

One Mountain Exalted Above All Hills

Isaiah 2:2-5, Invocavit Sunday
(GSLC 54th Anniversary Sunday)
February 17, 2013

Beloved of the Lord.....Sometimes in families there is a precious heirloom passed down from generation to generation. It might be a large house or an antique car preserved and waxed a thousand times, but rarely driven. When fathers pass on such an heirloom to their sons, it is hoped the next generation will take good care of it, yet sometimes they fail. When people do not put their blood and sweat into something, but rather it is given or inherited, seldom is the treasure held dear. One of the greatest problems in my own generation is our fathers have given us everything and we have worked for every little. Like the prodigal son we've squandered our father's gifts, and a gift given is often a gift abused.

Today marks the 54th anniversary of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church. What did the founders of our congregation give us, or better, what treasure did God give us through them? First and foremost they gave us the pure Gospel Word whereby we know, "a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." This truth came to us and was given, because our forefathers fought and labored for the purity of the Word. Though they were born and raised in Lutheran Synods which were once faithful, these Synods went astray. After diligent labors and admonitions our fathers did as God commanded them: they marked and avoided those who stubbornly defended error. This treasure came with a cost. They broke fellowship with family and friends and they would no longer worship with them. They marked and avoided. They first organized a smaller fellowship called the OLC, and then when the devil divided that, Good Shepherd was eventually formed in 1959. She joined the Lutheran Churches of the Reformation in 1964. We emphasize "churches" in the plural because we are not a Synod with a hierarchy and power above a congregation, but every congregation is autonomous, a divine institution of God. Christ alone is our Head, our Faithful Shepherd, as sung by our choir today. "Fear not little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

All this is said for the simple purpose that my generation today and the younger generation understand and appreciate the heritage of God's word given us. If we don't appreciate and cherish the pure and unadulterated doctrine given us by God through the founders, we may lose it. We are not to squander our father's inheritance by sinful living, compromising the Word for the sake of family or an easier life. Rather each doctrine, every jot, tittle, and word spoken by inspiration of the Spirit, is worth fighting for.....not with our flesh but the Sword of the Spirit. It is even worth dying for a thousand times. True doctrine brings Christ and salvation, but false doctrine brings the devil and damnation. Today then let us rejoice and give thanks to God for these 54 years of grace and truth, for "Not unto us, O LORD, not

unto us, but unto Thy name give glory, for Thy mercy, and for Thy truth's sake."

Our sermon today is divided into three parts: 1) The Lord's house at the top of the mountain, 2) All nations flow into Zion, and 3) Walk in the Light of the Lord.

I. The Lord's house at the top of the mountain. Today's verses are a good fit for our occasion, because God here teaches us Zion will endure forever. Though God's children on earth are always persecuted, cast down, and despised by men, God will never allow His Church to perish. Through Christ it will always triumph in the end. This is why the prophet Isaiah declares, "it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established." This is a prophecy about the New Testament Church. These "last days" are the entire New Testament era in which we still live, where Christ has come and fulfilled all prophecies by the cross, and His Gospel is continually preached by His disciples to all four corners of the earth. In this New Testament era, "the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains."

In order to understand this prophecy, first realize the prophet Isaiah lived in Jerusalem about 700 years before the Advent of Christ. Isaiah was very familiar with Solomon's Temple which was situated on a hill called Mt. Zion. This mountain of the Lord's house would be "exalted above the hills." This does not mean (as many teach) that the earthly city of Jerusalem would be the center of some future millennial kingdom on earth, but rather this means God's Kingdom of believers would be exalted, high and lifted up in the New Testament era. Whereas the Old Testament is a period of prophecy, the New Testament would be a glorious period of fulfillment. This is because Christ would be born, live, suffer, die, rise again for our justification, and ascend into heaven. The believers in Isaiah's day then were to be comforted knowing the New Testament Church would be glorious because of all Jesus would achieve. Jesus said, "The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me." Mt. 11

While the physical Mt. Zion is really a very small hill in Jerusalem as opposed to the far greater mountains of the world; the spiritual Mt. Zion is exalted above all other mountains. This means Zion, the True Church, all believers today, live in a high and lofty Kingdom of Grace which will outlast all other kingdoms in the world. Just as the Roman Empire rose to power but then fell, likewise Napoleon's Empire and the Third Reich.... Zion triumphs over all, outlasting all, because Christ lives here in the midst of His Church, by the Means of Grace. We are His own Body and Temple, a spiritual house of living stones. As our Mighty King above us, He also rules these little kingdoms below, so His Church on Earth never perishes. Isaiah writes concerning this everlasting Kingdom of Zion, "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever. O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good

tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift *it* up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God! Behold, the Lord GOD will come with strong *hand*, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward *is* with him, and his work before him. He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry *them* in his bosom, *and* shall gently lead those that are with young." Jesus thus is the Captain of your Salvation dear believer, fighting all battles for you, but He is also a Faithful Shepherd in our midst, daily feeding us His grace by the Word and Sacraments. We hear and see and taste and eat the goodness of the Lord. He also feeds our little ones, our children, this same grace and mercy. Each lamb is precious in His sight. This is why our children sang today "How sweet the name of Jesus sounds in a believer's ear! It soothes his sorrows, heals his wounds, and drives away his fear."

II. All nations flow into Zion. In the New Testament era this Zion continually grows. "All nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob." Here picture Mt. Zion as a tall and snow capped mountain with streams of people flowing toward it from every corner of every nation. This is done when we invite people to church speaking His Words of grace saying, "Come with me and learn of Jesus." Sinners are made saints when they take to heart, "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him." Another picture of how all nations flow unto Zion, would be the animals from around the world which once went two by two into Noah's ark. Again from every direction they came like streams and rivers flowing into that one central location of the ark. Though there were beasts of every kind, they were preserved from the flood on that ark and they lived in peace. That is what happens when men are converted to Christ. "They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and... nation shall not lift up sword against nation." This too is spiritual. It does not mean there will be no physical war on earth, rather it means once converted believers know the peace of Christ, and when we live as true Christians, we live in true spiritual peace with one another. The Bible says, "Be ye kind to one another, tender hearted, forgiving, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you." When we see all that Jesus did to make peace between God and man on the cross, giving His life a ransom for many, our violent and angry hearts are broken, and the peace of Christ enters in. Wild beasts repent knowing in the blood of Christ there is forgiveness for these sins also. Hence we make peace, we become tame and gentle, and "The wolf and the lamb shall feed together."

Knowing Zion continually grows wherever God's Word is taught, we should be encouraged more and more to preach and teach this Word throughout our life to others. Thus "out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem." Since we are the salt of the

earth, we are to rebuke the sins of our day. We are not Christians if we don't rebuke sin, yet we preach the law only so the broken heart will be prepared to receive Christ in the Gospel we preach. This should be the continual mission of our congregation, Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, for "the law was our schoolmaster *to bring us* unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ."

III. Walk in the Light of the Lord. We are then unholy children by sin, made holy by the blood of Christ which covers our sins in baptism. "O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord." This "Light of the Lord" is none other than Christ. As our Substitute Jesus kept and fulfilled the law in our place, and as our Substitute, Jesus paid the full penalty of our sins upon the cross. He paid our hell giving us heaven. Even now above us His holy blood covers our sins, so they are blotted out from God's sight. Only those who do not believe will be damned, but if your faith is in Him alone and not your works, God cannot see nor does He remember your sins, hence we are justified by faith alone.

To walk in this Light of the Lord then is to walk by faith and not sight doing good works of thankfulness and praise knowing His first love. "See that none render evil for evil unto any *man*; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all *men*. Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks." Truly that is why we are here today, for we thank God by faith, from the bottom of our heart He has given us 54 years of grace. To the glory of His name, let us cherish and hold fast the pure and unadulterated Word given us by God through our forefathers. Use it or lose it as they say. For "Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto Thy name give glory, for Thy mercy, *and* for Thy truth's sake." "Take heed" dear congregation "unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee." Amen.