

HYMNS: 627 33 633 (26 23 part 1 [& 2 if needed]) 34

INTROIT: Psalm 2

Why have the nations been restless, and why do the peoples plot for no purpose?

The kings of the earth take their stand, and the rulers conspire together, against the LORD and against His Anointed One, saying: "Let us tear up their chains and throw their ropes away from us!"

The One enthroned in heaven laughs. The LORD ridicules them.

Then He speaks to them in His anger and terrifies them in His glowing anger, saying: "Nevertheless, I Myself have consecrated My King on Zion, My holy mountain."

"I shall proclaim the decree of the LORD: He has said to Me: 'You are My Son. Today I have begotten You.

"Ask Me, that I may make the nations Your inheritance and the ends of the earth Your property.

"You will break them with an iron rod. You will smash them to pieces like a vessel of pottery."

Now therefore, kings, act with insight! Take advice, judges of the earth! Serve the LORD with fear and rejoice with trembling!

Fervently kiss the Son, that He may not become angry, and that you may not perish in your way! For His anger may blaze up in a short time. Blessed are all who take refuge in Him!

COLLECT: Almighty God, grant that the birth *of* Your only-begotten Son in the flesh may set us free from the bondage of sin; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

READINGS: Isaiah 52:7-10 The good news of salvation
Hebrews 1:1-12 And He will be My Son.
John 1:1-18 The Word became flesh.

Isaiah 52:7-10

7 How beautiful on the mountains **are the feet** of the messenger **who brings the good news**, who **announces peace**, who tells the good news of good things, who proclaims salvation, and who tells Zion, “Your God is King!” **8** Listen! Your watchmen have raised their voices and are shouting together joyfully. For eye to eye they will see it when the LORD returns to Zion. **9** Be happy and shout joyfully together, you ruins of Jerusalem! For the LORD has comforted His people. He has redeemed Jerusalem. **10** The LORD has made 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.**

Hebrews 1:1-6 (7-12)

1 God has long ago spoken at many times and in many ways to our fathers by the prophets, **2** but He has in these last days spoken to us by His Son. He has made Him the Heir of all things, and through Him He has also made the universe. **3** The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of His being. He maintains all things by His powerful Word. After He had made purification for sins, **He sat down at the right hand** of the Majesty on high.

4 He has become as much greater than the angels are as the name that He has inherited is superior to theirs. **5** For to which of the angels has God ever said, “**You are My Son. Today I have begotten You**”? Or again, “**I shall be His Father, and He will be My Son**”? **6** Again, when God brings His First-born Son into the world, He says: “**And let all the angels of God worship Him!**” **7** With reference to the angels He says, “**Who makes His angels spirits and His servants flames of fire.**”

8 However, to the Son He says: “**Your throne, O God, is for ever and ever, and the sceptre of uprightness is the sceptre of Your kingdom. 9 You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness. Therefore, God, Your God, has put You above Your companions by anointing You with the Olive-Oil of gladness.**”

10 He also says, “**Lord, in the beginning You laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of Your hands. 11 They will perish, but You continue. They will all become old like a garment. 12 You will roll them up like a robe and like a garment, and they will be changed. However, You are the same, and Your years will not come to an end.**” **13** To which of the angels has He ever said, “**Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet**”? **14** Are not all angels spirits in holy service, being sent to minister to those who are about to inherit salvation?

John 1:1-14 (15-18)

¹ **In the beginning** was the Word and the Word was **with God** and the Word was God. ² He was **in the beginning with God**. ³ Everything was made through Him, and not one thing that was made was made without Him. ⁴ In Him was life and the Life was the Light of mankind. ⁵ The Light is shining in the dark, and the darkness has not understood it. ⁶ A man came, whom God sent, and whose name was John. ⁷ He came to testify, that is, to testify about the Light so that through Him everyone might believe. ⁸ He was not the Light but came to witness about the Light. ⁹ The genuine Light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. ¹⁰ He was in the world and He had made the world, and the world did not know Him. ¹¹ He came to His own, and His own people did not receive Him. ¹² However, to all who received Him, who believe in His name, He gave the right to become the children of God. ¹³ They have been born not of blood or of an urge of the flesh or of a husband's desire, but of God. ¹⁴ The Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen His glory, the glory of the Father's only Son – He is full of grace and truth.

¹⁵ John testified about Him when he cried out: "This was the One about whom I said, 'He who is coming after me has been before me, because He has been before me.' ¹⁶ For from His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace. ¹⁷ For the Law was given through Moses, but grace and truth have come through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸ No one has ever seen God. The only God, who is in the lap of the Father, has made Him known."

THE MESSAGE OF PEACE
Sermon for Christmas Day, 2022
Isaiah 52:7-10

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is the First Reading from before, Isaiah 52:7-10: **⁷ How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of the messenger who brings the good news, who announces peace, who tells the good news of good things, who proclaims salvation, and who tells Zion, "Your God is King!" ⁸ Listen! Your watchmen have raised their voices and they are shouting together joyfully. For eye to eye they will see it when the LORD returns to Zion. ⁹ Be happy and shout joyfully together, you ruins of Jerusalem! For the LORD has comforted His**

people. He has redeemed Jerusalem. ¹⁰ The LORD has made 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.

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

“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 Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace,” (Isaiah 9:6). How the celebration of Christmas brings much joy! A Child has been born for us, a Child whose destiny is to die for us, and we know why.

Earlier in our worship service, we confessed our sins. We are fully aware that we have broken the Commandments in our thoughts, words, and deeds. The Apostle Paul notes, *“All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”* (Romans 3:23). Not one of us is perfect. We sin because we are sinners. We sin because we are corrupt by nature. We sin because we are in a state of rebellion against God. Even the best Christians are still rebellious by nature, and they, too, would break out into violence and lawlessness if the Word of God and the Holy Spirit did not subdue them. We cannot deny it: We are lost and condemned sinners by our very nature.

For this reason, celebrating Christmas is wonderful as God sends His messengers to proclaim the message of peace. It is for this reason that Isaiah writes: **“How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of the messenger who brings the good news, who announces peace, who tells the good news of good things, who proclaims salvation, and who tells Zion, “Your God is King!”** Of course, He is not talking about the shape of the messenger’s feet but the blessing of their coming to us. The message of peace, the Gospel of grace, makes their feet so beautiful. It is good news for it brings comfort, and it is for *the whole world*.

The message of peace is good news. **“How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of the messenger who brings the good news, who announces peace.”**

During the age of the Babylonian captivity, Jerusalem was downtrodden, oppressed and weary. Nearly all its people were gone. The city lay in ruins while the few people remaining there were poor and defenceless, plundered from time to time by wandering Moabites and Edomites. But there on the crest, silhouetted against the sky, comes a messenger, a runner, his feet flying. What a beautiful sight that is, for he brings good news. Actually, that whole phrase, **“the messenger who brings the good news,”** is just one word: *Evangelist*. That is what an evangelist is.

He could also be called a missionary, an apostle, or a preacher of the Gospel. It is all the same. And that is what Isaiah, the evangelist of the Old Testament, is talking about. He only uses the Jerusalem of the Babylonian time as a picture. He is speaking of the New Testament age when Christ would come and bring the everlasting Gospel. His age was ushered in by the angelic evangelists that appeared to Zacharias and then Mary and Joseph and on Christmas night to the shepherds, singing, “*Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom He is pleased!*”¹ They were the first evangelists of peace, singing of the Prince of Peace.

That peace is not something that is only to be hoped for, or something commanded, or something man can do; neither is it only a feeling in the heart. There is already peace. God is at peace with man. It is the peace that God has established between His people and Himself. God no longer burns with anger toward His people. He has removed their sin so that a condition of deep well-being exists between God and His people. In chapter 40, Isaiah is told to “*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 40:2). It is over. God is at peace with man. The peace had to start with God because man would never start it. Man only wants war with God. The Apostle Paul tells us that “*The sinful mind is hostile to God.*”² It is God that has made peace. We only agree to be at peace with God when the Gospel persuades us of God’s goodwill, and then and only then do we stop being hostile to God. Again, Paul writes that “*God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them. And He has committed to us the message of reconciliation.*”²⁰ *We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God*” (2 Cor. 5:19-20). That is the same as saying, “Believe that God is not your enemy; cease your foolish fighting against Him and remember, *since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*”³ That is to say, now that we know in our hearts that God is at peace with us, we feel at peace, and we are at peace with Him in turn.

The message of peace has three parts or three sides to it.

¹ Luke 2:14

² Romans 8:7

³ Romans 5:1

The first is “**who brings the good news.**” The messenger evangelises ‘good.’ He has a delightful message, and its content is something wonderful. It is good to hear. It feels good to listen to it because it means God has nothing but good things for us. All things work together for good to them that who love God.⁴

The second aspect of this message of peace is this: “**who proclaims salvation.**” Salvation is liberation. When you are saved, you are set free. The word for salvation in Hebrew is *Yeshuah*, Jesus. The Gospel, the Good News, is always about Jesus, who has set us free from our sins, from death’s power, and from eternal damnation. How beautiful are the feet of anyone who brings us this Good News! Unfortunately, the world is full of false prophets who preach a false peace, a peace that is not in Jesus, a peace that is no salvation and does not set us free from sin and death and hell but demands more goodness, more works, more love - or else a salvation that justifies sin and tells the sinner he has no need to repent. Of this latter false peace, Jeremiah complained when he wrote “*But look, you are trusting in deceptive words that are worthless.*”⁹ *Will you steal and murder, commit adultery and perjury, burn incense to Baal and follow other gods you have not known,*¹⁰ *and then come and stand before Me in this house, which bears My Name, and say, “We are safe” - safe to do all these detestable things?”* (Jeremiah 7:8-10). The Bible has a simple answer for that kind of Gospel: “*There is no peace,*” says the LORD, “*for the wicked.*”⁵

The third aspect of the true message of peace is, “**who tells Zion, “Your God is King!”**” That is, the Saviour who rules in peace is none other than God. Jesus is God, and we have reason to thank Him endlessly. He reigns by grace, His Word of forgiveness, and the Holy Spirit. There is no force in His rule, no tyranny, no compulsion. He obtains our obedience and service simply by the message of peace, forgiving our sins and promising us eternal life in heaven through His merits and suffering and death. This alone convinces and moves our hearts to serve Him. It is not the Law, not His rules and Commandments, no threats or fear, or any force. He simply assures us through His Gospel and the Sacraments that He forgives us for being sinners.

The message of peace brings comfort. We read, “**Be happy and shout joyfully together, you ruins of Jerusalem! For the LORD has comforted His people. He has redeemed Jerusalem.**” The ruins are the whole world. Physically the world is full of pollution, dirt, poisoned waters, air and soil, slums, rust and rot, vandalism,

⁴ Romans 8:28

⁵ Isaiah 48:22

and ruin. It is dying. And then look at our lives. Are they not waste places? We have driven away friends, soiled our consciences, debilitated our bodies, and corrupted our souls by the things we have done. How many of us have been unforgiving or selfish, seeing the speck in our brother's eye while taking no notice of the log in our own?⁶ How many of us have been or are being worldly? How many have neglected prayer or taken the time to read the Bible?

We repent of our many sins, and Isaiah says to be **“be happy and shout joyfully together, you ruins of Jerusalem! For the LORD has comforted His people. He has redeemed Jerusalem.”** Our consolation is Jesus Christ, and our Comforter is the Holy Spirit. The Lord has redeemed Jerusalem by paying the price to buy our freedom. The price was His innocent, divine blood. God died so that we may live. He carried our sins before God so we may be made righteous in His sight.

Other religions talk about forgiveness and a loving and gracious, and merciful God, but only the true Christian faith has any reason to speak of God that way. Only the Christian faith has a Redeemer that has taken away sin. God could not be gracious and forgiving without His sacrifice. He would have to be just, and His justice requires punishing and destroying sinners in hell. But Jesus stepped in our place, and God unleashed all the fury of His justice *upon Him*, and now we are free. God is not against us but for us, and all because of Christ. *That* is our comfort.

This message of peace is for the whole world. We read, **“The LORD has made 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 LORD is pictured as one who has, for a time, kept His powerful arm under the folds of His cloak. However, the time will come, Isaiah prophesies, when the LORD will show His power. **“The LORD has made bare His holy arm”** and will accomplish the great deliverances promised. Judah will return. Sinners will be released from the captivity of sin. The Lord will bring His faithful believers to a new and glorious Jerusalem far above all the trouble and misery of earth.

Dear friends, the Gospel has been published all over the world. Christ is for all the world. There is no saviour or way of salvation in the world other than in Him. *“I am the way...,”* He said, *“No man comes to the Father but by Me”* (John 14:6). Christ Jesus has redeemed the whole world. He has been born for the world and has died for all, and because of this, God has forgiven the entire world of sinners. The reason not everyone is saved is that they reject this free salvation and are lost by their own fault.

⁶ Matthew 7:3

However, since God has forgiven the whole world, He has forgiven us, and given us the Holy Spirit through His Word and Baptism. We have been made His Church, and He feeds us with the Holy Supper. Here we stand in the middle of the world. The world knows we are here, knows we are His Church. Some envy us. Some hate us and want us destroyed. Some look to us for the light of life. Our work is to radiate that light and to share it with others, to bring good tidings and publish peace. God Himself has come into the world to be our Saviour from sin. That is the true message of Christmas. **How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of the messenger who brings the good news, who announces peace, who tells the good news of good things, who proclaims salvation, and who tells Zion, “Your God is King!”** May they go everywhere! Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

PRAYER FOR CHRISTMAS DAY

Almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, with the angels and all the redeemed we worship, praise, and thank You for all Your goodness. Especially we give thanks for Your Christmas gift to the world, Your own Son our Saviour, who has become man and lived among us, full of grace and truth.

Help us all to possess the true joys of this festival and to welcome the Saviour into our lives. Open our hearts to receive Him whom You have sent to us, so that we may know You and have eternal life, and may be Your special people, redeemed from all sin and eager to live in ways that glorify You.

We sing Your praises for the great miracle and mystery of Christmas: that He who was born in the manger is Lord of all. Grant that the whole world may kneel before the Manger Child, and know Him as Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace, so that His government over redeemed people may increase, and the influence of His peace may extend everywhere. Make His light shine on the nations, and especially direct all those in authority.

We glorify You for this supreme gift of Your Son. In Him give us all other blessings for this life and the life to come. Let the true light of Christmas shine on our homes, and bless all families through Him. Grant that every gift we make to each other may be more precious and meaningful because we know and remember this gift from You, which is beyond description, the Holy Child Jesus.

Put the light, peace, righteousness, and joy of this holy festival into the homes of the sad, the sick, the poor, the lonely, the dispossessed, the loveless, and the sinful. Let the Good News of triumphant life and hope in Jesus drive away all depression and despair. Make Your generous love shine through in the lives of all Your children. Help us to show compassion and generous love to all in need.

Loving Father, we offer our praise and thanksgiving before the manger-throne of Your Son Jesus. We offer our lives, our love, and our service to You in grateful devotion. So help, protect, and keep us through Him, that, when He comes in glory on the Last Day, we may rejoice and share in the perfect life and happiness of His eternal kingdom. Amen.

Humble Yourselves before God

How wonderful it is to come to church to listen to the children tell us again the Christmas story! It's not as if they are our teachers. We are their teachers. They recite, read, and sing the Gospel that God, through us, has taught them. There is something inexpressibly precious about hearing the good tidings of great joy brought to us in the voices of our children.

The Gospel is God's gift to us of eternal life in Christ. Our children are God's gifts to us. When we teach the Gospel to our children God joins us to them in a bond stronger than blood. He unites us in the common confession of the one true faith that receives eternal life. God binds us together forever. Our children are God's children.

God gives us children. But they aren't own possessions. They belong to Him. When we bring our children to God in Holy Baptism, we are not only confessing that we believe that God adopts us as His children in this spiritual washing, we are also confessing that our baptised children belong to God. They bear the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. They are heirs of God's promises. They are Christians.

Jesus once said "*Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven*" (Matt. 18:3). Why? Is it because children are so innocent? But they're not! Jesus also said, "*That which is born of the flesh is flesh*" (John 3:6). Children don't need to be taught how to sin. They are born sinful. They believe that the world exists to serve them. It's cute for a while until we see it for what it is.

Why then does Jesus say we must turn and become like little children or we cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven? Is it because their faith is purer than the faith of an adult? I don't doubt that it is, but if our faith must be pure and free from any doubt at all I wonder if anyone over the age of six can be saved! It is true that little children believe with a more implicit confidence than we have as we grow older and become so smart that we think we know better than God knows.

But our Lord is not talking specifically about the faith of a little child when He says that we must become like little children in order to get to heaven. Consider the question Jesus was answering when He said these words. The disciples had asked Him who was greatest in the kingdom of God. In response to that question Jesus set a child in the midst of them. He pointed to the child and said to be like him. Humble yourself as a little child.

Even in our day, when children often lack proper discipline and make themselves the centre of attention when they should be respectfully silent, children don't have the status of an adult. We don't let them drive or vote. We set down rules about what they will wear, eat, and drink. They are minors. And we try to teach them to submit to parental authority so that they will learn to get along in this world. We look at families in which the children have their parents under their control, and we pity the poor parents.

Who among adults wants the status of a child? But that's what Jesus wants for you! He's not telling us to think or act as a little child would think or act. He's telling us to accept the status a little child has: to become small and powerless and without any real status at all. When we humble ourselves before God and one another and become like little children, whom do we see? We see the little Child of all little children. We see the little Child born of Mary. We see the almighty Son of the Father given to us as the helpless Child of Mary. We see our God with us. And look! He's with our children! He's in their voices. He's in the words we hear them speak to us today. He's in their singing of the ancient hymns and carols of the Church.

He, who joined Himself to us as a little Child, remains with us and with our children even today. He is God. He is our God. He is with us. He is with our children. He grew to manhood in innocence. He was pure and free from all sin. On the cross, in His innocence He bore our sin. His pure, holy, and spotless life was offered to heaven in the place of our sinful, prideful, and corrupt lives. God remained with us as Jesus rose from the dead to proclaim forgiveness of sins to the whole world. God was with us as He established His holy Christian Church on this earth, and gave to her the pure Gospel and Sacraments in which and through which God is with us until the end of time. God is with us and our children.

So humble yourselves before your Creator today. Bow down before Him whom the sea and wind obey. See Him lying in a manger, a little Child. Find in that Child the greatness you need, for He is God with us.



Children's Message:

Merry Christmas! What's special about Christmas? Jesus was born!

One of today's Bible readings says: "*The LORD has made bare His holy arm*" (Isaiah 52:10). What does it mean to bare your arm? Well, to bare something in this way means to uncover it, so to bare your arm would mean something like to roll up your sleeve so everybody can see your arm. When do people do that? To work, to fight, to be ready for action, to show off muscles.



Who has a strong arm? How strong is God's arm?

God's arm is strong enough to pick up the whole world and carry it. His arm is so strong that He can carry the oceans, the sky, the land, all people, all animals, buildings, cars, everything! No one is as strong as He is. "*The LORD has made bare His holy arm.*" That means He's strong and He's ready to work.

But it says not just "His arm." What kind of arm is it? It says "His **holy** arm." What does "holy" mean? "Holy" means being very much like God Himself in His goodness. If God's arm is holy, what kinds of things does He do with it? Holy things. He saves unholy people like you and me. He makes us holy.

God's holy arm is His holy Son, Jesus. In today's Old Testament Reading, God says: "*The LORD has made 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*" (Is. 52:10). He has bared His holy arm. Jesus is God's holy arm.

When God wanted to show His muscles and get to work, He sent His Son to be born of the Virgin Mary. He sent Jesus to teach holy things. He sent Jesus to give us Holy Baptism. He sent Jesus to give us the Holy Supper. He sent Jesus to die a holy death and to rise again. And Jesus then sends us the Holy Spirit. He gave us the Holy Bible. He makes you holy by forgiving your sins. He makes you holy when you pay attention to the Bible reading, the songs in worship, and the sermon. So pay attention and listen to what we say here at church about Jesus! God's holy arm is Jesus, born on Christmas to be your Saviour!



Merry Christmas

Welcome to all worshipping with us today! Merry Christmas!
 Pastor Peter Ziebell, Phone 0407583922.
 Email him at paziebell@gmail.com or to the church office at ddaalc@gmail.com.
Please notify pastor of anyone who is unwell or in need of a visit.

WEEKLY ANNOUNCEMENTS

1 January 2023 Circumcision & Name of Jesus	8 January The Baptism of our Lord	15 January 2 Epiphany
8.30am OAK HC 9.00am TMBA LR 9.30am AUB LR 10.15am GRN HC 9.00am MARBURG LR	8.30am OAK LR 9.00am TMBA HC 9.00am GRN LR 10.15am AUB HC 9.00am LOWOOD LR	8.30am OAK LR 9.00am TMBA LR 9.00am GRN LR 9.30am AUB LR 9.00am LOWOOD HC
1 January 2023		
READINGS: Numbers 6:22-27; Galatians 3:23-29; Luke 2:21		
HYMNS: 552 36 277 (398 842) 512		
8 January		
READINGS: Isaiah 42:1-9; Romans 6:1-11; Matthew 3:13-17		
HYMNS: 16 152 791 (789 291) 279		

Next Sunday, 1.30pm. Seminary Committee meeting at Bethlehem Toowoomba.
 If you haven't already, please take home a copy of Pastor's Christmas Letter today.

Weekly sermons and bulletins are available at www.aelc.org.au.
 Weekly Sunday School lessons are also now available in the Members section.
 If there are any late changes to be made to divine services, these will be listed immediately on the website, and a text sent out to members.
If you are unsure, please contact pastor.