

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!"⁸ 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.⁹ Burst into songs of joy together, you ruins of Jerusalem, for the LORD has comforted his people, he has redeemed Jerusalem.¹⁰ 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.

Share the good news of Christmas freely and with great joy!

He immediately grabbed his shiny black tablet and sent an email. The first time grandpa happily tapped out the message. *Our grandson was born today.* The email listed the exact time of birth, the name, the weight, and even the length of the baby. With short bursts of text and exclamation points for good measure, the joy was shared.

She picked up her pink smartphone that was well worn from use and she made a call. She gladly announced to her dear friend that her boyfriend had finally popped the question. She listed the details, walked through the events of the night, and recalled with great joy the moment that he gave her the engagement ring. And oh, there was joy. She smiled so much her face hurt and you could hear it over the phone. It was beautiful.

Long before text messages and tweets, long before emails and phone calls, long before it was common practice to share good news from sleek portable devices there was a different messaging system. The messenger could be seen even at some distance, running on the hillsides running to deliver the message. And how swift, how beautiful those feet would be when they brought good news. But what made this so beautiful wasn't so much the appearance of the runner or the pleasantness of his feet, just as is it really not so much about the outward brilliance of the latest device that makes a message beautiful today. But rather it is the content of that message that is important!

Dear friends, we have the most beautiful message to share! ***For to us a child is born, to us a son is given (Isaiah 9:6).*** The one who came to save us from our sins has come. We have a Savior who would redeem us, poor, wretched, miserable sinners, from sin and death and hell. God's own son would save us by taking on our humble flesh and laying down his perfect life. We have a God who loves us so much that despite all our failures, all our defiance and stubbornness, all our sins and unrighteousness, he loved us so much that he was willing to roll up his sleeves, lay bare his holy arm, and take on a servant's form to save us. What a beautiful message we have to share.

But sometimes we feel a bit sheepish in sharing it. Sometimes we feel unequipped, unqualified to speak the message. We worry about messing it up. We

worry that our delivery won't be polished enough, that we will stumble or ramble or the words wouldn't come. But think for a moment about that first-time grandpa, think for a moment about that young woman who had suddenly experienced that brand new joy of engagement. This was a new experience, this was not something that they had much practice in, but because of the beauty of the message they shared it freely. Their words might have been a bit jumbled. Their delivery might not have been polished or practiced, but their joy was shared.

Think about the feet of the young man swiftly and nimbly running through the hillside, jumping over obstacles, scaling rough terrain, stumble every once in a while and yet he pounded out one step after another because he had good news to share. ***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!*** Isaiah speaks of a messenger who has a beautiful message to share and because of the rich and wonderful content of that message, nothing would stand in his way! Imagine the joy of messenger would have in running up to a sullen group of exiles and sharing with them that the LORD God would grab hold the reigns of world history and bring his people back to the land of their fathers. Imagine the joy of a messenger who came to the meager group of people who remained in Jerusalem and could declare to them the good news of victory and peace and restoration. ***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.***

The return of the exiles would be unprecedented in all of history. Nations would indeed sit up and take notice. But Isaiah's prophecy not only foretells of an historic deliverance, but God's words spoken through Isaiah his prophet speak to the good news, peace, good tidings, and salvation that only the Savior could bring. This message of joy is beautiful, it is wondrous, and therefore, it just has to be shared.

As we have now celebrated another Christmas Day, our minds quickly make the connection to the shepherds of Bethlehem running joyfully through the countryside announcing the good news of the Savior's birth. He had come for them. He had come for all. The holy God had taken on flesh to bring salvation to sinful mankind. They had good news to share, indeed. We can imagine a sort of a rag-tag group, their clothes a bit tattered and torn, their feet a bit dusty and dirty (and who knows what they smelled like), but they were beautiful as they ran with great joy to announce the good news that had been told them about this child. They ran through the hills, like messengers of old, and they shared the good news of great joy.

This was probably something very new to them. Shepherds were often alone with their sheep with long periods of time. I can't imagine that they were by trade great orators, great public speakers, but here they were; they were the ones that God had chosen to send throughout the streets of Bethlehem. The delivery probably wasn't too polished; but they took on the task freely and with great joy because they heard and

believed the message. The promised Savior had come. The beautiful words of God had been spoken to them by the marvelous angel hosts, and now God would use them to run through the hills proclaiming the good news of victory. No obstacle would keep them from sharing the message. No hesitation would keep them from sharing that good news of salvation for the message was too beautiful, their joy was too great. What a wonderful example that believers today can learn from, it is not so much about the messenger, it is about the message.

Isaiah himself, could be a beneficial case study for those who may be hesitant to share the good news. Some of the most beautiful and poignant prophecies of all Scripture come from Isaiah's lips. His poetic words of prophecy are revisited during these holy days of Christmas. He speaks of ***those walking in darkness have seen a great light***. He speaks of a shoot from the stump of Jesse that would produce a branch that would preserve and produce the Savior of the world. He depicts the peace of God's kingdom with such profound and unforgettable imagery, ***The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them.*** But even Isaiah, had his doubts about serving the LORD.

When he was called to serve his God and proclaim the word of the LORD, he saw the glory of the LORD and angels appeared. And in the presence of these beautiful and holy beings he saw in himself only as a horrible sinful man, ill equipped, inadequate to stand before God or serve him. ***Woe to me! I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King the LORD Almighty! (Isaiah 6:5)***. Isaiah was hesitant to move or speak in the presence of the Holy God and yet God delivered to him a message of specific gospel as the LORD God sent an angel to place a hot coal on Isaiah's lips and the angel was to proclaim this good news, ***"Your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for"*** (Isaiah 6:7). And at the very proclamation of this good news Isaiah was ready to go and share with others the word of the LORD. He had a beautiful message to share from a merciful God. Any obstacles were removed or now much more manageable because the message was so beautiful, so great, it needed to be shared.

What obstacles stand in your way of sharing the good news? Maybe you are slowed by a lack of training, by feelings of inadequacy. Like the shepherds many of you have never received formal training in sharing the message; but the joy of Christmas has been proclaimed to you. Angels did not appear to us in the night, but through the Word, we have all the details of his birth, the reason that our Savior has been made clear to us, he came to deliver us. This is the good news that is beautiful to share. Like Isaiah you and I recognize that because of our sin we deserve nothing but God's wrath and punishment. How can a sinner like me expect to speak to others about God? Woe to us! We are not only unclean by nature, but we are unclean in how we live, how we think, how we act, and how we speak, but God has sent to us messengers of his grace. There is good news for us in Christ Jesus. God's Word tells us that Jesus came to give us peace with God, to change us from enemies of God to children of the Most High. He

forgives our sins by his perfect sacrifice. He cleanses us and sets us free. Who better to share the word than one who knows the forgiveness of God so well? He has forgiven me this a message that is so beautiful in your life and it is for your friends and neighbors, family and co-workers as well.

The good news of Jesus brings good tidings of great joy that will be for you and me and for all people. God's Word tells us that in his great love God came into this world. He rolled up his sleeves, so to speak, and went to work to accomplish our salvation. He came to this earth, he took on our human flesh, he endured the pains of this world, so that you and I might be redeemed. Our sins are forgiven in his sacrifice. This baby born in Bethlehem would be the Savior of the world. This is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. The child born and placed in the manger is the light of the world that brings life and light to all who believe. By his grace we are redeemed from sin and we are set free to serve our LORD, which includes sharing the good news of a Savior.

We have been given this good news. The joy of Jesus has been proclaimed to us and therefore we can burst forth with in a song of joy together, encouraged by this word we can go out filled with a joy that erupts into action and praise. With great joy in Jesus we will climb the mountains that are in our way of sharing the gospel. We will overcome the obstacles as we concern ourselves less about the messenger and we focus on the beauty of the message we have to share. No, our delivery might not always be polished and perfect, but the goodness of God, the beauty of the gospel enables to rejoice in *and* share the good news of salvation in Christ Jesus. And who knows, we may be able to utilize these new forms of communication to help us share this good news. If you still aren't quite comfortable in speaking to a friend about the gospel in person, maybe you would invite them to worship over the phone, or you would share a favorite bible passage in an email, send a helpful devotional link via text message or social media. We have a message that is beautiful that needs to share. May the LORD give us a joy that that overcomes hesitation, a joy that lifts the believer up and over obstacles that might stand in our way of sharing this message. May the LORD bless and encourage us in sharing the message of salvation as hear once again these words from the prophet Isaiah. **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!"** And our LORD and Savior, has stretched out his arm to save us, and that same gracious God will reign forever and ever. This is a message that is beautiful and one that we can gladly share. Amen.