

Isaiah 62:1-5 For the sake of Zion I will not be silent. For the sake of Jerusalem I will not be quiet, until her righteousness goes forth shining brightly, and her salvation burns like a torch. ²Nations will see your righteousness, and all kings will see your glory. You will be called by a new name that the mouth of the LORD will assign to you. ³Then you will be a beautiful crown in the LORD's hand, and a royal diadem in the palm of your God. ⁴You will never again be called Abandoned, and your land will never again be called Desolation, for you will be called My Delight Is in Her, and your land will be called Married, because the LORD delights in you, and your land will be married. ⁵For just as a young man marries a virgin, your sons will marry you, and just as a bridegroom rejoices over a bride, your God will rejoice over you.

Have you ever wondered what people really think about you? How many people are kind and sweet to you when you are face-to-face, but as soon as you are out of ear-shot they roll their eyes and tell everyone else about how they really feel? I've always preferred that people would be straight-forward with me. Tell me the truth. I'm a big boy. I can take it. I truly believe that honesty is the best policy.

When I was a young pastor I was very concerned about what people thought about me. Some of that was good. It is not a small thing to be God's ambassador to a group of people he bought with his own blood. I want people to consider me faithful to my calling. Now that I'm older, I don't really care what people think about me. Oh, I still want to be faithful. But I've learned that you can be as faithful, as helpful, as loving as possible and for some people it will never be enough.

Here's a better question: have you ever wondered that God really thinks about you? If you could log into heaven's computer network and look up your name, what would you find there? Your conscience would have you believe that it's nothing good. Thankfully God is not two-faced like human beings are. He doesn't say one thing but feel another. Isaiah shows us that God Is Delighted in You. You have his righteousness and you have a new name.

God himself speaks through the Prophet Isaiah in this text. He says, **"For the sake of Zion I will not be silent. For the sake of Jerusalem I will not be quiet, until her righteousness goes forth shining brightly, and her salvation burns like a torch."** Zion is basically another name for Jerusalem although specifically it was the hill on which the Temple was built. If you would have looked at the city at that time, the words "righteousness" and "salvation" would not have come to mind.

Listen to how God describes the city in the beginning of this book, **"Look how the faithful city has become a prostitute! She was full of justice. Righteousness once lived in her, but now murderers live there. ²²Your silver has become slag. Your drinks are mixed with water. ²³Your officials are rebellious. They are partners with thieves. Everyone loves bribes and chases payoffs."** No wonder God was threatening his judgment against them.

That gets back to what I said in the introduction. What would people think about us if they watched us every moment of our lives? Right now we would look great. We're where we should be, in the house of our Lord. We all look respectable and are paying attention. What about when we're not here? Would people be able to tell on a regular basis that there is a difference between us and anybody else? Or do we find it easier to just go with the flow and do what everybody else is doing?

Earlier in this book God had convicted his people of their guilt. They stand silent and helpless before him. Then chapter 40 begins with these words, **"Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. ²Speak to the heart of Jerusalem and call out to her."** You can almost see God's people flinch when that chapter starts. But quickly they realize that God is not going to give them what they deserve.

Maybe here it would be good for us to define our terms. The word **"righteousness"** means sinlessness or moral perfection. Obviously on our own that name would not apply to us. But because of Jesus, it does. In the Gospel lesson for today we see him carrying out his heavenly Father's will. He was working on God's time table, not his mother's. Because he is our Substitute, Jesus' righteousness is credited to us.

The other big word here is **"salvation."** I used to falsely assume that everyone knows what that word means. Now I don't assume that anybody understands it. To have salvation means that we know that through Jesus, heaven is already ours. When we die or he returns in glory, whichever comes first, we will be in heaven and be able to enjoy it fully. That is true because Jesus took our sin on himself when he went to the cross. His perfect sacrifice opened heaven for us.

We could stop there and say, "God, you have blessed me more than I could ever earn or deserve. Thank you so much." But God is not content to stop there. The blessings just keep coming, **"²Nations will see your righteousness, and all kings will see your glory."** It doesn't always seem that way. Christians are not immune to problems. We get sick. We feel pain. We die, just like everybody else.

There are times in life when people notice that righteousness and glory that God has given to us. They see it when believers face massive problems with quiet confidence. When someone get up in our faces because we are Christians and we don't pay back insult with insult, that's going to be unusual. People will want to know why. We aren't reacting like everyone else does.

Of course that righteousness and glory will not be clearly seen until Judgment Day. When Jesus returns to judge the living and the dead, we will be standing there like Moses and Elijah at Jesus' transfiguration, shining in the same glory that he has. That won't be reflected glory like the moon reflects the light of the sun. It is glory that is our very own through Jesus' life, death, and resurrection.

God can't stop gushing about us, **"³Then you will be a beautiful crown in the LORD's hand, and a royal diadem in the palm of your God."** A king's crown is a symbol of his power and authority to rule. Back then when a king was defeated, his crown would be taken off and put on the head of the victorious king. That was the ultimate humiliation. Diadem is just another word for crown, although it's more like a tiara or a headband made of gold.

It's interesting that this crown is not on his head, but in his hand. That shows how precious we are to him. He holds us safely in his hand, where no one can get us or harm us. Jesus said about believers, **"No one will snatch them out of my hand. ²⁹My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all. No one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. ³⁰I and the Father are one."**

Another reason why he is holding his crown in his hand is because he wants to show it off, like a master craftsman showing off his finest creation. So what is God most proud of? The amazing universe he created? Nope. The fact that he can do anything and that he knows everything? No, sir. He is most proud of us, the people that he has redeemed and made his own through the blood of our Savior Jesus.

God Is Delighted in You. You have his righteousness and you have a new name.

In the second part of this text the Church goes from being pictured as a magnificent crown to being pictured as a dearly loved bride. **"You will be called by a new name that the mouth of the LORD will assign to you."** Traditionally in our country and in many others when a woman gets married, she takes her husband's last name. I remember seeing my wife sign something for the first time after we got married. The "Elisabeth J." flowed quickly and easily. The "Arnold" part, not so much.

In this text our old names are things that we are more than happy to get rid of. We don't want to be identified that way anymore. God says, **"⁴You will never again be called Abandoned."** That was true of the Israelites. They had abandoned God and so not many years after Isaiah wrote these things God would abandon them to the Babylonians. Because of our sin we deserved to have God abandon us both in this life and eternally.

God continues, **"your land will never again be called Desolation."** That's exactly what the Promised Land would look like when the Babylonians invaded and burned Jerusalem to the ground, including Solomon's Temple. That name would also describe us in this life apart from God. It wouldn't matter how much money we have, how popular we are, or how great we feel about ourselves. Without God we have nothing of value at all.

God announced what our new names will be. Remember that in many other languages apart from English your name actually means something. I mean, we do have a few names that are legitimate English words like Grace or Faith. In Hebrew my name means "gift of the LORD." I will leave it up to you as to the accuracy of that name. Think of names for Jesus like Immanuel which means "God with us." Even the name Jesus means "he saves." It is the Greek form of the Hebrew name Joshua which means "The LORD saves" or "The LORD is salvation."

So this new name isn't just something we call ourselves. It describes our relationship with God. The first name is **"My Delight Is in Her."** Think about that. God doesn't look at us and say, "Ugh, those people again." He sees people he loves more than anything else. God has the same kind of overwhelming love for us that a husband has when he sees his wife walking down the aisle toward him on their wedding day.

The next one is a bit more strange to our modern American ears, **"[Y]our land will be called Married."** In the context of this entire book it makes perfect sense. God compares himself to a patient, loving husband. He compares Israel to an adulterous wife who does nothing but run around on him. She would be abandoned, not because that's what God wanted, but her actions gave him no other choice.

Another thing that helps here is to know that the word translated "married" literally means "to possess like a husband." That means that the people of Israel were going to be able to return to the Promised Land to take possession of it. That way God could keep his promise that the Savior of the world would be born there. I don't think of my wife as my possession like my car or my clothes, but she is my wife and not anybody else's.

That also helps explain the next phrase, “**5For just as a young man marries a virgin, your sons will marry you.**” It seems, um, weird at best to talk about sons marrying their mother, but remember the picture. The mother here is the land of Israel and the sons are all the Israelites. Just like a husband and wife get married with the goal of never separating, the chastened and forgiven Israelites would return home with the goal of never leaving again.

But even that is nothing more than a picture of a far greater, far more beautiful reality. This text ends with a flourish, “**just as a bridegroom rejoices over a bride, your God will rejoice over you.**” When I was growing up I only really wanted two things. I wanted to be a pastor and I wanted to get married and have a family of my own. In September of 1994 the first came true. In September of 1996 the second came true. “The LORD is good. His mercy endures forever.”

The kind of love that husband and wife have for each other on their wedding day is the closest we can come to experiencing the kind of love that God has for all of his people. So when he looks at his Church he doesn’t roll his eyes as if he has seen her one too many times. He sees the object of his heart’s desire. He says things like, “**I have loved you with an everlasting love.**”

There’s always a danger in marriage that husband and wife start to take each other for granted. Their hearts don’t race for each other as they did on their wedding day. God’s love for us never grows stale. In chapter 60 of this book God says, “**I will make you a source of everlasting pride, a joy from generation to generation.**” I don’t know what’s going to happen in the future, but this I know for sure—the love of God will be there.

God Is Delighted in You. You have his righteousness and you have a new name. Let people think whatever they want to think about us. Their opinion doesn’t matter at all. There is only one whose opinion matters and that is the opinion of our God. From eternity he chose to love us. He sent his one and only Son to show how much he loves us. In love he adopted us into his family. That love will never end.