

Sermon for Christmas Day
“How Beautiful the Feet”
Isaiah 52:7-10
12/25/18c

Introduction: Beautiful Feet?

**How beautiful upon the mountains
Are the feet of him who brings good news,
Who proclaims peace,
Who brings glad tidings of good things,
Who proclaims salvation,
Who says to Zion,
“Your God reigns!”
⁸ Your watchmen shall lift up their voices,
With their voices they shall sing together;
For they shall see eye to eye
When the LORD brings back Zion.
⁹ Break forth into joy, sing together,
You waste places of Jerusalem!
For the LORD has comforted His people,
He has redeemed Jerusalem.
¹⁰ The LORD has made bare His holy arm
In the eyes of all the nations;
And all the ends of the earth shall see
The salvation of our God.**

“How beautiful...are the feet” Isaiah says. But what’s so beautiful about feet? Nothing very beautiful about *these* feet, I can tell you that. These feet are flat. They’re kind of knobby. They’re big. They get dry and scaly on the soles. They’ve been known to smell. No, I definitely wouldn’t use the word beautiful to describe my feet.

How about you? Got beautiful feet? My wife made this for me a couple of Christmases ago; it’s my boys’ foot prints. Wow, now those are some good looking feet, I must say. But who knows? Give ‘em sixty, seventy years and my sons’ feet might well look like some other feet I saw recently—toes gnarled up, all slanted to one side, a big bunion. Hey, let’s face it, for most of us, feet are not a very beautiful thing.

Feet that Bring Good News Are Beautiful

But feet *can* be beautiful when they're attached to the legs of someone who's coming with a message of good news.

Like the UPS man walking to the door with a large envelope marked "University of Colorado"—containing that hoped-for acceptance letter for an anxious high school senior who wants to go to CU Boulder in the fall. Now that mailman's feet are beautiful!

Our text says, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news...your watchmen...lift up their voices...they sing together" (Is. 52:7-8). The image here is of a messenger running over hill and dale to bring you news that your enemy has been defeated and the danger is past. The watchmen on your city's walls see the messenger approaching the city and they rejoice at the news he's about to announce. The Lord's prophet Isaiah used this image to refer to the salvation God was about to bring His people. That salvation would be reason for great rejoicing. In the near term that salvation would be deliverance from exile in Babylon and a happy homecoming to Jerusalem. Several centuries down the road that salvation would take on far greater proportions still.

Feet that Bring Bad News

Well, we know it's true, in Isaiah's day as well as ours, that everybody loves to get a message of good news. But we also know the sad reality is, not every messenger brings good news. Not in this fallen world. I heard a mother recalling the night she got the news her son had been killed in Iraq. She was in the living room when out the front windows she saw the headlights of a car. She watched as the car slowed down and parked at the curb in front of her house. Two men in uniform got out. The mother said the moment she saw them walking toward the front door she knew what had happened. They rang the bell and she

forced herself to open the door. “Ma’am,” they said, “we are sorry to have to inform you that your son has been killed in the course of his brave service to our country.” Even as she heard the words, this mother said, none of it seemed real to her. It seemed like a dream. But it was all true.

Such is the world we live in. It’s a world where messages of good news are sometimes pretty hard to come by, while messages of death and sadness are all around. And the feet that bring us *those* messages we would certainly not call beautiful.

Christ Jesus Crucified and Risen Is THE Good News

Nevertheless, this Christmas morning in our reading from Isaiah God is announcing a message of Good News, uniquely Good News—Good News of peace, happiness, and salvation. “Your God reigns,” says the prophet.

But does He really reign? The disciples of Jesus had heard much about the reign of God—from John the Baptist, from Jesus Himself. “Repent,” both had said, “for the reign of heaven is at hand” (Matt. 3:2; 4:17). And the disciples had repented. And followed—with great expectations of what Jesus was going to do. They witnessed miracles. Heard the Lord’s authoritative teaching. Saw His power to heal and restore, to help and to save. But then, in an instant, it had all been swept away. When their Lord was put to death, everything came undone. Their hopes were dashed, their expectations were shattered; fear returned. Jesus was gone. So they locked the doors and hid in the darkness.

Have you ever felt that way? Like hope was gone? Like you were painted into a corner with no way out? Like everything you’d been holding onto has evaporated in an instant? That’s the way the crushing power of sin impacts upon us in this world. Sin and death paint us into a corner and leave us locked up in the darkness with no way out. And there’s nothing we can do to save ourselves.

But as the angel told Joseph, Jesus came to do for us what we could not do for ourselves. Jesus came to save us from our sins (Matt. 1:21). That means that when we are locked up without a key, there is still hope: the Lord Jesus is able to enter behind the locked doors.

Remember how that happened Easter evening? “Jesus Himself [came and] stood among [the disciples], and said to them, ‘Peace to you!’” (Luke 24:38). But the disciples doubted. It didn’t seem real to them. Good News like this was too good to be true. It all seemed like a dream. *Yet it was true.*

Luke writes that “[the disciples]...thought they saw a spirit. And [Jesus] said to them, ‘Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have’” (Luke 24:39).

Now why do you suppose Jesus pointed to His hands and His feet? Well, it was because His hands and feet had been nailed to the cross. And so, wounds could still be seen there—which may seem a bit gruesome perhaps, but bear in mind, they were glorious, glorified wounds now...not sources of pain but marks of a sacrifice completed and a death defeated. Which made them beautiful wounds! And how beautiful, too, were Jesus’ FEET that day as He stepped into the room and personally delivered a message of peace and victory to fearful disciples who had lost hope!

Now, Christmas morning may seem a strange time to talk about cross and wounds and Easter, but if you think about it, a clear, straight line connects it all. Why, after all, was the babe of Bethlehem born? It was to save His people from their sins. That meant that Jesus’ feet had a road to walk. And walk that road He did. Jesus bore the cross for sinners. He suffered for us. And He died for us. *But that was not the end.* He also rose. Now He lives for us. And He reigns. And He

comes. And He saves us. How beautiful above all other beauty in this world are the feet of our Savior who comes to save us!

Our Feet Are Beautiful When We Tell the Good News of Jesus

And how beautiful, too, are the feet of those who tell the Good News of Jesus to others. How beautiful in the pulpit are the feet of the pastor who preaches the Gospel. How beautiful by the bedside are the feet of the father who tells his frightened child that Jesus watches over His little lambs as they sleep. How beautiful by the backyard fence are the feet of the woman who shares with her neighbor what Christmas means to her. How beautiful are the feet of those who share the message in every way—by Christmas card, by word of mouth, or however the Good News is shared that Jesus Christ the Savior is born. That's the heart of the Christian message. That Jesus Christ saves us from our sins. How beautiful are the feet of everyone who tells that message near and far and wherever you are. How beautiful are *your* feet when *you* bring to a fellow human being the consoling news of God's love in Christ!

You may never have thought of your feet as particularly beautiful. You may consider your feet something better left covered up, but that doesn't matter. Those feet of yours become beautiful, figuratively speaking, when they take you to the places where people are, so that you may bring to others the Good News of peace and happiness in Christ.

Let that be our prayer this Christmas—that we be granted the gift of courage, not to keep the message of the Lord's salvation to ourselves but to go and tell, to share the Gospel with others.

On a Civil War battlefield a soldier had an artery of his arm lacerated severely by the fragment of a shell and was fast bleeding to death. A passing physician bound up the artery and saved his life. As the physician was leaving, the man cried, "Doctor, what is your name?" "Oh, no matter," said the doctor. "But, Doctor," the man said, "I want to tell my wife and children who saved me." In the same way, when Jesus

has come binding up broken spirits and saving life eternally, may the Holy Spirit place in us a burning desire to tell others what Jesus has done for us! (From *Encyclopedia of Sermon Illustrations*, p. 207).

On this Christmas Day, may our joy in our Savior's birth not be a joy for this place only, something that we hide away the moment we walk out the doors of the church, but may God cause our Christmas joy to go with us back to our homes today, and from there to our places of work and school and play, to be noticed and overheard by others. May the message about Jesus be a Word we are continually ready to speak and share and tell to others.

The final sentence of our text says, "All the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God" (Is. 52:10). May it be our earnest desire to see the message of the Gospel spread to every land and every tongue in our day. God grant us grace to make our feet available to the Lord to be His messengers who share His Gospel wherever He may send us.

"How beautiful upon the mountains," says Isaiah, "are the feet of him who brings good news!" (Is. 52:7)

Today you've heard the Good News. So let us together

*"Go tell it on the mountain,
Over the hills and ev'rywhere;
Go tell it on the mountain
That Jesus Christ is born!" (LSB hymn #388)*

Amen