

Christ Comes to All the World

Thomas Robinson, *Life Renewing 10*, Advent 2, December 10, 2017

Romans 15:13-21

¹³ May the **God of hope** fill you with all **joy** and **peace** as you **believe**, so that you may abound in **hope** in the **Holy Spirit's power**.

¹⁴ I am completely sure, my brothers and sisters – I myself from my own knowledge about you – that all this **goodness fills you completely**, since you've been filled with all **knowledge** of it and are able also to give **instruction** to one another.

¹⁵ But I have written to you **rather daringly** at some points so as to remind you. This is because of the **grace given me by God** ¹⁶ to be a **minister of Christ Jesus** to the nations/Gentiles in the **priestly service of God's proclamation of Good News**, so that the **offering of the nations/Gentiles** may become beautifully acceptable, made holy in the Holy Spirit.

¹⁷ Therefore, I have my celebration in Christ Jesus, with regard to everything belonging to God. ¹⁸ For I won't dare to speak of anything except what **Christ has been working through me toward obedience by Gentiles/nations** by his **message (logos)** and **action**, ¹⁹ by power of **signs** and **amazing events**, by power of **God's Spirit**. The result has been for me from **Jerusalem** and around to **Illyricum** to have completed my proclamation of the Good News of the Messiah. ²⁰ In this way the only honor I desire is to preach the Good News in places **where Christ has not been named**, in order that I may build not on someone else's foundation, ²¹ but rather as it is written,

*"Those who have never been told of him will see,
and those who have never heard will understand."* [Isaiah 52:15]

Romans 10:14-17

¹⁴ How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone proclaiming? ⁵ And how are they to proclaim unless they are sent as emissaries? As it is written,

"How beautiful are the feet of those announcing good news of good things!" [Isa 52:7]

¹⁶ But they have not all obeyed the good news. For Isaiah says,

"Lord, who has believed the report heard from us?" [Isa 53:1]

¹⁷ So believing is from a report heard, and the report is through a message/word of the Messiah.

Isaiah 52:7-10

⁷ How beautiful upon the mountains | are the feet of one... | who brings good news of good things, | who proclaims salvation, | who says to Zion, "Your God is King!" | ⁸ Listen! Your lookouts ... | sing joyfully together! | Before their eyes they see | the LORD returning to Zion. | ⁹ Break into song together, | you ruins of Jerusalem! | The LORD... | has redeemed Jerusalem. | ¹⁰ The LORD has bared his holy arm | in view of all the nations/Gentiles; | the ends of the earth have seen | our God's salvation.

Isaiah 52:13, 15; 53:1-5 LXX

52:¹³ See, my servant shall understand, | and he shall be exalted and glorified exceedingly. ...

¹⁵ Many nations shall be astonished at him, ... | because those who never have been told of him shall see | and those who have never heard shall understand.

53:¹ Lord, who has believed the report heard from us? | And the arm of the Lord, to whom has it been revealed? | ² ... He has no form or glory, ... | ³ He was dishonored and not esteemed. | ⁴ This one bears our sins | and suffers pain for us, | and we accounted him to be in trouble | ⁵ But he himself was wounded because of our lawless acts, | and has suffered because of our sins; | a chastisement for our peace was upon him; | by his wounds we were healed.

Luke 2:7-14

⁷ And Mary gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a feed trough because there was no place for them in the inn. ⁸ And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹ And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with fear.

¹⁰ And the angel said to them, “*Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.* ¹¹ *For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Messiah Lord.*¹² *And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a feed trough.*”

¹³ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, ¹⁴ “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!”

Apostle to Nations who've Never Heard of Jesus

Paul knew that he was called to a special role, as one saturated in the Law, a Roman citizen, a Greek-speaker, confronted by the resurrected Jesus, sent especially to cities/people across a pagan Roman empire. He worked in Syria, Arabia, Asia Minor, Greece, now Rome, Spain.

Paul has a strong sense of Advent. God is always breaking in, coming to new peoples new lives. He's seen it. Participated. That's the particular calling he received. Rome's empire was tied to its own throng of gods. The Jews' story seemed superstition. – A crucified Jew as Lord? Paul was the instrument of Advent in regions beyond what's known in Acts – Illyricum.

He “daringly” writes Romans to a church with many people he knows. He's encapsulating their shared knowledge and experience that lays the basis for the power of that Gospel Advent. Now he hopes for new work in Spain in partnership with the church in Rome.

The God of Boundaries Crossed and New Territory

Paul quotes scripture. It may seem arbitrary but he trusts that we know it: Isa 52:15: The introduction of God's great intervention, his holy arm, the suffering servant, without glory, wounded, but with great effect, healing, bringing peace and God's salvation to the nations.

Paul has meditated on these scriptures deeply. We focus Advent on Jesus' birth, but the whole story is God's intervention, advent. The only hope is for God to intervene to heal, restore.

The whole story of Israel was seen as one exile/loss of identity and hope after another: Egypt, David (anointed outlaw, sinner), Assyrian scattering, Babylonian destruction of temple, exile, continued oppression under empires. Even Eden led to exile. God comes repeatedly with grace and healing, deliverance/Exodus, hope, new identity for his people. But the alienation is deep. It was Isaiah in exile who saw both the great hope of God's advent and the deep mystery of what God's mighty arm would look like when he appeared, wounded, healing.

Paul knew that leading Jews were focusing on a pure, exclusive community like the Pharisees. He saw in the crucified Jesus the opening of Israel's story to all the nations of the earth.

The Advent of the Glorious Humility

It was that intervention, that Advent of God that Mary and others around her sensed/recognized in the birth of Jesus. Mary speaks of God's arm, as in Isaiah, when she sings before Jesus' birth. God's mighty arm has scattered the proud, raised the lowly (Lk 1:51-52).

The sign of the Coming of God's Anointed King and Lord was a baby in a feed trough. The message was given not to the emperor or king Herod but to shepherds and foreigners. But it was given by Angel armies and Stars. It was weak but powerful beyond imagination.

Paul worked to continue the advent for new people. Each person who hears for the first time is the edge of God's advent. Every one of us who shares the Good News shares ‘beautiful feet.’