



## Third Sunday in Advent

Sunday Service 10:15 am – December 16, 2012 –

[Living Hope Lutheran Church](#)

**Pastor Nathan Seiltz**

**Sermon Theme: “What do you want for Christmas?”**

**Isaiah 61:1-3** New International Version 1984 (NIV1984)

### **The Year of the LORD's Favor**

<sup>1</sup> The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me,  
because the Lord has anointed me  
to preach good news to the poor.  
He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,  
to proclaim freedom for the captives  
and release from darkness for the prisoners,  
<sup>2</sup> to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor  
and the day of vengeance of our God,  
to comfort all who mourn,  
<sup>3</sup> and provide for those who grieve in Zion-  
to bestow on them a crown of beauty  
instead of ashes,  
the oil of gladness  
instead of mourning,  
and a garment of praise,  
instead of a spirit of despair.  
They will be called oaks of righteousness,  
a planting of the Lord  
for the display of his splendor.

**Sunday Worship Service: 10:15 A.M. (Bible Study/Adult Class 9am)**

7305 208<sup>th</sup> Ave NE, Redmond, WA 98053

(425) 868-9404 - [www.lhlc.org](http://www.lhlc.org), [pastortodd@lhlc.org](mailto:pastortodd@lhlc.org)

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What do you want for Christmas?

- I. Jesus knows exactly what you need!
- II. Jesus offers the Christmas exchange program!

“What do you want for Christmas?” How many times have you heard that question this month? When I was in grade school, that question was pretty easy to answer. One year I wanted a bicycle; another year I wanted an electric race car set. In high school, that question got a little harder to answer. I usually asked for clothes because that’s when you started to have to look nice. In college, it got even harder. I got a little refrigerator one year for my dorm room but after that I really wanted a car. At the Seminary, I started the old, “I don’t know” when my mom or grandma or whoever asked, “What do you want for Christmas?” Now that I’m married it’s really easy. I just ask Natalie. Just last month my mom asked what I wanted for Christmas and immediately asked, “Natalie, what do I want for Christmas?” She had a list all ready to go. That was comforting.

What about you this year? What do you want for Christmas? Our text for this morning has some incredibly comforting news for us. Jesus knows exactly what you need. Jesus offers the Christmas exchange program.

Our text is taken from the prophet Isaiah. In Isaiah’s time, the people of Israel were conquered by the Babylonians and carried off into captivity to be slaves and put in prisons. This was God’s punishment on them for rebelling against him. But God promised a remnant of survivors would return to the land of Israel and the promise of the Messiah, Savior of the world, would be fulfilled. Much of the book of Isaiah is presented in the pictures of captivity, but these pictures describe the conditions not only in that time but now and all eternity.

**The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor.** This is a prophecy of the Savior. The Messiah, as He is also called, would have the spirit of the Lord. He would be anointed to preach the good news. These prophecies were fulfilled in Jesus Christ. **Matthew 3:16-17** **As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."** **Luke 4:17-21** **The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written: "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him, and he began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."**



No doubt about it, Jesus is the Messiah, the Savior of the world. He came because He knew exactly what you needed, and He knew exactly what he needed to do. **He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners.** God saw people in trouble and in need; that is why He sent His only Son to this earth. He saw broken-hearted people. Do you know why they were broken-hearted? Because they saw His law. God's law is merciless. It strikes right at your heart and your conscience. It demands perfection and there will be no second chances. **The wages of sin is death.** That is eternal death. We deserve nothing but eternal death because of our sins.

Sin holds us captive. Like Israel held captive in Babylon, so sin makes us spiritual captives. The Israelites received no mercy as slaves and prisoners. So our sins prevent us from having any relationship with God or going to heaven. No mercy; all we get is condemnation and punishment. Sin blinds us. Prisons in those days were very dark and when prisoners were released, their eyes had to adjust to the light of the sun. We are blinded by sin. We can't go to God or believe in His Son on our own. We wander, unknowingly, right to the gates of hell. Indeed we are in need. "What do you want for Christmas?" I will tell you what I don't want - I don't want to go to hell.

How does God's law effect you? This is what Christmas is all about, really. It's all about people and God's law. Some people need to hear His law because they are sinning and blind and captive. Others are simply crushed by God's law. People like David after his sin with Bathsheba, Judas after betraying Jesus, and others were so conscience-stricken that they were in a state of despair. What am I to do? How could I have been so stupid, and so blind, to think that I could get away with it? Surely, God knows everything and He knows what I have done. I have no excuses, no defense. I deserve only punishment and death. Lord, I am sorry. What am I to do?

God has news for you captives and broken-hearted who have been brought low by God's law. Jesus will raise you up. Jesus will preach the good news to all afflicted by the law. It is exactly what you need for Christmas. Jesus fulfilled the requirements of the law. He was perfect and he died on the cross for us. He rose again three days later and proclaimed victory over sin, death, and the devil. He had suffered our punishment and offered his righteousness to everyone in the world. Freedom from hell! Release from the captivity of sin! Forgiveness, life, and salvation are yours in Christ Jesus alone. It is exactly what we need!

Christmas Eve in my house was a big day. There was the Children's Christmas program and then the opening of presents that night. Not only did I wonder if I would get what I wanted but I also wondered how all the presents got under the tree. Our house was right next to the church, my dad was the pastor, my mom the organist, and when we left there were no presents under the tree. After the service, my brother and sister and I always made it back to the house before my parents. Yet, under the tree was seemingly loaded with presents. It still remains a mystery today. (Mom won't talk.)

God doesn't make Christmas a mystery. You don't have to wonder what it is all about. You don't have to go through life wondering what will happen when I die. It is all about Christ. As Martin Luther wrote, "*Lord Jesus, I am your sin; you are my righteousness. I have made you what you were not; you have made me what I was not.*" Jesus knows exactly what we need.



Jesus also offers a Christmas exchange. Just like after Christmas when you take back the clothes that don't fit and exchange them for ones that do, Jesus offers to exchange our sinful life condemned by God's law for righteous that He alone can give us. He was sent **to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion--to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair.**

Jesus proclaimed God's favor on mankind while living on this earth. He said over and over again that He was the Savior of the world. He called out to people to turn from their sinful lives condemned by God and believe in Him as Savior. He still proclaims that message to us today through His Word. Repent of your sins, listen to God's law as it tells you your rebellions against God and ask God to forgive you. He does forgive through Jesus Christ. That is an amazing exchange - my sins for Jesus' righteousness. That is the real meaning of Christmas.

The exchange doesn't stop there. We are comforted, knowing that Jesus died for us. Crushed by the law, we have sadness, mourning, and despair. Called to faith in Jesus through the Word, we have been restored to life. We have **a crown of beauty instead of ashes**. Ashes was a sign of grief and despair, but an ornamental wreath was a sign of rejoicing. **The oil of gladness instead of mourning** - people were anointed with aromatic oils on joyous occasions. **And a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair** - a festival garment instead of intense grief and despair. These are all descriptions of incredible joy of the heart. What joy we have as people belonging to God, as those called according to His purpose. Our despair at God's law has been exchanged for peace, love, mercy, freedom, and eternal life.

**They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendor.** The oak tree was symbol of fresh and enduring strength. God has planted us through His Word. We were called to faith, called to throw away our sinful life, called to repentance, and called to eternal life. The salvation that God promised from the creation of the world was fulfilled in Christ Jesus. We enjoy the benefits of the great exchange. We have been made fresh and strong and happy in our salvation that is ours by the grace of God.

What do you want for Christmas? Christmas is not about anything else, but Christ. Jesus is Christmas. Jesus knows exactly what you need - law and gospel. Jesus offers the Christmas exchange program - *"Lord Jesus, I am your sin; you are my righteousness. I have made you what you were not; you have made me what I was not."* May the joy of the Savior be yours this holiday season.