

St. Paul: On The Same page

for 12.25.14 Christmas

Day One: Isaiah 52:7-10

⁷ 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!"

"How beautiful... are the feet..." Now, that's just weird.

This phrase sounds odd to modern ears. Generations ago, it didn't seem as strange. In the 1920s you could sing, "Drink! Drink! Drink! To lips that are red and sweet as the fruit on the tree!" Singers could croon about ruby lips or alabaster arms then, but we seldom see it today.

And yet, we all understand the word-picture in "the pitter patter of little feet." It makes us think of a home full of family love. In the same way, the feet of the messenger who brings the gospel is like the ring tone of the call that says "surgery was successful." It's like the doorbell that says a gift has arrived. The footstep of a messenger was how good news came in those days.

What messenger has God used to give you the best news of all? We are not always grateful for cell phones or email. I've heard many people curse FaceBook and other social media because they bring so much trivial news. And often the TV screens in the airport broadcast nothing but bad news.

But if good news arrives, how do you expect to hear of it? It may be the incessant ringing of the phone. It may be that little chime noise announcing a new post on FaceBook. It may even be the sound of a church bell.

But like the prophet, we give thanks for the sound of the messenger because the message is so wonderful. Peace! Peace in the midst of war and crime and hatred and ugliness. Peace, not just among nations, but peace between us and God.

Who will tell you this good news? Give thanks for that person today!

Prayer: *Dear Jesus, you sent a messenger to me. Thank you for _____, and for the joy I have in knowing you because of your faithful servant. Amen.*

Day Two: Hebrews 1:1-6

¹ In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, ² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son...

Our communication keeps getting better. From the Pony Express to the telegraph was a big jump. Then the US Postal Service was born and letters began to criss-cross the country. But even that was not fast enough. Cell phones and email and text messaging bring our messages to us no matter where we are, all around the world!

Some say we'll have 3-D holographic images soon... in high resolution! But even though the phone company used to say that a long-distance call was like reaching out and touching someone, it really wasn't. Even today, when we can Skype someone on the other side of the earth and speak face to face, it is still not like touching them – or being there.

But this is what God did. He came in the flesh. He didn't send a message through a prophet. He didn't send just a book or a letter. He didn't even give us a picture or a

video blog. He sent us his own Son. And Jesus is now with us... personally.

“In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets...” They were messengers who shouted out God's call to repentance. They announced his invitation to be reconciled, to be welcomed back to God. They were like newspaper criers from the old days, yelling on the street corner about stories that were important for us to know.

But they were not God himself. And no matter how much we learned *about* God, we were still far from him... until he sent his Son.

“Now, in these last days, he has spoken to us by his Son.” God has come close to you. He has bridged the awful distance from heaven to earth. Will you come close to him?

Prayer: *Heavenly Father, sometimes I feel so alone. But I know you are not far away. In the person of your Son you have come close to me. Keep me always near. Amen.*

Day Three: John 1:1-18

¹ *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.* ² *He was with God in the beginning.* ³ *Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.* ⁴ *In him was life, and that life was the light of men.* ⁵ *The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it...*

¹⁴ *The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

Have you ever had another person come live in your home for a period of time? Maybe it was an elderly parent, or an exchange student, or a renter.

For a few years we welcomed our niece into our home while she attended college nearby. When we do this kind of thing, at first it's uncomfortable. Then we get used to having someone else around. Finally we discover that it has also changed us. The influence, the likes and dislikes, the new ideas of another person change us.

The presence of a renter or a relative cause us to take another person's feelings into

consideration. We take their plans into account when we make our plans. We have to move our things aside to make room for their things. We adjust our mealtimes and our menu to accommodate their needs. I don't mean that we necessarily do whatever that person says, but the pattern of our life is shifted.

John says that The Word became flesh and lived with us. God's Son moved in with us. How does his presence change you? Knowing that Jesus is with you, do you speak differently, act differently, think differently? Your sins are washed away. Does that change how you act toward others who have sinned? You have a new home in heaven. Do you look at your house in a new way?

Jesus has made his dwelling among us. In the Lord's Supper, he joins himself to us intimately, and it all began at Christmas. How are you changed?

Prayer: *Dear Lord Jesus, you are welcome in my home, welcome at my workplace, welcome in my mind and heart. Let your presence cause me to see my world differently, and to think and act in new ways. Amen.*

Day Four:

*Joy to the world, the Lord is come
Let earth receive her king,
Let every heart prepare him room,
And heaven and nature sing...*

A friend of mine asked on Facebook what everyone's least favorite Christmas songs were. The responses poured in, including: Little Drummer Boy, Santa Baby, and Grandma Got Run Over By a Reindeer. (I said anything sung by Chipmunks.)

But a few people also added some hymns, like "Joy to the World." They may have been joking, but it is still true that almost anything can be ruined by overexposure.

Are you tired of the Christmas songs and ready to pack them all away? Perhaps instead of avoiding the Christmas crush, we should simply stop and really listen.

We sing "joy to the world," but I wonder if people outside the Christian faith would say that we are particularly joyful people. Would anyone say that their world is a more joyful place because of us?

"Let earth receive her king." We certainly include references to Jesus' royalty in a

lot of Christmas songs. He is the son of David. He was born in the City of David. And yet, we may prefer to receive Jesus as a baby, and keep him that way. Are we joyful because a ruler has come who will make things right?

"Let every heart prepare him room?" Which room in your house would you prepare for your Savior? Are you willing to devote a guest room at the back of the house – or are you willing to throw open the doors of your life and let Jesus be a part of it all? We set aside an hour for worship, but Jesus would come into every hour of our life.

"And heaven and nature sing." God's creation recognizes its king and praises him. If you are tired of Christmas songs by now, what song would you sing about Jesus' coming?

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, there is room in my life. Nothing else is so important as your presence. Let me push these things aside. Let me clean this space. Let me open these windows and let in the light. As heaven and nature sing, I know that you will bring joy to me as well. Amen.*