



Sermon Transcript October 21, 2018

Hospitable God, Hospitable People The Church is a Light that Guides the Way Isaiah 61:10 - 62:12

This message from the Bible was addressed originally to the people of Wethersfield Evangelical Free Church on October 21, 2018 at 511 Maple Street, Wethersfield, CT, 06109 by Steve Durgin (WEFC Church Planting Resident). This is a transcription that bears the strength and weaknesses of oral delivery. It is not meant to be a polished essay. An audio version of this sermon may also be found on the church website at www.wethefc.com.

Sermon Text
Isaiah 61:10-62:12

61:10 I will greatly rejoice in the Lord; my soul shall exult in my God, for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation; he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself like a priest with a beautiful headdress, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. ¹¹ For as the earth brings forth its sprouts, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to sprout up, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to sprout up before all the nations.

62:1 For Zion's sake I will not keep silent, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not be quiet, until her righteousness goes forth as brightness, and her salvation as a burning torch. ² The nations shall see your righteousness, and all the kings your glory, and you shall be called by a new name that the mouth of the Lord will give. ³ You shall be ^sa crown of beauty in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of your God. ⁴ You shall no more be termed Forsaken, and your land shall no more be termed Desolate, but you shall be called My Delight Is in Her, and your land Married; for the Lord delights in you, and your land shall be married. ⁵ For as a young man marries a young woman, so shall your sons marry you, and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you.

⁶ On your walls, O Jerusalem, I have set watchmen; all the day and all the night they shall never be silent. You who put the Lord in remembrance, take no rest, ⁷ and give him no rest until he establishes Jerusalem and makes it a praise in the earth. ⁸ The Lord has sworn by his right hand and by his mighty arm: "I will not again give your grain to be food for your enemies, and foreigners shall not drink your wine for which you have labored; ⁹ but those who garner it shall eat it and praise the Lord, and those who gather it shall drink it in the courts of my sanctuary."

¹⁰ Go through, go through the gates; prepare the way for the people; build up, build up the highway; clear it of stones; lift up a signal over the peoples. ¹¹ Behold, the Lord has proclaimed to the end of the earth: Say to the daughter of Zion, "Behold, your salvation comes; behold, his reward is with him, and his recompense before him." ¹² And they shall be called The Holy People, The Redeemed of the Lord; ^kand you shall be called Sought Out, A City Not Forsaken.

Introduction

I should begin by saying that I come to this hospitality stuff, with a testimony. You know how I describe my early relationship to the Church, to Christians just after I became one? “I was swallowed whole by a loving family.” In no time I had so many mothers and fathers and I spent so much time at so many people’s houses, that there came a point when, (and this was stressful for my parents...) you really couldn’t predict who’s house I would end up at for the night. And my hosts were diligent to remind me to call my parents about where I was that night... and I rarely did. Some of you would be irate if your kids acted that way. The older I get the less I blame you.

In any case, I was welcomed. Into people’s lives, into people’s homes. But it wasn’t just Christians who welcomed me and treated me as family. Sometimes non-Christians did a better job being hospitable than Christians. And that’s why I think we need God’s word this morning. To help us be who we’re called to be.

The claim of this passage, as I understand it?

Jesus is making his people a light to the nations, so prepare the way for the nations to come to God.

Today I am going to give you three reasons to believe that Jesus is making his people a light to the nations: (1) He is commissioned; (2) he is compelled; and (3) he is committed to do so. Commissioned, compelled, committed. And then I will end with a call for you, his people, to prepare the way for the nations to come to God.

Here’s the first reason:

Commissioned

As 61:10 begins, God’s chosen servant, this Anointed one, is speaking, and the first thing he brings to our attention is his clothing. What do you make of that?

Clothes can say a lot about somebody. I for one am grateful that when my wife first met me she chose to look past my clothes. I was not, after all, very deliberate about my wardrobe. I had no jeans without rips across the knee. Not a single pair to my memory. So it might have seemed like I was deliberate about only buying ripped jeans but the truth was that I bought them unripped and managed to rip all of them. What might have my clothes said about me?

Irresponsible? Careless? Generally unaware of my self-presentation? I like to think they said “adventurous” “daring” “willing to climb things” but I doubt that message came through.

But what do the clothes of the servant say? Righteousness. Salvation. To be clothed in *righteousness* means that he lives for God, and will do what ever God’s holy love requires. To be clothed in *salvation* means the he lives for us, and will do whatever his people need. To say that he’s clothed is to say that he is ready for action. What you do every day before you go out? (I hope.) You put on clothes. What you do before you go to work? You put on clothes suited for your job. How do you identify a police officer, a fireman, or a soldier? Their uniform.

In other words, Jesus has been commissioned. To be commissioned is to be given official approval to act. Jesus is commissioned in that God authorizes him for the work of saving us. And the proof of that is in the uniform. It’s in the robes of righteousness and salvation. Jesus is literally suited for the task. He is dressed for success with respect to his mission.

And if you’re familiar with the Biblical story, with the true story of the world, Jesus is wearing the clothes that we need —salvation and righteousness. From the beginning, something of the glory of God, was meant to shine in and through us. It probably did in the garden. It did when Moses walked down mount Sinai and people couldn’t bear to look at his luminous face.

And now, recognizing that the world could not produce its own salvation, and had nothing to wear but rags, the Lord clothed *himself* with garments of salvation and righteousness. It is on *him* that God puts salvation and righteousness so that (Isaiah 61:11)) he can make righteousness sprout for the nations and salvation blaze brightly for his people. And how else could that happen except if the clothes that Jesus wears, become ours? Jesus is clothed so that we may be clothed.

Jesus is **commissioned** to make his people a light to the nations (61:10-11)

He is saying, “Look, I am already dressed for the task. I stand ready.” In the same holy

and careful way as a couple dress for their wedding (VERSE 10), the Lord has dressed his great agent for the work of salvation. He is ready down to the finest detail.

Here’s the second reason:

Compelled

Jesus is compelled. VERSE 4 reads, “you shall be called My Delight is in Her, and your land Married, for the LORD delights in you.” And look at VERSE 5, “as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you.” God’s desire is to enjoy honeymoon delight with his people.

Look to VERSE 8. “The Lord has sworn.” The LORD has sworn himself to do this. We are talking about nothing less than God’s own faithful love. His mission can only fail if his love fails. And that is as sure a thing as you can get because his love never fails.

VERSE 8 continues.... “The Lord has sworn by” what? “...by his right hand and by his mighty arm.” His hand refers to God’s personal involvement. Some of you know what it feels like to have a boss who has to have a hand in everything. Some of you know what it is to parent a child who feels compelled to touch, touch, touch everything, and you have to constantly teach them where their hands don’t belong. Not so with God. You want his hand on your life. You don’t want a “hands off” parenting style from God. You won’t do well without his personal involvement. And here God promises to put his hands all over your life.

His arm refers to God’s personal power. If the LORD puts his arm into something, it’s gonna get done. Given what Israel’s been through, and how wickedly Israel has sinned, nothing less could get the job done. And just what has God promised to do with his arm? Bring about this picture of a flourishing people in a flourishing land.

And check out this subtle move in VERSES 8-9. “I will not again give your grain to be food for your enemies... but those who garner it shall eat it...”

Israel won’t have to worry about foreigners taking their food. But if you’ve been paying attention through Isaiah, you’ll realize that foreigners aren’t a threat not because they are gone, and not because Israel has huge walls around it. Rather, the foreigners don’t take food from Israel because there is such an abundance of food and such an appeal to their God that they’ve been invited to join Israel!

Isaiah 61:5 makes clear that, far from the foreigners taking Israel’s crops, they will be helping to grow them (Isa. 61:5) and participating in the worship of the God who gives them (56:3, 6; 66:25). In other words, God is saying, “foreigners won’t take your food, but you’re gonna give it to them.” We will share together in God’s abundant provision.

And God will do it by his own hand and his own strength. He is compelled. God's ambition is to bless us. Israel's forsakenness will be replaced with delight. He will see to it that we are called by a new name and seen as a marvel and a beauty in this needy world. Zion, this city marked by God's presence, will be the object of God's cherishing love and the Lord will rejoice over everyone whom Jesus has saved and made right. That's his mission. That's what his success will look like. And it's his hands-on love that will see it through.

Jesus is **compelled** to make his people a light to the nations (62:4-5, 8-9)

And what compels him, Church? His love for you.

Jesus is making his people a light to the nations. You've heard two reasons why to believe that. First, that he's **commissioned**. Second, that he's **compelled**.

Here's the third reason:

Committed

VERSE 1 reads, "For Zion's sake I will not keep silent, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not be quiet, *until* her righteousness goes forth as brightness, and her salvation as a burning torch."

This servant will not give up, he won't stop interceding for us, *until* God's character is seen in God's people. And we see here the guarantee that he will not fail.

VERSE 2-3: "The nations **shall** see your righteousness, and all the kings your glory, and you **shall** be called by name but the mouth of the Lord will give. [and] you **shall** be a crown of beauty in the hand of the Lord, and the royal diadem in the hand of your God."

As he intercedes for us, Jesus promises that he will not be silent. But he takes his commitment a step further in VERSES 6-7.

On your walls, O Jerusalem,
I have set watchmen;
all the day and all the night
they shall never be silent.
You who put the Lord in remembrance,
take no rest,

62:7

and give him no rest
until he establishes Jerusalem
and makes it a praise in the earth.

Jesus is so committed to making his people a light to the nations, that he has specially appointed watchmen to join him in interceding for us. And the watchmen he appoints will not stop praying until the peoples of the world are welcomed into God's house for food and celebration.

Those who engage in prayer are the true guardians of the Church. They see what others do not. They are vigilant when others are not. I have had my heart touched and darn near broken by some of the older women of this church family. Because they've come up to me, as a high schooler, as a college student, and now as a pastoral resident, they've come up to me, and told me, "You know, Steven, you don't know me. You may not remember me. But I've been praying for you. For years." For years! Asking God to arrest my attention (because Lord knows I regularly need it) pleading with God to make me more gentle, more perceptive, more humble, that I would be a blessing to God's people and to this neighborhood. For years. Some of you have prayed for me. Can I just say, "Thank you." Those who engage in prayer are the true watchmen of the Church. You have guarded me.

Whoever these watchmen are, we are called by the Lord himself to join them. Look at VERSE 6. *You, You*, who put the LORD in remembrance —Well, that should be everyone! Everyone who aspires to live before God and seek God's kingdom. *You, you Israelites, and now, You Christians*, join the watchmen. Pray without ceasing. Give God no rest. Press him to finish his work in the world.

We do not conclude that God appoints watchmen because he needs help, or that he asks us to remember because he would otherwise forget, but he speaks this over Israel to say that their future is secure. He will do more than necessary to make his people a praise in the earth. And it pleases him, rather than doing it all apart from us, to do it through us.

Jesus is **committed** to make his people a light to the nations (62:1-3; 6-7)

God will not stop until his work his done. Neither should you. So continue, prayer warriors, in your labor. Press on. Press Him. Take no rest and give him no rest until the world sees Christians shine as a people who dare to trust God and open their hands and hearts to a world that needs him.

Isaiah has given us three strong reasons to believe that Jesus is making his people a light to the nations. He is **commissioned**; he is **compelled**; and he is **committed** to do so.

So what do we do about it? Well, it's no accident that following these descriptions of Jesus the coming servant, there is this image of a highway.

But who is on this highway?

VERSE 12. "They will be called." Who are "they?" "They" are the pilgrims, the people and peoples of verse 10. Do you see that?

VERSE 10 said,

Go through, go through the gates; prepare the way for the **people**;
build up, build up the highway; clear it of stones; lift up a signal over the **peoples**.

Who are "the people," Church? Israel. Who are "the peoples," Church? The Nations.

But how are they to come down this Highway? How on earth can Israel take the nations with them into the city of God's presence when Israel has failed so many times before? How can they lead those who have been their enemies? Those whom they struggle to understand? Those whose ways of life seem so different that fellowship and hospitality is bridge too far? Let alone family.

The key is in VERSE 12.

"Behold, **your salvation comes**; behold, his reward is *with him*, and his recompense *before him*."

Behold your salvation comes. That is to say, we know we can travel this road, Church, because someone's coming down that road to get us, and he will take us with him as his reward, and keep us before him as his recompense. I don't know if you heard what I just said.

Church, this road was once an impossible road. It was a road we could never journey on, it was a highway disheveled, and full of stones, it was a highway where obstacles abounded, and a clear path was nowhere to be found. It was a highway ever out of the reach of God's people, but now we know that we will take this highway all the way to glory because someone else will take it first. Your salvation comes.

This road is not a pipe dream. This road is not a long shot. This road is a guarantee. Your salvation comes. Church, I don't know if you what he's saying this morning, but all of your deepest longings for the presence of God, all of your yearning for a new and better world, all of your pain, and all of your loss, it's going to be dealt with because your salvation comes. He comes endowed with the Spirit of God and the word of God. He comes in the garments of salvation and the robe of righteousness. He has sworn by his right hand and by his mighty arm that Israel will feast in abundance with the nations that once robbed them. He has appointed watchmen and he will not rest until his people shine with righteousness. He is commissioned. He is compelled. He his committed. Your salvation comes. He comes that he may make our righteousness sprout before the nations, and our salvation shine brightly as burning torch.

And we can walk this highway because he walked it first, and now that he's come into the world, he is taking his reward and his recompense with him. That's his work, that's his work Church, but *this* work is ours, you, you, the people of God, you, the presence of God in the world, you, the Church, you are charged to "prepare the way for the people, and lift up a signal over all the peoples of the world."

Maybe you didn't catch this, but this highway has a threefold purpose. (1) It's the Anointed Servant who comes down it first, (2) It is the same highway over which the redeemed people will walk when they prepare the way and enter the new Jerusalem, (3) and as they lift up a signal over the peoples its the nations of the whole earth that come with them at their invitation.

Jesus is making his people a light to the nations, so prepare the way for the nations to come to God.

God comes towards us, we prepare the way, and we welcome the nations to come with us. In other words, God shows us the way to show other people to him.

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Sermon Date: October 21, 2018

COMMUNITY GROUPS

Getting To Know Me Questions

1. Who was a person in your life who pointed you to Christ? What was it about this person that drew you to Christ?
2. What was a highlight of the past week? What was a challenge you faced this past week?
3. What did you take from the sermon on Sunday?

Diving Into The Word

4. Read Isaiah 61:10-11. How do these verses describe what God is doing in the world today? How have you seen God do this work in your life?
5. Read Isaiah 62:10-12. What could it mean for God's people to prepare the way for each other?
6. What could it mean for God's people to lift a signal over the peoples? How might the church do this locally?
7. Compare Isaiah 62:1 and 62:6-7. Do you see any similarities? What does it look like to "take no rest" and "give [God] no rest"?

Taking It Home

8. What is one thing you are taking with you from your discussion?
9. What step of obedience do you need to take this week in response to your discussion?