

Good News: Prophesied, Sung, Proclaimed

Gaudete! Rejoice! In the name of Christ who came in God's most Holy Name.

Isaiah prophesied:

***Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,
and the ears of the deaf unstopped;
then the lame shall leap like a deer,
and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy.***

Mary sang:

He has shown the strength of his arm, he has scattered the proud in their conceit. He has cast down the mighty from their thrones, and has lifted up the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty. He has come to the help of his servant Israel..."

Jesus proclaimed:

"Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them..."

Have you ever had it happen that you thought you knew what something meant but then one day you hear it and suddenly you got a whole new meaning? And you wondered why that never occurred to you before? With that in mind, I have a little history with today's scripture readings. Maybe some of you do too and maybe my story is yours as well.

I grew up in the Christian faith. I was a very regular church goer. I went to Sunday school and I went to adult church services. I had lots of Bible study and thought I knew a lot about the scriptures. I got the message early on that Christians are supposed to spread the Good News.

In my grade school years I thought the good news was that because Jesus died for my sins I was going to go to heaven when I died—if I was a righteous person. In my teens that thinking was modified to believing I might never die at all and could live on the earth forever—if I was a righteous person.

After a time I came to realize there are several things to note in this way of thinking about the Good News. One is that it is pretty self-centered. Another is the notion of having to be "righteous". And finally, after reading these scriptures as an adult, I had the startling revelation that Jesus never mentioned any of that when talking about the Good News.

So for me the quandary became, what did Jesus mean by "Good News"? I don't think I am alone in this. I think there are many Christians who have this same quandary. I think there are many who have read these same scriptures over and over and never really got the true meaning.

In Jesus' and Mary's world everyone they associated with was a Jew. Listen again to the words of Mary and Jesus: "**He has shown the strength of his arm, he has scattered the proud in their conceit. He has cast down the mighty from their thrones, and has lifted up the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty. He has come to the help of his servant Israel...**"

"...the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them..."

Isaiah prophesied. Mary sang of the hopes in that prophesy. Jesus proclaimed the prophecy fulfilled.

Yet, those who heard their words back then did not seem to understand.

In our day, these words might seem hollow. We are nearly 2,000 years since Jesus proclaimed the prophecy fulfilled and little seems to have changed. How can we Christians possibly rejoice because of the Good News that Jesus proclaimed when the world we live in is so depressing.

That is where understanding what the Good News is, will bring that rejoicing spirit to well up in us and cause us to sing like Mary and proclaim it like Jesus did.

The Good News is our reconciliation to God.

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And it is our reconnectedness to one another and to all creation.

Jesus's life was the template of the Good News. Through it, we are shown how to live into the prophecy so eloquently stated by Isaiah and sung by Mary. When we care for one another, when we care for creation, when we serve and allow ourselves to be served, the prophecy is fulfilled—every time.

There is an affirmation of faith in the Advent section of the book *Daily Prayer for All Seasons* that reminds me of our reconciliation with God. The last part is especially noteworthy:

"...We believe in God, Spirit with Us: Ever present and ever guiding, upholding us and showing us the principles to live by. We hear God's voice through the prophets. Creator, One Who Walked with Us, Spirit with Us, Holy One: We are named in the waters of baptism as your own, all of us related, all of us your children..."

I want to share a story with you that I think illustrates how this Good News of reconciliation and connectedness works.

My mother is in a skilled nursing facility in Salt Lake City. Her situation is such that I was compelled to go there this past week. Surprisingly, I have reasons to sing God's praise, to rejoice—not because my Mom is miraculously cured; but, because God was with me every moment—even in my sadness. Because of connectedness and reaching out I secured lodging at a minimal cost and **that** connectedness lead to the services for Mom I knew she needed to help her adjust to the loss of so much by having to give up her home and the life she knew. And then:

One afternoon an aid came in to help her. I could tell something wasn't going well for the aid. I was wearing my clergy collar and the aid asked about it. Then she asked for prayer. I asked what her need was. She closed the door and told me of an issue in her family that weighed heavily on her—all the while continuing to pay attention to what she came in to

do for Mom. I rejoice that I was able to comfort someone in need at a time when I was feeling so very saddened. ...All of us relate—all of us your children.

A theologian from the 11th century wrote a hymn called “*Awakening as the Beloved*” which my husband and I say every morning together. The last part of it really brings home to me that Good News of reconciliation with God in Christ:

“...For if we genuinely love Him we wake up inside Christ’s body where all our body all over, every most hidden part of it is realized in joy as Him; and he makes us utterly real. And everything that is hurt, everything that seemed to us dark, harsh, shameful, maimed, ugly, irreparably damaged is in Him transformed. And in Him, recognized as whole, as lovely, and radiant in His light, we awaken as the beloved in every last part of our body.”

As we go about our preparations during this last week and half before Christmas, let us ponder the Good News that we read today in these scriptures. Take the bulletin home with you and reread them all several times as you go about shopping, decorating, wrapping gifts, cooking and baking.

Consider how in **your** daily life, you recognize the Good News Jesus proclaimed; how is God reconciled in your life? How do you rejoice? How are you connecting that Good News with others and with creation?

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