

3rd Sunday after Pentecost June 26, 2022

**OPENLY PRAISE THE LORD FOR HIS MERCIFUL
BLESSINGS!**

Isaiah 12:1-6

Scripture Readings

Acts 3:1-6

Luke 15:11-31

Hymns

44, 38, 26, 644

Hymns from The Lutheran Hymnal (1941) unless otherwise noted

+ In the Name of Jesus Christ +

And in that day you will say: “O LORD, I will praise You; Though You were angry with me, Your anger is turned away, and You comfort me. Behold, God is my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid; For YAH, the LORD, is my strength and song; He also has become my salvation.” Therefore with joy you will draw water From the wells of salvation. And in that day you will say: “Praise the LORD, call upon His name; Declare His deeds among the peoples, Make mention that His name is exalted. Sing to the LORD, For He has done excellent things; This is known in all the earth. Cry out and shout, O inhabitant of Zion, For great is the Holy One of Israel in your midst!”

In the name of our Savior God whose marvelous deeds are always worthy of our praise, dear fellow redeemed;

A fitting title for Isaiah chapter 12 is a “Song of Praise.” The concept of praise is not foreign or unfamiliar to us. In fact, we might say that we are a praise-oriented society, for people like to bestow praise on others, as well as receive it for themselves. Folks, for the most part, like to be recognized for things they have done or accomplished and to receive praise for it. Just consider the vast number of awards given out each year. The sound of praise rings out for talented athletes, actors, musicians, writers, scientists, and the list goes on and on.

Among the many recipients of praise there are certainly those who are worthy of praise. But when praise is handed out how often do we hear the name of the Lord being mentioned? Now and then we may hear individuals in the public eye giving credit to God for what He enabled them to do. Yet, such instances are few and far between. Every truly good thing accomplished by anyone should redound to the glory of God, because He is the One who is ultimately responsible for it.

Not only has God done many things through humankind that are worthy of our praise, but He has also accomplished many marvelous things for us. In the last two verses of Isaiah 12, the prophets writes, ***“Sing to the LORD, for he has done excellent things; this is known to all the earth. Cry out and shout, O inhabitants of Zion, for great is the Holy One of Israel in your midst!”*** Keeping in mind these words of exhortation, let us consider this Song of Praise.

Isaiah begins his song with these words, ***“And in that day you will say: O LORD, I will praise You.”*** Isaiah’s inspired lyrics point ahead in time when something truly marvelous would occur which would cause the children of God to open their mouths and speak the praises of the LORD before all the world. That future great day is described by Isaiah in his previous chapter, as he foretold the coming of the promised Lord and Christ. This promised One of God would establish a kingdom of grace that would finally lead into a kingdom of glory in the blessed life to come.

Concerning this promised One, Isaiah revealed that He would possess divine wisdom, knowledge, and understanding to give us infallible counsel in the saving truths of God. In His sovereign rule over all the world, He would be just and equitable. In the realm of His spiritual kingdom He would establish peace and harmony among us. And in His love and mercy He would draw both Jew and Gentile alike into His kingdom of grace.

That day which Isaiah spoke of has already come and the many spiritual benefits which Isaiah spoke of have been made a living reality for us

today in the person of Jesus Christ. Because of Jesus we are prompted to say to the Lord God in praise, ***“Though You are angry with me, Your anger is turned away, and You comfort me.”***

The apostle Paul says of God’s anger concerning our sinfulness, ***“The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men...”*** (Romans 1:18) The wrath of God is kindled and burns fiercely against us whenever we resist, oppose, and rebel against Him in breaking His commandments.

An example of God’s wrath was manifested at Mt. Sinai when the children of Israel worshiped a golden calf. God was so angry with His chosen people over this that He was ready to consume them all in His righteous wrath. The sin of idolatry, which angers God, is not limited to worshiping false gods, but also includes putting anyone or anything above Him.

As we reflect on the accolades of adoration given to individuals in our society, we observe that there is something grossly out of whack. In current times, society has the tendency of deifying and idolizing celebrities whose character and manner of living is very worldly. Is society elevating such moral misfits on a high pedestal so as to excuse their sinful behavior and allay their guilty conscience? Perhaps so. What everyone needs to realize is that any sin—whether it be of thought, word or deed—is reason enough to kindle God’s all-consuming eternal wrath.

But then we are comforted in hearing the psalmist proclaim these merciful words of God, ***“For His anger is but for a moment, His favor is for life; weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning.”*** (Psalm 30:5) God’s fierce wrath is turned aside and completely taken out of the way through Jesus’ atoning sacrifice. This wondrous deliverance from God’s eternal condemnation is received and enjoyed as we lament over our sins with a penitent spirit and rely on Jesus’ redemptive work for our forgiveness.

The prodigal son in Jesus' parable was very sorrowful when he came to realize his wasteful and wicked living had offended his family and above all the Lord. Conscious of God's wrath over his sinfulness, the prodigal son was weighed down with the feeling of guilt and didn't regard himself worthy of being called a son of his earthly or heavenly family.

But, oh what joy and thankfulness he had when his father unconditionally forgave him of his offenses and received him back into the family with loving arms. This, of course, pictures God's forgiving love toward us when we return to Him with a penitent and believing heart. It is because of this precious truth then that the psalmist was prompted to exhort us to ***"Sing praise to the LORD, you saints of His, and give thanks at the remembrance of His holy name."*** (Psalm 30:4)

Isaiah proceeds in his Song of Praise with these words, ***"Behold God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid."*** Because of what our Savior has done for us through His substitutionary life, death and resurrection, we don't view God as a wrathful judge. Rather we see Him as loving and merciful heavenly Father. Neither do we regard Him as an avenger of our wrongdoings, but instead as One who has graciously absolved us of all our sins. Surely God is our salvation, our deliverance, and our helper.

Knowing that our salvation is found in God alone, we possess complete security and confidence so that we are unafraid of what otherwise would terrorize our hearts. With God as our salvation there is a feeling of security and confidence in having a guilt-free conscience and in knowing that God guards and preserves us from any danger that can prove to be eternally harmful to us.

Also, with God as our salvation there is no need to fear any kind of evil whatsoever. Consider the lame man spoken of in our reading from Acts. He had faith in the Lord's powerful help to deliver and completely heal him of his physical disability.

This is not to say that we will always be delivered from various physical maladies. For when it comes to whether or not God will deliver us from physical ills, this is determined according to God's divine wisdom and good will for us. In any event, our Lord will either remove our physical affliction or enable us to patiently endure it.

However, when it comes to God delivering us from the spiritual ailments caused by our sinfulness, there is no qualification in this regard. We know that this is His gracious will for us in Christ Jesus. We know this with complete confidence of heart.

Not everyone possesses such a peaceful state of mind. While there are many religious people in this world, yet a vast majority of them do not have this kind of security and freedom from fear. This is due to the fact that they are not looking to God alone for their salvation, but rather to themselves. By relying on themselves they will always have an insecure feeling of not knowing whether or not what they have done is enough or even good enough to make amends for their wrongs or turn aside the wrath of God. Only by knowing that Jesus is our only Savior from sin can anyone possess complete peace and security of heart.

The precious truth of God being our salvation is further spoken of in these words of our text, ***“For Yah, the LORD, is my strength and song; He also has become my salvation.”*** This is a quotation from a song of praise sung by Moses and the children of Israel after they had safely passed through the Red Sea on dry land. The Israelites, who had escaped from slavery in Egypt, were being pursued by Pharaoh's army. When Israel reached the Red Sea, they became boxed in with no apparent way of escape. But God through His almighty power divided the Red Sea and enabled them to pass over safely on dry ground through the heart of the sea. As for the Egyptian army, when they followed after the Israelites, the Lord caused the sea to swallow them up. With this divine act of deliverance the children of God knew that it was not they themselves who had saved them, but God alone. He was their strength and their

salvation. Being thankful to God for His merciful deliverance, they lifted up their voices in a song of praise to Him.

Knowing that the Lord is our strength and our salvation, Isaiah exhorts us to ***“Praise the Lord, call upon His name; declare His deeds among the peoples, make mention that His name is exalted.”*** The Hebrew word translated here as ‘praise’ has the basic meaning of pointing out with the hand or acknowledging with the mouth.

How very often we find ourselves praising people for what they have accomplished by singling them out and telling others about them. A number of years ago during the Winter Olympics the U.S. hockey team won the gold medal. This was considered by many as being quite an accomplishment. It had the effect of renewing respectability for this nation’s athletes. After that victory, many in our country were pointing out to others what these young men had done and were openly praising them before others.

Now consider the far surpassing greatness of the things which God has done that not only benefit people of our country, but also all people in the world. His saving acts of mercy far exceed any accomplishment of man. He has given us more reason to point Him out to others and declare with praise all He has accomplished for us. We do this by being unashamed of our Lord and being unafraid of what others might think of us for openly praising God. Even as Americans spoke the praises of our hockey team years ago and openly expressed appreciation for them, so also we even more so want to speak the praises of God, openly acknowledging before others what great things God has done for us.

We not only want to glorify God with our praise, but we also want to speak of Him to the unbelievers so that they come to know and believe in the God of their salvation. Being called by God to be bearers of such good news, Isaiah exhorts us saying, ***“Declare His deeds among the peoples. Make mention that His name is exalted.”***

Mindful of the great and marvelous deeds of our Savior God, we lift up our voices in songs of praise to Him. Our words of praise to God are not only directed to Him in His house of worship, but also before others in the world around us. We do this so as to give honor and glory to God. It is also our hope and prayer that others will join us in speaking and singing the praises of God. May the words of praise for our Lord and Savior ever be found on our lips to His honor and glory. Amen.—**Rev. Mark Gullerud** Sunnyvale, CA