

**MINISTRY BY MAIL**  
**Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship**  
[www.lutheranlccf.org](http://www.lutheranlccf.org)  
**Sunday after Christmas, Dec. 27, 2009**

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Hymns: 95, 92:1, 106, 108: 1-5, 98:5.  
(The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Lessons: Isaiah 62: 1 – 63:6, Galatians 4:4-7, Matthew 2:13-23.

Text: Isaiah 63:7-9

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehlretter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Do you remember what the shepherds did after they had found Mary and Joseph and the baby lying in a manger? ***“They made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child”***, Luke 2:17 (King James Version) or, in the words of the New International Version: ***“they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child.”***

I want to remind you today of your responsibility, your joy, and to look for opportunities, too, to spread the word concerning what has been told you about this child in Bethlehem. So I ask:

**CHRISTMAS IS OVER. NOW WHAT?**

- 1. Well, you can *be false to God,***
- 2. or you can *tell of the kindnesses of the LORD, the deeds for which he is to be praised,***
- 3. so that others can rejoice and remember, too!**

Christmas is over, and the merchants have started the next phase of their businesses. They are trying to sell off all the Christmas stuff and work at stocking their shelves with things for the next special sales and the next holiday that will make them money. Yet I hope Christmas is not over for you.

Do you remember words of the Christmas gospel that the angel spoke? ***“I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.”*** Luke 2:10-11, King James Version. ***“But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.”*** New International Version.

We are between the festival of Christmas and the festival of Epiphany. As we approach the Epiphany season, we especially rejoice in the message of Epiphany: the message that Jesus Christ came for us Gentiles, too, that we should share in the heavenly Jerusalem, the eternal kingdom of Jesus Christ, the descendant of David, as he rules in heaven.

Isaiah chapters 60 through 62 are often used for celebrating the Advent season. But they, and the words of our text, apply now and at any time. ***“I will tell of the kindnesses of the LORD, the deeds for which he is to be praised, according to all the LORD has done for us-- yes, the many good things he has done for the house of Israel, according to his compassion and many kindnesses. He said, ‘Surely they are my people, sons who will not be false to me’; and so he became their Savior.”***

It might be easy to think that everyone knows the Christmas Gospel, the Christmas “good tidings”. But don’t be so sure. There are many to whom Christmas is all Santa and gifts and fun and toys and partying. There

are many who don't know or don't realize all the good things, all the kindnesses and grace and mercy God has given to mankind. And so you really should be someone – a child of God who believes in that Savior who is Christ the Lord – who can say and will do this: ***“I will tell of the kindnesses of the LORD, the deeds for which he is to be praised, according to all the LORD has done for us-- yes, the many good things he has done!”***

Despite the joyous news of the angels about the Savior, who is Christ the Lord, this is one season of a great deal of depression and sadness. “Happy” things, “good” things, don't happen that people want to happen. Things don't turn out the way people expect them to turn out. They don't have all the “happy times feelings” and the “warm fuzzy times” and feelings that many of the secular Christmas carols tell them they should have. And I think that is all the result of sin. I think that maybe Satan wants people to become depressed and gloomy so that they don't see the real Christmas message.

The real Christmas message isn't ‘eat, drink and be merry’. The real Christmas message isn't that ‘gifts will make you happy’, whether you get them or give them. The real Christmas message isn't found in earthly gifts. Those are all false ideas about what Christmas really is. And those who hold false ideas about Christmas and about the Savior are false sons. Even at this time when God's children celebrate the Savior's birth, the true God becoming true man, those who don't have and live the correct ideas God gives us are false sons. The Lord said, ***“Surely they are my people, sons who will not be false to me”***. See how confident and hopeful – in a human, anthropomorphic sense – God is about us, and about all the humans he created? In the sense that God created all men, all people are “children of God”. But all those who believe in God and Jesus Christ as their only Savior from their sins are “children of God” in a second sense, in a special, different way. God doesn't want us to be unfaithful and “false”. He wants us to be true children, to be those about whom he can really and honestly say ***“You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.”*** Galatians 3:26. Don't be false sons!

And that relates to the real message of Christmas which you have learned. Right here is the real Christmas message: ***“For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.”*** Luke 2:11. All else is counterfeit, fake, false, superficial, mere decorations that will be gone next week.

Listen again to the way Isaiah, speaking hundreds of years before the birth of Christ describes the life of the true child of God: ***“I will tell of the kindnesses of the LORD, the deeds for which he is to be praised, according to all the LORD has done for us-- yes, the many good things he has done for the house of Israel.”***

Can you imagine people who have been dragged from their homeland speaking that way? The literal house of Israel had many tribulations – including difficult times during the life of Isaiah – before the Savior would be sent. And surely they weren't all thinking of a spiritual deliverance. There were many – and still are many today, both among Jews and those using the name Christian who are thinking of earthly peace and an earthly deliverance and restoration of the physical kingdom of David, of the nations of Israel and Judah at their largest extent. Many today are hoping for earthly peace in the Middle East and the restoration of the nation of the first king David. We find that yes, God DID do many great things for the physical nation of Israel before the Savior came. Any casual recounting of their history, especially the deliverance from the Egyptians and God's delivering the land of Canaan into their hands will tell us “Wow! God surely did great deeds for them!” But the most important deed of the Lord didn't come until hundreds of years after Isaiah. The most important gift of God didn't come until his Son was made flesh, born of a virgin.

The Savior didn't come when people most thought they wanted him to come. Instead, our epistle lesson tells us ***“when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.”*** That means that God sent the Savior when the time was right, “in God's own good time.” You know that God doesn't give you everything you want when you want it. That is true both of earthly things – earthly gifts from God, and spiritual things – spiritual gifts. A gift

is something that you didn't earn. It is often something unexpected. A gift is given freely. And all that we have and are – except our sinful nature – is a gift from God.

***“I will tell of the kindnesses of the LORD, the deeds for which he is to be praised, according to all the LORD has done for us – yes, the many good things he has done.”*** Can you imagine everyone you know speaking that way?

Think about the many good things God has done for you, too! Don't forget his compassion and many kindnesses.

Did you notice the optimism God expressed? The Lord ***“said, ‘Surely they are my people, sons who will not be false to me’; and so he became their Savior.”*** The Lord God expected that his chosen people would not reject him and be false to him. He, of course, knew from eternity what would happen, but he speaks here in a human way, hoping and anticipating that his chosen nation would turn to him, not away from him. And doesn't that also express the ideas behind the forgiveness of sins? God forgives our sins and hides them and washes them away, hoping that we will then gladly serve him and ***“will tell of the kindnesses of the LORD, the deeds for which he is to be praised, according to all the LORD has done for us.”***

Even though many were false sons, God continued with his plan of salvation. ***“He became their Savior. In all their distress he too was distressed, and the angel of his presence saved them. In his love and mercy he redeemed them; he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old.”***

He became the Savior of his people, the physical descendants of Abraham. But he became our savior, too. We who are Gentiles are included as adopted sons of God simply because of God's grace. We see the sufferings of Jesus Christ in these words: ***“In all their distress he too was distressed.”*** The Lord suffered with us and for us. God's very son suffered for our sins, even though he didn't commit any sin at all!

***“In all their distress he too was distressed, and the angel of his presence saved them. In his love and mercy he redeemed them; he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old.”***

Christmas is the celebration of the beginning of God's redemption of mankind. It wasn't finished until Jesus suffered, died, and then rose again from the dead.

So as the Christmas of the world is winding down, or is even all taken down in some cases, don't let the world, or the devil, or your own flesh take the joyous message of Christmas away from you.

We daily pray not to be false children to our God, for he has done wondrous, marvelous things for us. You need only look at the petitions of the Lord's Prayer to see not only what we are asking God for, but listing exactly what he has done for us!

Although the world is taking down Christmas decorations, I have at least one decoration which I do not intend to take down until the day after Epiphany. It is something you can see even as you drive by my house in the daytime. It will come down and be packed away on January 7 until the next Advent/Christmas/Epiphany season. And I hope that decoration is a symbol to all who drive by my house that the birth of Jesus Christ is something important to me and my household. (It is a flag picturing the baby Jesus with Mary and Joseph.)

Remember again the words we started with today about the shepherds who were the first ones to worship the new-born king: ***“And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. And all they that heard it wondered (marveled – were amazed) at those things which were told them by the shepherds.”*** Luke 2:17-18. Amen.