

Isaiah 59:19-21, NRSV

- ¹⁹So those in the west shall fear the name of the LORD, and those in the east, his glory; for he will come like a pent-up stream that the wind of the LORD drives on.
- ²⁰And he will come to Zion as Redeemer, to those in Jacob who turn from transgression, says the LORD.
- ²¹And as for me, this is my covenant with them, says the LORD: my spirit that is upon you, and my words that I have put in your mouth, shall not depart out of your mouth, or out of the mouths of your children, or out of the mouths of your children's children, says the LORD, for now on and forever.

(slide #1)

"Guess What?"

I used to be a kid. I used to be really high energy. For those of you who think I'm hyperactive now, you ought to have known me then. I used to be so incredibly high energy *all the time*. I am reminded of that fact by my children on a daily basis, just as I am reminded that I do not possess that same energy anymore—or at least I don't have it as often. Yet it's still there—that desire to explode in excitement with the arrival of each new day. I don't express that energy very often, but it still lurks beneath the surface. And I let it out on occasion.

But I seldom now look like I did when I was a young lad with *something that you just had to hear*. You know the emotion I am talking about: when I had done something good, something that I was very proud of—or, when something exciting was about to happen—and I just had to tell somebody. I see it in my kids now. It is spawned by a special piece of artwork on which they have been laboring all morning, and they need to show it to me RIGHT NOW. Or, when Jeanette tells the boys that we are going to do something special as a family, and the kids hit me with the good news as if they suddenly found out that it was their birthday.

It goes something like this...

"Guess what?"

Ringin' any bells?

(slide #2) I got home from work the other day, and Micah—even at his tender age—had something he just needed me to see. He had rediscovered the remote control for one of our TVs, so he grabbed me by the finger and dragged me down the hall, just to show me his new re-discovery. And he was so pleased with himself...

I love that energy! I am humbled by that energy, by that passion to share admittedly routine information. My kids aren't yet old enough to know that they're not supposed to be excited by life, excited by the possibilities of discovery, excited by the chance to do something special. By the time they're older, they'll outgrow this phase. And they will lose their passion.

Whatever happened to our childhood exuberance about the things in life that were really exciting? Whatever happened to our desire to overwhelm anyone crazy enough to get near us with whatever good news and excitement we happened to have at that moment—the desire to share the things that really fire us up?

It's still there, that desire to share the things in life that make me passionate. I let it out once in a while. Get me talking about football. Or about my kids. Or about my wife. There are still things that get me going. And I'm sure there are for you, as well.

(slide #3) I'm going to share with you this morning one of these things that really, really excite me in life—the good news of Jesus Christ, the good news that draws us together today.

Together we are celebrating Advent, the season of anticipation of the coming of Christ. Like all seasons of anticipation, Advent gives us the opportunity to build up a little of that healthy anxiety—the stress within us to do something, the desire to see the thing hoped for. You'll notice that the first candle lit on the Advent wreath was *the candle of hope*. We look forward again to the coming of the King, the Christ-child. And I am excited. Last week I was tired. This week I'm excited.

I remember the countless hours I spent as a child counting the hours until Christmas day, because I was so excited about the gifts that I was going to both give and receive; I've always liked giving gifts as much as receiving. I have always been prone to being on the edge of my seat to share my excitement with anyone willing to listen.

(slide #4) I like the visual given us in the prophetic words this morning from the book of Isaiah: "*...he will come like a pent-up stream...*" What a beautiful image of the coming of the LORD! And I do believe that this text was meant at least partly to point to the coming Messiah, the One who would come to Zion, that is, the mountain of Jerusalem, as "Redeemer" of those who are willing to turn from transgression. The excitement, the passion of our LORD for us, that though we were yet sinners, he would come explosively to redeem us—i.e., to buy us back from slavery to sin and death, to pay back what we owe for our own disobedience.

That good news gets me excited every time I really consider it, every time I don't just *assume* it. And look what it says in verse 21, *for those to whom the spirit of the Lord has been given, these words will not depart*. We who are redeemed by our Lord cannot help but talk about what he has done for us, or that's how we should be. This good news is constantly on our lips, in our lives, in everything that we do. "**Guess what?**" Hear this: Jesus has come to give us a new hope and a new life. This is the news that shapes our very speech, because his word will never leave our mouths. This is who we are: the people redeemed by God.

Or is it?

I wonder sometimes. Those of you who know me even a little bit can tell who I root for when it comes to college football. Why? Because it excites me! Can you tell the same about my faith? I don't know. You'll have to tell me. I daresay I could do a better job of getting my passion across.

"...he will come like a pent-up stream..."

Does my passion for God match his passion for me?

Let me tell you about passion. Passion led this coming Messiah to lay down his life in order to *redeem* us. That's what *redemption* means—he paid the price that we owed for our own sin. (slide #5) We're about to celebrate Communion with one another. We're about to remember together the good news that we can know God one-on-one because of his Son.

In preparation, I want us to take a few moments to consider what God might be asking of us in terms of our passion. Nothing that we can do can match the eternal and overwhelming passion of our Lord. Nevertheless, he invites us to be driven by his Holy Spirit, to catch his passion, and to share our stories with everyone around us. If this is truly important to us, it will come out in our conversation, just as with a child. As we prepare to share in the Lord's Supper, let us consider what it means that we are redeemed people! As the scriptures say, "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so!"

Guess what? Jesus loves you. And here's how he showed us...