

# Sermon Outline

## THE YEAR IN OUR LORD, 2012-2013

### The Advent and Christmas Messages:

- ♦ Nov 25: Christ Jesus for the Poor (Isa 61:1) ♦ Dec 9: Christ Jesus for the Sad (Isa 61:1)
- ♦ Dec 16: Christ Jesus for the Captives (Isa 61:1) ♦ Dec 23: Christ Jesus for Offenders (Isa 61:2)
- ♦ Dec 25: Christ Jesus Is Born (Lk 2:1-12)

### CHRIST JESUS FOR THE SAD: AN ADVENT MESSAGE (ISAIAH 61:1)

#### I. The Christ Who Gave Christmas

#### II. “I Have Forgotten What Happiness Is”

- A. When Israel went into exile, Israelites had a lot of reason to be sad.
- B. What made the exile so traumatic was more than a mere loss of socio-economic standing.  
—When Israel went into exile, their status as God’s people was called into question. it was as if the ground had been removed from under their feet.
- C. If you want to know what it was like being an Israelite at the time, read the Lamentations of Jeremiah.
  1. Lamentations 1:1, 2:

*How lonely sits the city  
that was full of people!  
How like a widow has she become,  
she who was great among the nations!  
She who was a princess among the provinces  
has become a slave.  
She weeps bitterly in the night,  
with tears on her cheeks;  
among all her lovers  
she has none to comfort her;  
all her friends have dealt treacherously with her;  
they have become her enemies.*

2. Lamentations 3:16-18:

*He has made my teeth grind on gravel,  
and made me cover in ashes;  
my soul is bereft of peace;  
I have forgotten what happiness is;*

*so I say, "My endurance has perished;  
so has my hope from the LORD."*

—For the ordinary Israelite, exile felt as if all hope from God had gone. It felt as if happiness was a far distant memory.

- D. Why should the fall of the nation affect each individual Israelite so drastically?
1. The issue at stake is much more than national pride or patriotism—it has to do with one's own sense of acceptance by God.
  2. From young, each Israelite was taught to see himself or herself as part of God's kingdom on earth, as a holy member of God's special nation.
  3. But now that that holy nation has been destroyed, the ordinary Israelite must have felt forsaken by God.
  4. The fall of Israel was more than a mere political event.  
—It was an event of great spiritual, earth-shattering significance; it was a day of judgment for God's people.

**\*Questions for reflection:** (1) Based on Lamentations 1:1, 2 and 3:16-18, how did the exile feel for Israel? (2) Why was the exile so traumatic for the ordinary Israelite?

### III. The Cursed Normal Life

- A. Although we may feel far removed from what was going on in Israel, each one of us knows what it means to be sad.  
—This is because *sadness in all its different degrees of intensity is part of normal human life in a cursed world.*
- B. God placed a curse upon the human race as a punishment of our sins.
1. The ultimate punishment of sin is death in eternal hell.
  2. But a curse was also placed on human life in this world.
    - a. God said to Adam in Genesis 3:17-18: "cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field."
    - b. In 3:19, God concludes the curse with this pronouncement: "you are dust, and to dust you shall return."
      - i. There is a death-ward trend in all human existence.
      - ii. For this reason, sadness is part and parcel of life in this world, for that is God's punishment on human sin.
- C. Therefore, even if we are unable to fully enter into Israel's experience of national destruction and exile, you and I know what it means to be sad  
—for sadness is part of life.

**\*Questions for reflection:** (1) Why is it that each one of us can know sadness? (2) What words does God speak to Adam in Genesis 3:17-19? How do these

words affect life for all of Adam’s descendants? How do those ancient words affect our lives today?

#### IV. The Great Depressions

- A. In fact, deep sadness is increasingly the norm for more and more people in the world.
- B. Consider what the mental health specialists say about depression.
- C. The World Health Organization (WHO): Depression is projected to be the second largest health problem in the world by the year 2020 (cited in *Depression: A Global Crisis*, 14).
- D. Clinical psychologist Dr. Michael Yapko believes that too often, people focus only on the physiological aspects of depression (*Depression Is Contagious*, xix).
  - 1. Yapko believes that depression is also socially caused.
  - 2. We fall into depression because our *relationships* are not in order.
  - 3. While talking about relationships may seem sloppy and sentimental, Yapko points out what science is now recognizing:
    - a. “our brains also change in measurable ways in response to other people, and we can now measure those subtle changes” (*Depression Is Contagious*, 1).
    - b. “Our social lives directly shape our brain chemistry and powerfully affect the way we think and feel. With modern scanning technologies, we now have evidence that our brains change with positive life experiences.” (*Depression Is Contagious*, xiv).  
—In other words, bad relationships can badly affect our brains!
  - 4. Clinical psychology is recognizing what Scripture has always taught.
    - a. God has made us to live in holy and nurturing relationships with one another (Rom 12:5; 1 Cor 12:12, 25).
    - b. If these relationships do not exist, we open ourselves to sadness and even more severe forms of depression.
- E. Why are instances of depression increasing worldwide?
  - 1. Mental health specialist Dr. Jeffrey Rossman believes our modern lifestyles have something to do with it (*The Mind-Body Mood Solution*, 3). Due to an overreliance on modern technologies...
    - a. we have more sedentary lifestyles today.
    - b. we are more isolated from one another.  
—Yapko also supports Rossman’s observation: “Social skills have declined and relationships have become less rewarding and effective. As a result, the vulnerability to depression has increased” (*Depression Is Contagious*, xv).
    - c. we do not rest properly.
  - 2. But to all these reasons, Scripture also adds some more.
    - a. We are increasingly treated in less and less humane ways.

- i. The combined forces of technology, affluence, fear, and ambition cause us to treat one another as commodities.
  - ii. Today, we seek less to understand people, and more to manage them.
  - iii. This mindset is surely connected to our increasing power to control our environments.
  - iv. God gave humankind the ability to control the earthly realm and harness it for our use (Gen 1:28).
  - v. But sinners abuse this power and think that everything in life is about taking control.
  - vi. We treat one another as commodities to be used.
  - vii. The further result is that our relationships are deformed: —We relate to people only when we want something from them—or else to correct what we perceive to be a malfunction in them. Everyone is reduced to a thing.
  - viii. That is why depression is on the rise. —We are living in societies that are increasingly *incapable* of supporting deep relationships.
- b. We despise the image of God in one another—and therefore despise God himself.
- i. Again, we see that suffering does come back to sin.
  - ii. We fall into depression and cause others to fall into it because we are unwilling to be and to do what God desires.
  - iii. While God calls us to represent him in all the different callings that we have, we limit people to their narrow, earthly functions.
  - iv. Secularism contributes to this de-humanization by pushing God out of the picture entirely.
  - v. Once God is pushed out of the picture, the ordinary man has no protection from the powers of technology, affluence, fear, and ambition.
  - vi. The world can do whatever it wants with us—and then dump us after we have outgrown our usefulness.
  - vii. There is something truly demonic in the way things are run in our world.
    - (A) Ephesians 2:2: “...the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience.”
    - (B) The evidence of the demonic is seen in how human beings are reduced to earning power and material productivity.
3. Summary: Why is depression reaching epidemic proportions?
- a. There are reasons related to our modern lifestyle: More sedentary lifestyle, greater social isolation, lack of bodily engagement, and proper rest, so resulting mental weariness.

- b. But above all, it comes back to sin.  
—We refuse to find ourselves in God and treat one another according to his life-giving will.

**\*Questions for reflection:** (1) According to Dr. Michael Yapko, why is it not enough to treat depression with medicine? How does this confirm the teachings of Scripture? (2) Why is depression reaching epidemic proportions? (3) How do you think secularism contributes to forming depressive societies?

## V. Facing Our Own Sadness

- A. How have you been sad? Why are you sad?
- B. Our sadness or lack of happiness may be due to *trials and tragedies in our lives*.
  - 1. God allows us to go through seasons of suffering and grief.
  - 2. This is not because of any particular sin we have committed.
  - 3. God allows us to undergo suffering, because unless we know what sadness is, we would not be able to comfort others.
    - a. In 2 Corinthians 1:4, Paul says that God “comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.”
    - b. When God brings us out of our depressive slumps, we are to respond in the right way.  
—Instead of boasting in our own resilience, we are to come alongside the weak and help restore them (see Gal 6:1).
- C. Our sadness or lack of happiness may be due to our *failure to properly care for ourselves*.
  - 1. We allow ourselves to become overworked, overly stressed, overly nervous.
  - 2. To use the words of Paul, we allow ourselves to be “tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes” (Eph 4:14).
  - 3. We have difficulty saying no to people and allow ourselves to be enslaved to the ambitions of others.
  - 4. Yet, we actually *allow* ourselves to be conned.
    - a. Precisely because we crave acceptance and idolize the perceptions of some significant others, we allow ourselves to be used by them and swayed by their responses to us.
    - b. There again, we cannot deny the influence of our sinfulness.
    - c. Our idols are slave drivers; and they drive us to lifestyles that are not sustainable in the long run.
- D. Our sadness or lack of happiness may be due to *guilt from our own sins*.
  - 1. We feel sad because we have not confessed our sins to God (Ps 32:3-4)
  - 2. We feel sad because, though having confessed our sins, we have not trusted in Christ to cleanse us.

**\*Questions for reflection:** (1) What are some possible reasons for our struggle with sadness? (2) If our sadness is due to tragedies in our lives, how are we to view our situation? What are we to do after God has brought us out of our depressed moods? (3) Why may we not be caring for ourselves as we ought? (4) What are we to do if our sadness is due to our sin? (5) What if we have confessed our sins but still feel sad and guilty? What should we do?

## VI. The Anointed One Binds up the Brokenhearted

- A. Now, that we know the causes of Israel's and the world's sadness, we can go to our Lord Jesus as he is offered in Isaiah 61:1.
1. Based on this Scripture, we see that...
    - a. YHWH has placed his Holy Spirit upon Jesus.
    - b. YHWH has placed his Holy Spirit upon Jesus to enable him to proclaim good news to the poor.
    - c. YHWH has sent Jesus "to bind up the brokenhearted."
  2. The Lord's Anointed One is the ultimate solution to global sadness.
- B. But how would Jesus "bind up the brokenhearted"?
1. The answer comes in Isaiah 53:4-6:

*<sup>4</sup> Surely he [God's Anointed One] has borne our griefs  
and carried our sorrows;  
yet we esteemed him stricken,  
smitten by God, and afflicted.*

*<sup>5</sup> But he was pierced for our transgressions;  
he was crushed for our iniquities;  
upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace,  
and with his wounds we are healed.*

*<sup>6</sup> All we like sheep have gone astray;  
we have turned—every one—to his own way;  
and the LORD has laid on him  
the iniquity of us all.*

2. The Anointed One will heal brokenhearted sinners by taking the guilt and punishment of their sins, and therefore, their sadness, upon himself.
3. The Anointed One is himself the atoning sacrifice for sin, who takes the full punishment of sin on himself.
  - a. Romans 3:25: "whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood..."
  - b. 1 John 4:10: "In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

**The Anointed One of God heals us brokenhearted sinners by taking the guilt of our sins upon himself, by receiving into his own body and soul the full and comprehensive punishment that our sins deserve, so removing from us the main reason for all our sadness, which is our sin. Now that our sins are paid for, the way is open for God's new creation to break into the world in joyful power!**

- C. What was the first sign that God's new order has begun? *It was the resurrection of Jesus our King.*
1. By raising King Jesus from the dead, God signals to the whole world that the days of exile and sadness are numbered.
  2. Now that sin has been removed, King Jesus has begun his work of removing all the other barriers to our eternal joy.
    - a. King Jesus has satisfied God's righteous requirements on our behalf.
      - i. God's requirements are the only requirements that truly matter.
      - ii. Therefore, you and I do not need to be enslaved to the requirements of others when they are selfish or unreasonable.
    - b. King Jesus has shown us that God does value human beings.  
—Therefore, you and I are free to defy the dehumanizing spirit of this world, which reduces everyone to jobs, monetary value, or mere human resource.
    - c. Now that King Jesus himself has been raised from the dead, the whole creation, including our own bodies, will one day rise from the dead as well (see Rom 8:19-21).

**\*Questions for reflection:** (1) What has God sent his Anointed One to do? (2) Based on Isaiah 53:4-6, how does God's Anointed One deal with our sadness? (3) How has King Jesus begun to remove all the other barriers to our eternal joy? How will you begin living in freedom?

## **VII. The Christ Who Ends Sadness**

*Do you dare believe—really believe—the Gospel of Jesus Christ?*