Jerusalem’s sake I will not remain quiet, till her righteousness shines out like the dawn, her salvation like a blazing torch.** These are the words of the Lord concerning his Church – the words of the Lord concerning believers – his people by grace alone! This is Good News – so good it must be shared! **The nations will see our righteousness, and all kings your glory; you will be called by a new name that the mouth of the LORD will bestow. You will be a crown of splendor in the LORD’s hand, a royal diadem in the hand of your God. The nations... all kings!** Do we appreciate what that includes? It means everyone everywhere! I am always fascinated by all the different countries that are out there – in alphabetical order – places like *Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra – Andorra?* Have you ever heard of Andorra? Andorra is a very small country – just 181 square miles – less than 90,000 people – that speak the language of *Catalan*. Andorra is between Spain and France. What do they make? What do they produce? What do they do? *Tourism!* That’s what they do. They are so wonderful – their main thing is for people to come there – and spend time there – taking pictures and resting. How many people visit Andorra? I have no idea – but Jesus knows. Jesus knows exactly how many people live in Andorra – what *Catalan* sounds like – and why people go to Andorra for vacation! There’s a country called *Abkhazia* – 3,256 square miles. A country only recognized by Russia and Venezuela and Nicaragua and South Ossetia. Where is South Ossetia? *Abkhazia* sounds like a place in Harry Potter. She is stuck between Georgia and the Black Sea. Part of the former Soviet Union – it sounds like the Russians could roll their tanks into her any time they want to. Nobody seems to know how many people there are in *Abkhazia* – there used to be around 200,000 but now there are less. Her population is shrinking. That can’t be good. But that’s what happens when times are tough. Jesus knows how many people there are in *Abkhazia*, too. He knows all their names – all their birthdays and when they will come home to heaven. Jesus knows everything about every single one of them. That’s pretty amazing – to think Jesus knows exactly how many people there are in the world – some 6,795,800,000. Jesus knows that there was a world-wide baby boom back in the 1950s – also in the 1960s and in the 1970s. There are about 134 million people being born every year. Jesus knows exactly. There are about 57 million people dying every year. Jesus knows exactly. Experts predict by the year 2040 – when I hope to be 88 years old – there will be 9 billion people in the world!

You just can’t keep quiet--**until her righteousness shines out like the dawn, her salvation like a blazing torch.** We are right with God – because Jesus paid for all our sins. Jesus paid the debt we owed. There was a man in East Switzerland the other day – who was caught speeding. His speeding ticket cost him \$290,000. That’s right. I didn’t say it wrong. It cost him \$290,000. How fast was he going? 85 mph in a 50 zone. That’s way too fast – but how did he get almost \$300,000 for a 30 mph over the posted speed limit? The fact is the speeder has over 20 million dollars and they have this thing apparently in Switzerland – where the punishment should fit the guilty person’s ability to pay. They don’t want to fine someone where they could pay with the money they have in their pocket. It’s like the professional football players that have sponsors like *Nike* – who pay the players when they are fined – so a fine – a penalty – a

punishment doesn't have to weigh on their mind and possibly distract them. Then they appeal the fine – which usually gets reduced – to the point that some *unsportsmen* like conduct fines – have actually ended up being money makers for the *unsportsmen* like athletes! That doesn't seem right! It doesn't work that way with God's righteousness – Jesus' justice. It doesn't matter in God's sight if sinners are rich or poor – **the wages of sin is death**. You and I can't begin to pay the debt we owe with all the gold and silver in the world. The only payment for sin that's acceptable is Jesus' sinless life and his tortured death on the cross in our place. Only Jesus' innocent blood could cover our sins – and his blood covers them all!

The nations will see your righteousness, and all kings your glory... Do you read the devotion – each day from the Synod? Did you sign up for the e-mail devotion that comes Monday through Saturday? It might very well be the best news – the good news of the Gospel that you get each day. Just the other day – the devotion was about the mercy of God – his undeserved love and undeserved forgiveness. It told the story that **“in the early 1800's, Napoleon Bonaparte ruled as emperor of France. His word was final. A woman appeared before him one day. She was seeking a pardon for her son. Napoleon explained to her why this was not possible: Her son was guilty of committing a serious crime not once but *twice*. Under the law of the land, he had been sentenced to death. But the mother persevered. 'I plead for mercy for my son,' she said. 'But your son does not deserve mercy,' pronounced the Emperor. It was then that this mother got to the heart of the matter. 'You are correct,' she said. 'My son does not *deserve* mercy. But if he did, it would not *be* mercy. And *mercy* is all I ask for.' 'Then I will have mercy,' Napoleon said. He spared her son's life.”** God is merciful to us. We see Jesus' righteousness – his mercy in the Gospel!

As a young man marries a maiden, so will your sons marry you; as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so will your God rejoice over you. This is a picture that is found in God's Word again and again. What can you compare Heaven to? What do we have on earth that is anywhere near the joy of Heaven? Maybe it would be a wedding feast. What could be more fun than that? There is probably not another time in our life – where we spare no effort to make everything as perfect as humanly possible. The bride wears the most beautiful dress – her bridesmaids wear beautiful dresses. The men rent tuxedos – and maybe two-tone wingtips! There is feasting – a wedding cake that is such a beautiful dessert that people buy a special knife just to cut it! And then comes the dancing. The little children love this part best. In their little stocking feet – they dance the night away. Often times just jumping up and down and up and down – around and around and around they go. They do “Gimme that old time rock'n roll” and “YMCA” and the chicken dance. The bittersweet part of wedding feasts of course – is the fact that there are people we love – who can't be with us – because they died. Often times there are flowers on the altar. Their name is mention in the bulletin. There are candles and arrangements with their names on them. And there is the part where people you love have to go home. They hug you and kiss you. There are tears in their eyes as they say they have to leave. They have to go home. That will never ever happen at the wedding feast in heaven – because we will all be home – home in Heaven – our forever home for Jesus' sake!

The Golden Retriever – named Angel – was in terrible danger – a cougar had her literally by the throat. Then the cougar literally had Angel's head in her mouth – when a Royal Canadian Mounted Police Officer – **“Dudley Doright”** came to the rescue. It took him two shots--to save the puppy! At first – even after the cougar was dead – the puppy didn't move. Everyone thought – for a moment – it was too late! Then the puppy gasped – and got up! How would you thank that dog – for risking her life to save her master? Austin said when his dog gets out of the animal hospital he will give her some steak! Really? I think I would give her treats all the time!

Jesus has saved you and me from the eternal fires of hell! How will you thank him? How can you thank him? One of the most obvious ways would have to be – to *worship* him. To come to Church – week after week! To read your Bible! How simple is that? The more you read God’s Word – the more you will come to Church! The more you read God’s Word the more you will pray for *spiritual* blessings – live your faith and share your faith! The great I AM delights in us! This new week – by the power of the Gospel – we will delight in our Savior. Amen!



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