

Sought Out! “Behold, Your Salvation Comes!”

Christmas Day – 12/25/24 – Mt. Calvary Luth.

Text: Isaiah 62:10-12 Pastor Keith Besel

v. 11, **“Behold, Yahweh has proclaimed to the end of the earth: Say to the daughter of Zion, ‘Behold, your salvation comes; behold, His reward is with Him...’”**

Introduction

✘ Well, here we are: It’s Christmas Day! A holiday; a most holy day. As we heard the angels proclaim it last night, this is the day in which “Peace (has now come) on earth, (filled with) goodwill toward men.”

→ This is the day we’ve been waiting for; the culmination of so much attention for so many weeks. And now it’s happened. God has fulfilled His promise through the prophet Isaiah, “Behold, your salvation comes” (v. 11). Yes, my dear Christians, our salvation has come!

✘ For you and me here in the year of our Lord, 2024, it’s been four weeks, maybe more, depending on when you started shopping. For Mary and Joseph, it was nine months. For God’s people Israel, it was hundreds – even thousands of years.

→ But Mary delivered. In fact, God delivered on His promise. The angels proclaimed it: “For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior” (Lk. 2:11), God’s Messiah, Christ the Lord!

I. After waiting, our salvation has come.

✘ Did you have any doubts? Did you wonder if God would actually come? Certainly, Israel must have wondered. They knew God’s Word with His promises, but too often it seemed hopelessly out of step with the realities of their world; even with their life as God’s special people.

→ It wasn’t supposed to be this way. Isaiah had begun his great vision in chapter two, describing the way it should end: nations coming to Zion; a city set on a hill; raised up by the power and presence; by the peace and the promise of God; a city sought out by all the world (Is. 2:2–4).

✘ But the reality was oh-so-different. Here in Isaiah’s day, the nations came to Zion all right; they came to destroy and plunder. And not because they were so rich with earthly treasure – those days were long gone. It may have been true in the days of David; especially with Solomon in all of his glory. That was when the nations truly sought them out; even the queen of Sheba came.

→ But that was then. This was now. The Assyrians had already destroyed the North and decimated the South. And just when the Israelites thought it couldn’t get any worse, Jerusalem was captured; the temple utterly destroyed, and almost all of them were carried off into captivity and exile. They were lost, pitiful slaves. No one would ever be seeking them out, that’s ridiculous!

✘ And what was worse is that this was no accident. They were actually the victims of their own foolishness, sinfulness, and selfishness. Utterly hopeless and helpless – there was nothing they could do. Whatever they tried to do, only made their situation worse.

✘ So, Merry Christmas! Well, yes, it was. Yes, it is! “Now hear this,” Isaiah was told to say to God’s people. “Listen up! Help is on its way! There is a future, not by anything you can do, but by the hands of God.” Or in the actual words of our text, “Behold, your salvation comes!”

→ You see, what is so special, so glorious, so wonderful about Christmas is that we are faced with God’s reality; His response to what really matters; His response to the deep, even the darkest realities of our world.

→ I don't mean to take anything away from the peace and joy; even the gifts and goodies that adorn the celebration of this day. But let's also make sure that we understand the profound truth here in this text from God's holy Word: we – along with the entire world – we are lost, entirely forsaken, even more, abandoned. Try as hard as we might, any and all of our attempts cannot ever save us – they only make matters worse.

✘ And yet Isaiah comes bursting into this today with his prophetic voice: “Behold, your salvation comes’. You are, in fact, ‘Sought Out’ and “Not Forsaken!”

✘ Here in our world we also wonder if it's supposed to be this way. God's people hardly seem special, holy, or set apart. Certainly we are not sought after as having something most people want. It only seems to increase every day that true believers, when our faith becomes public are treated with disrespect and disdain.

→ Isaiah described the land of Israel and Judah as desolate and deserted. No one was left. And worse, no one cared. There was no one to rescue them; no one to ransom them; no one to seek them out.

Or so it seemed.

✘ You know, there is only one thing even worse than being lost – knowing that no one is looking for you. Through the years we've heard stories of tragic losses: coal miners trapped, children wandering off, elderly folks fallen and suffering in their own homes sometimes for days or weeks – not missed by anyone.

→ Remember the movie *Cast Away*? One minute Tom Hanks's character is anticipating a special Christmas, the next he is lost, cast away on an island that no one will ever find. For a while he actually assumes someone will be coming to rescue him. Then he realizes that no one will. He is forsaken, left for dead, even declared dead. He is not “sought after.”

✘ Even surrounded by people, you and I know the feeling of being forsaken and all alone. Our lives are out of our own control – so many things happening and no one to help. Even on Christmas Day, so many are all alone.

→ In fact, today, for many, the loneliness feels like it is at its worst. The holidays just mask it over, but come tomorrow, the problems are still there.

→ Yes, we know the feeling: forsaken, forlorn, deserted, no longer desired. You don't have to lose your job to know the deep concern of uncertainty. And boy do we know it: we live in highly uncertain times. It can be lonely at the bottom. And it can be lonely at the top.

→ Look, ours is a society that generates loneliness: we are an independent people; our families are fractured; true friends are few; which is just as well because we don't have time for anything but the necessities. And even the basics of home and job and wage; including the food and clothes they buy, are hardly secure.

✘ Our children – the next generation – are actually looking for community. But they are afraid of relationships. And we aren't teaching them how to trust others. Interacting constantly on social media and video games, in front of their best friend – the screen, they are completely alone, and often feeling frustrated.

→ Our world tells us to take care of ourselves first, yet we find that it can be quite lonely by oneself.

✘ Isaiah knew this feeling of being forsaken, all alone. He was God's prophet, and it was very lonely in the middle. Few people listened to his words of warning; few listened to his words of hope.

→ And yet, in the midst of what should have been the darkest despair, Isaiah speaks God's clear words of hope and comfort. Looking ahead, just as we have done throughout the Advent season, Isaiah sees, and he proclaims that God's salvation is coming.

II. Waiting to be sought out and saved.

✘ Remember, you're lost; we're all lost in our old sin-filled nature. And just when you have given up hope; when you've recognized that no one is looking, seeking, or coming to find you; once you are resigned even to die, you suddenly realize that someone is coming. That's the absolute truth: we are being sought out; we are not forsaken, because our salvation has come!

→ Friends, today that includes you...and you...and you...!

✘ And consider how it is that He came; to whom He came: to those who were alone and forsaken; a people sitting in darkness and despair who knew the worst loneliness of being separated from God. Isaiah 9:2 assures us, "the people who walked in darkness have seen a great light!"

→ Many of us know the feeling; when we're alone or grieving or feeling hopeless and someone comes to help; maybe just sits with us; shows concern, friendship and love, and we realize, we are no longer alone. Home alone; with all of those problems – then the phone rings, a friend calls to visit; someone comes to help and the loneliness goes away.

✘ So it is friends that Jesus came to earth, to you and to me. He came to us from heaven above to earth. He searched out the helpless, the homeless, the forsaken, the deserted, the no-longer-desired.

✘ Jesus came to earth, not just to you; not just to me but to this entire world. Verse 12 assures us of this: He came and sought us out; the forsaken ones, and He gave us a new name; a sought-after name; a name that means "Sought Out," "A City No Longer Forsaken" (v 12).

→ He came to rescue and redeem us from ourselves; from our own sinful destruction. He came to be with us; to take our place as the lost and forsaken ones. He found us and in doing so, He lost His life. He loved us, even as He cried out that God had forsaken Him. He died so that you and I might live. He rose from the dead in victory, so that you and I might live in victory as well.

→ He opened the way of eternal life, so that we might be with Him forever. Hebrews 13:5 gives us His assurance, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." You get what that means right! We will never, ever be alone: not in the life to come and not in our life here and now on earth either.

✘ But there's more. Not only has He sought us out, but He has made us something to be "sought out" by others. Shepherds came to see this thing that had come to pass. Wise Men came to seek Him out.

→ Isaiah tells us that we have a new name – think of that: Jesus is born, a new baby, and we are the ones who get named! Verse 12: "And they shall be called The Holy People, The Redeemed of Yahweh; and you shall be called Sought Out, A City Not Forsaken."

✘ Imagine that! Even in our world, we Christians have something that others need. We are sought out. They are seeking what we already have! They may not know it; they may not realize it; but we do.

→ Sometimes they actually seek us out; more often though, we need to go to them. But they see it in our lives; they see it in our hearts; they see it in our eyes and on our lips. We've got a confidence that they crave after: we know God's salvation. It is for all nations to seek; to know; to come to know. It's God's plan that it works like this; the plan and purpose of the God who has come to earth; who came to seek and to save the lost.

✘ The angels made it clear: The child who is born is "A Savior who is Christ the Lord!" (Lk. 2:11). We know this truth; God's truth. We know God's reality. Things may not be as they appear.

God is real. God is with us. We are not lost, after all! We are not deserted. We are not alone. We are God's special people. Jesus has made you...and you...and you, God's holy person.

➔ Christmas has finally come. Christ, the Savior is born, to seek you out. For your salvation has come! Amen.