

ONLY THE BEGINNING  
CHRISTMAS DAY

ISA 52:7-10  
DEC 25, 2016

<sup>7</sup> How beautiful upon the mountains  
are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace,  
    who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation,  
    who says to Zion, "Your God reigns."

<sup>8</sup> The voice of your watchmen—  
    they lift up their voice; together they sing for joy;  
for eye to eye they see the return of the LORD to Zion.

<sup>9</sup> Break forth together into singing, you waste places of Jerusalem,  
for the LORD has comforted his people; he has redeemed Jerusalem.

<sup>10</sup> The LORD has bared his holy arm before the eyes of all the nations,  
and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.

What kind of Christmas present do you enjoy most?

    Research shows most people most like to give presents  
    that are more exciting when people open them  
    But that most people most like to receive presents  
    that are more enjoyable in the long run.

A Christian celebration of Christmas can be exciting & fun  
    but more than that it is the gift of something that lasts.  
For many people, the celebration of Christmas is already over  
    but for us, on this first day of Christmas, it is only beginning.  
because...

JESUS' BIRTH IS ONLY THE BEGINNING OF HIS SAVING  
JOY IS ONLY THE BEGINNING OF WHAT GOD GIVES  
WE SEE ONLY THE BEGINNING OF WHAT GOD WILL DO

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When a baby is born, it is best done head first,  
    but Isaiah pictures the good news coming feet first.  
For this good news to be known, someone must first go  
    messengers must be sent. In that day it was on foot.  
I was talking with someone the other day who commented  
    their feet were the ugliest part of their body.  
    But Isaiah says he sees beautiful feet.

they are beautiful because they bring something  
that is most beautiful of all: good news.  
There is good news for us because someone comes in person.  
It is Jesus, who is God himself.  
He does not send substitute  
Because he comes to proclaim peace,  
reconciliation between the almighty, just God  
and people who have rebelled against him.  
Jesus birth, God being willing to be with us in person  
on cute, beautiful little feet, is good news,  
but it is just the beginning.  
Jesus goes on to walk on dusty feet through our dirty world,  
washing feet as a servant of all,  
having his feet nailed to the cross  
and rising again from the dead  
appearing to disciples who fell at his feet in awe  
and ascending into heaven where he rules  
with all things under his feet.  
This is reason for great joy to the world, but

#### JOY IS ONLY THE BEGINNING OF WHAT GOD GIVES

<sup>9</sup> Break forth together into singing, you waste places of Jerusalem,  
for the LORD has comforted his people; he has redeemed Jerusalem.

<sup>10</sup> The LORD has bared his holy arm before the eyes of all the nations,  
and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.

Isaiah speaks to the waste places of Jerusalem,  
which has been left in ruins by enemies,  
saying the Lord has come to comfort them.

When there are disasters in our country,  
it is comforting for the president himself to come  
and be with them in their time of trouble.

When we have disasters in our lives,  
it is comforting for friends to come & be with us.

But Isaiah says more: break forth into singing.

This is because Jerusalem is not left in ruins but rebuilt.

We have joy because God forgives us  
instead of justly punishing us for our sins  
and we are comforted by his caring presence with us,  
experiencing the same troubles we experience,  
even being born into poverty,

The shepherds saw this and had great joy

and they were among the first messengers to go  
with running feet to announce the birth of Jesus  
but they still knew only part of the story.  
We know God didn't just come to suffer with us  
but to redeem us from all evil and the power of the devil  
to bring us into his own kingdom.  
He doesn't just change our feelings for a day of partying  
but he is at work transforming our whole lives.  
He the faith he gives us in his forgiveness  
gives us confidence in his eternal love so we have peace  
Confidence in his love also leads us to love others  
and to be gentle, kind & forgiving ourselves.  
He gives us faith in his word which gives us trust in his wisdom  
and in his power to do what he promises.  
This leads us to obey his will even when it is hard  
and to accept his will with endurance and patience  
when things are difficult for now.  
But even all this that happens in our lives is just the beginning.  
It sends us in turn running with the good news to others  
so that, as Isaiah foresaw, he is revealed to the nations  
and the ends of the earth see the salvation of God.  
and the whole world is transformed.  
This began to happen when the Magi learned the prophecies  
and came to worship Jesus, realizing already  
that he was more than he appeared, a great king,  
but and they may have told others when they returned home  
but they too left before they knew the half of it.  
We have yet to see this happen, but even when we do,

#### WE SEE ONLY THE BEGINNING OF WHAT GOD WILL DO

<sup>8</sup> The voice of your watchmen—

they lift up their voice; together they sing for joy;  
for eye to eye they see the return of the LORD to Zion.

For now we hear the voice of the watchmen.

Watchmen are those expected to look far off.  
Isaiah is a watchman prophesying to Israel  
their future return from exile  
but also seeing farther into the future  
what will happen when Jesus comes to bring us back  
from being separated from him & exiled from heaven.

The O.T. prophets, looking far into the future,  
saw big things all at once,  
so they saw separate things close together.  
Jesus birth, which we are looking at close up now,  
is seen together with his death and resurrection,  
as one big thing, our redemption.  
The whole of Jesus first coming, as a humble baby,  
is seen together with his coming again in glory,  
as one big thing, our salvation.  
Now, in the middle of his two comings,  
we don't see everything at once.  
We see part of what Jesus is doing for us right now  
but there is much more to come  
both in this life and in eternal life in heaven.  
A day is coming when we will see it all,  
Isaiah says: eye to eye we will see the Lord's return.  
Then we will see Jesus face to face,  
and then we will finally see how great  
his love and wisdom and power really is.  
What we see now is like a Christmas gift wrapped in tiny box,  
but when it is fully opened we will see it contains  
they key to unlock endless treasures.  
This is why our celebration of Christmas is only beginning.

**JESUS' BIRTH IS ONLY THE BEGINNING OF HIS SAVING**  
He goes on to live, suffer, die and rise again to give us life.  
**JOY IS ONLY THE BEGINNING OF WHAT GOD GIVES**  
All that Jesus does transforms our whole lives  
to give us peace, hope, and love for God and others.  
**WE SEE ONLY THE BEGINNING OF WHAT GOD WILL DO**  
We celebrate his first coming as a humble baby  
because it is part of his great coming to save us  
which includes his coming again in glory  
to give us whole new lives with him.