

Isaiah 62:1-7

For the sake of Zion I will not be silent.
For the sake of Jerusalem I will not be quiet,
until her righteousness goes forth shining brightly,
and her salvation burns like a torch.
²Nations will see your righteousness,
and all kings will see your glory.
You will be called by a new name
that the mouth of the LORD will assign to you.
³Then you will be a beautiful crown in the LORD's hand,
and a royal diadem in the palm of your God.
⁴You will never again be called Abandoned,
and your land will never again be called Desolation,
for you will be called My Delight Is in Her,
and your land will be called Married,
because the LORD delights in you,
and your land will be married.
⁵For just as a young man marries a virgin,
your sons will marry you,
and just as a bridegroom rejoices over a bride,
your God will rejoice over you.
⁶Upon your walls, Jerusalem, I appointed watchmen.
All day and all night they will never be silent.
You who keep reminding the LORD, do not rest!
⁷Do not give him rest
until he establishes Jerusalem,
and he causes her to be praised on the earth.

I Will Not Be Silent

I.

There was bad news for the people of Israel. A few chapters before our text Isaiah wrote: "It is your guilt that has separated you from your God, and your sins have hidden God's face from you, so that he does not hear" (Isaiah 59:2, EHV). The people had forsaken God. They had chased after other gods and had committed unspeakable, idolatrous acts. They deserved bad news.

So bad was the news that some very unkind pet names were being established. Israel would be called "Abandoned" and "Desolation." The pet names were due to the fact that it appeared that Israel's God had deserted them. They had no one left to turn to and nowhere to run. They were doomed to be taken from their land, and when that had happened, their cities and their very country would appear to be abandoned. Everything was hopeless.

Into the hopelessness and sure despair came God's comforting words. "For the sake of Zion I will not be silent...⁴You will never again be called Abandoned, and your land will never again be called Desolation, for you will be called My Delight Is in Her, and your land will be called Married, because the LORD delights in you, and your land will be married" (Isaiah 62:1, 4, EHV).

Instead of the blemish of sin that separated them from God, they would be seen as righteous through the forgiveness of sins. Instead of being called "Abandoned," they would be known by God as "My Delight Is in Her." Instead of being "Desolation," they would be known as "Married," because the Lord would have that kind of close, personal relationship with the people.

II.

There is bad news in our land. The news is not just bad, it is bleak.

Last year a movie was made called “Gosnell: The Trial of America’s Biggest Serial Killer,” based on a book written about events that really happened in Philadelphia. The movie is about an abortion “doctor” who operated a so-called “clinic” inside a filthy building. He and his staff casually murdered born-alive infants. Many of those performing the abortions in the clinic were not doctors, but were just hired to do a job. His actions were universally decried, even by those who are pro-abortion.

Apparently “Dr.” Kermit Gosnell was just ahead of his time. As soon as the State of New York began its new legislative term, Governor Cuomo indicated that he wanted legislation that made abortion as legal as possible. This past week that legislation was passed and signed into law in New York by Governor Cuomo. The legislation makes everything Gosnell was doing, outside of the non-cleanliness of his facility, legal. Now a woman can abort her baby right up to the due date. In fact, that’s not even completely necessary, since if the baby happens to be born by accident, you can still execute him or her. Gosnell was convicted of allowing unlicensed non-medical personnel to perform abortions. New York now permits those who are not doctors to perform abortions.

This legislation was passed on the anniversary of the Roe-v-Wade decision by the Supreme Court. In the legislative chambers in New York there was cheering when it passed. The news is dark, indeed.

There was additional abortion news. A group of students from a Catholic High School in Kentucky were attending the Pro-Life march in Washington D.C. They were slandered and accused of acting like a bunch of racists and bigots. Perhaps it had something to do with a Trump “Make America Great Again” hat, or maybe it was pro-life slogans the students also had with them. News media from all sides jumped on the students, some even *after* it became apparent that they had been the victims of bigoted remarks, not the perpetrators. The school and some of the students have received death threats and threats of violence. Support even from school officials seemed slow in coming. Being pro-life, it seems, has become dangerous.

III.

So the news is bad in our society. Something important to remember is that the news is bad in our own hearts, too. Whether sins related to the pro-life issue are in your past or not, there is no doubt that there are sins of *some* kind. Because of our own sinfulness, each one of us deserves to be called “Abandoned” and “Desolation” by God. We deserve to have no one to turn to. Our property, our bank account, our physical or intellectual abilities—none of these things can rescue us from what we deserve because of our sin. Each of us deserves to be described the way Paul describes people before they know Christ: “Without hope and without God in the world” (Ephesians 2:12, EHV).

That’s bad news. In a way, that’s what makes the good news so good. Instead of the guilt and sin that had separated us from God, he sees us as just and holy. Our sins and our guilt were laid on Jesus. *He* was abandoned. *He* was desolation. For *us*. He had no one to turn to. He cried out from the cross: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Matthew 27:46, EHV).

We deserved to be deserted, but *he* was. Now we are called: “My Delight Is in Her.” We have someone to turn to in faith. We have someone who loves us and forgives us.

“Then you will be a beautiful crown in the LORD’s hand, and a royal diadem in the palm of your God” (Isaiah 62:3, EHV). We are no longer abandoned, with nowhere left to turn. We are precious, special, and cared for. God has given us his Word and Sacraments to hear and taste and see the love and grace he has poured out on us.

IV.

“For the sake of Zion I will not be silent. For the sake of Jerusalem I will not be quiet, until her

righteousness goes forth shining brightly, and her salvation burns like a torch” (Isaiah 62:1, EHV). God was not silent in the face of evil. He did what was necessary to bring salvation and righteousness to us.

It’s time for us to not be silent, as well. This is not really a divisive political issue, but a spiritual issue. Abortion is a spiritual issue because it is not *something* that dies in an abortion, it is *someone*. It is someone created by God and for whom Jesus died. It is someone who is a gift from God. It is not a time for silence when we have the opportunity to speak for those who cannot speak for themselves.

Abortion is a spiritual issue because it deeply wounds women who were pressured into believing that abortion was their only choice. They are burdened with guilt, and only the gospel can bring them the forgiveness and hope they need. It is not time to be silent when we have the good news to apply to the sin of abortion.

Somebody has to speak because the news is bad. There have been well over 60-million abortions since the 1973 Roe-v-Wade decision. There are more victims than the babies, too. For every child killed, a woman is deeply wounded. While the mantra is that it is a woman’s “right to choose,” women are often pressured into believing it is the only choice they have. Pressure comes from the boyfriend, or from the young woman’s mother, or from a counselor who says that abortion is the only answer or the best answer. Many times the woman is never told of any of the alternatives, like adoption.

The Bible tells us that God knit us together in our mother’s wombs. His hands formed us and shaped us. His hands redeemed us. The hands of God were stretched out on the cross to purchase for everyone the forgiveness of sins and eternal life. You were purchased, not with gold or silver, but with the precious blood of Jesus. God’s creating hands, God’s redeeming hands—God’s hands make all human life valuable—precious like a beautiful crown in the Lord’s hand, like a royal diadem.

It’s good news because it means you have value no matter what. You have value whether you are an embryo in the womb or a teenager in a messy room, whether you are an athlete or a computer geek, whether you have your whole life ahead of you or only months to live. Your value does not depend on *who* you are, but *whose* you are. You are the work of God’s hands—you belong to him. That’s what gives human life value.

That good news means that it’s no time for silence. Our society desperately needs to hear about the God-given value of human life. The church needs to be a blazing torch to the nation about the value of life.

We have good news for those who are filled with shame and despair following an abortion decision. Jesus is not only *willing* to get down into the dirty reality of our messy lives, he has already *done* so. On the human garbage dump called Golgotha he stretched out his hands to lift us out of the trash of our problems. It doesn’t matter what the sin is—he took its guilt and suffered its punishment. He took our sin and guilt and gave us back righteousness and purity.

Whether it’s the sin of abortion or some other sin that has left you feeling abandoned and like desolation, understand that because of the cross, you are one in whom the Lord delights.. He can bring you healing and hope. You are one who is called married. Through faith God unites you to himself. He will never leave you or forsake you. That’s good news—good news that everyone needs to hear. Now is not the time to be silent. Amen.