

The perfect plan produces praise. Again, we had the chance to hear from the children of the congregation the story of God’s perfect plan in Christ Jesus, how even from the Garden of Eden, the Lord promised a savior from the seed of the offspring of Eve. The Lord orchestrated the intervening history to bring forth Jesus born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law.

We see in our Old Testament text a snapshot in the intervening time when the people of God were still waiting for a Savior, and we see this Savior promised in the anointed one who would bring good news to the poor, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and to open the prison to those who are bound.

We see that perfect plan unfolding in the person of Jesus Christ who works to restore creation and to heal those struck down by sin. Isaiah paints this in poetic pictures in Isaiah 61, but we see this enacted as Jesus heals the sick and disabled, He teaches through His Word, and He forgives our sins as He dies and rises for you.

The perfect plan produces praise. This Third Sunday in Advent is known as joy Sunday, we light the pink candle on the Advent wreath, and we celebrate the coming of the Messiah in an otherwise somber and penitential season. Isaiah does not disappoint us with pictures of praise and joy in Isaiah 61.

The perfect plan produces praise. In some cases, it provokes ridicule. When a friend of mine got married, he was a super planner. The events on the wedding day were planned down in five-minute increments. Perhaps a coping mechanism for being nervous, but nonetheless, the wedding party couldn’t help but poke fun. Although the wedding went smoothly, the five-minute schedule may have been set aside at some point in the day.

Isaiah uses imagery of weddings and clothing in our text today. **“to grant to those who mourn in Zion— to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit;”** Also, we read in verse 10, **“I will greatly rejoice in the LORD; my soul shall exult in my God, for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation; he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself like a priest with a beautiful headdress, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.”** The relationship between the Lord and His people is likened to that of a marriage. In the Old Testament, Israel was the bride of Yahweh. In the New Testament, the Church is the bride of Christ.

Despite the fact that the Church is often a bridezilla, the Lord loves her nonetheless. His perfect plan was to send Jesus, and that resulted in a rags to riches story for us. Today we rejoice because those who mourn in Zion are being clothed in beauty. Instead of sackcloth and ashes, we have joy. Instead of lament, we have gladness. Instead of a faint spirit, we have garments of praise.

Christ Jesus has clothed you in the robe of righteousness and garments of salvation. These garments of clothing are ours because Christ first came in garments of vengeance to defeat sin, death, and the devil on our behalf. When He became man in the womb of the Virgin Mary, He entered our frail estate and took on the burdens we could not bear. His perfect plan produces praise on a day like today, but it will produce praise as we gather for the marriage feast of the Lamb in His Kingdom which has no end.

The perfect plan produces praise. You don't make a living as a farmer by just winging it. By August it's too late to decide what crops you want to harvest in October. Farmers need to plan far in advance to know what crops to grow where, when to buy futures to hedge their bets, and Christian farmers soak their crops in prayer as they pray for the Lord of the harvest to bring success to their planting endeavors.

The other illustration in our text is that of planting. The Lord's plan is to restore His people so that, "... **that they may be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he may be glorified.**" We had a conference at this church a few years back about families and farms. One of the organizers was asked, "What are you raising on your farm?" He answered, "Children." We are the crop that the Lord is so pleased to bring forth.

**"For as the earth brings forth its sprouts, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to sprout up, so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise to sprout up before all the nations."** We are the nations, the goyim, who are praising the Lord. We are the result of God's hard work and perfect plan. We are thankful that the promise of salvation has been extended to us who are from a variety of backgrounds and ethnicities.

As mentioned earlier, God promised salvation through the seed of Eve. That seed passed down from generation to generation until the birth of the Messiah. Jesus said, **"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit."** God's perfect plan was to bring forth the Messiah, and have Him die and rise for our sins, and this results in praise for all generations.

As we gather here this day, we can be glad that praises spring forth even from the mouths of our youngest. We thank the Lord for His Perfect Plan, and even when things seem uncertain or unknown in our plans, we entrust our lives to Him, that it will all work out, even despite evidence to the contrary. God's perfect plan produces praise.