

## Isaiah 63:7-9

<sup>7</sup>I will tell about the LORD's mercies,  
about the praises of the LORD,  
about all that the LORD has done for us,  
about his great goodness to the house of Israel,  
which he did for them according to his abundant compassion,  
and according to his great mercy.

<sup>8</sup>He said, "Surely they are my people,  
sons who will not deal falsely,"  
so he became their Savior.

<sup>9</sup>In all their anguish he had anguish,  
and the Angel of his Presence saved them.  
In his love and in his pity he himself redeemed them,  
and he took them up and carried them all the days of old.

## I Will Tell

### I.

How well can you keep a secret? News about your new girlfriend or boyfriend. The fact that you got engaged. The promotion you received at work. The new addition to your family. We don't really like to keep great news to ourselves, we like to tell someone about it. The words just gush out from our lips over and over. We tell the same good news to anyone who will listen, sometimes even complete strangers.

When you were born I'll bet that was the case. I'll bet your parents told many people. They were thrilled that God gave you to them.

The story of Christmas is a story of telling. Way, way back, not long after the beginning, God told Adam and Eve the good news about Jesus. He was actually speaking to the snake about the fact that Satan's days were numbered, but Adam and Eve could hear him, and they knew what he meant. Throughout the history of God's people he sent prophets to tell them the story—more and more of the details with each passing prophet. God sent the angel to tell Mary—and Joseph. Mary told Elizabeth. Elizabeth told Zechariah. Joseph told the innkeepers. Angels told the shepherds through their songs. The shepherds told everyone they met. The star told the Magi. The Magi told Herod. The Bible told me, as did my mother and father, my pastors, my Sunday school teachers, my professor, and others. I've told my children and many, many other people. I'm telling you right now.

Go, tell it on the mountain. That familiar Christmas hymn is a favorite of children. They love to belt out the refrain with gusto. But sometimes these days the story becomes more of a listening story than a telling story. You have heard the story many, many times. But how often do you go and tell it—on the mountain, or anywhere, for that matter?

### II.

Back in the day, telling was very important. Even if people could read, there weren't many books lying about. Books were expensive. Telling the story, especially history, was important and trusted.

"I will tell about the LORD's mercies, about the praises of the LORD, about all that the

LORD has done for us” (Isaiah 63:7, EHV). Isaiah wants the story of God’s love and salvation to be known to the world. He wants to tell everyone what God has done. To do this, he looks to the past—he looks to history, “His story.”

“Go, tell it on the mountain.” To tell the story you have to *know* the story. Look at “His story.” Study the Bible. Learn about God’s grace taught in Bible history. Do you really know the story—the whole story? It starts back in a garden called Eden.

The story of God’s grace and salvation is a personal one. There is a personal story of how God has worked in your life. He wants to be your personal Savior, not just someone who’s birth announcement you have memorized from Luke 2. He wants you to know why you needed saving, how he saved you, and why he wanted to save you. Your story—and my story—aren’t all that glamorous.

Isaiah says: “I will tell...about his great goodness to the house of Israel, which he did for them according to his abundant compassion, and according to his great mercy” (Isaiah 63:7, EHV). Israel’s story wasn’t glamorous, either. Isaiah mentions God’s goodness, compassion, and mercy to the house of Israel.

The People of Israel got to see, up close and personal, the goodness of God. Again and again he showered his blessings on them. But even with firsthand experience of who God is and the great things he was doing for his people, many would turn their backs on God’s goodness. He wasn’t doing what they wanted, when they wanted it. He was acting in ways that were beyond their understanding. Rather than just accept that he was their loving God who promised them everything, they walked apart from God.

Telling the story of failure is an important part of the telling. Israel failed God. Over and over.

Every individual from every generation fails God. Over and over.

God’s great goodness and abundant compassion and great mercy continue to be shown to his people, even in the face of their faithlessness. This is the story Isaiah knew needed to be told.

### III.

“In all their anguish he had anguish, and the Angel of his Presence saved them” (Isaiah 63: 9, EHV). God does not have changing moods or emotions like human beings have. Still, the Bible describes his deep feelings for his people in terms we can understand.

Deep down, the conscience knows there is a God and that we are accountable to that God. Deep down every human being understands evil. Evil causes anguish. Sin fills God’s people with anguish. God understands the anguish of his people. God understands that we had no hope on our own of making ourselves right with him.

The story grows. What Isaiah tells of the goodness of the Lord grows. The Lord sent the Angel of his Presence. “Angel of his Presence” refers to Jesus, who was to come.

“In his love and in his pity he himself redeemed them, and he took them up and carried them all the days of old” (Isaiah 63:9, EHV). In telling the great things God has done, Isaiah gets to the root of it all. The kinsman redeemer.

God made provisions in Old Testament law for a kinsman redeemer. Typically, the kinsman redeemer became necessary when a family had become destitute. Hard times had come upon them to the point that it was necessary for the family to make some difficult choices. Among the choices might be to sell some land that was to remain in the same family forever, according to God’s plan for the nation of Israel.

The kinsman redeemer was a relative who would step in and agree to buy the property back. Either he would buy it initially, recognizing that it was essentially a gift to his destitute relatives, or he would buy their land back from the current owner. His actions would mean that the property rights would be preserved for future generations of that family.

The sinful actions of Adam and Eve destroyed the relationship we were to have as a family with God. Hard times left us destitute. The original right of inheritance was completely out of reach. Jesus took the roll of kinsman redeemer. He cared enough about us to restore our precious relationship with the Heavenly Father. The price he paid was far higher than any earthly monetary sum: it was his holy, precious blood, and his innocent sufferings and death.

Jesus redeemed us as the kinsman redeemer. He has taken us up and carried us, and will continue to carry us.

#### IV.

“I will tell...” So began Isaiah in today’s Old Testament lesson. He looked back into the history of the people of Israel to tell the story of how God had dealt generously and lovingly with his people in the past, and he pointed to the coming of the Angel of his Presence who would be the kinsman redeemer who would finish the job.

As we near the end of the old year, look back. Many things have happened in this past year. Some have been good, others not so good. Perhaps the past year is a bit too close to put things into context. Looking back further into the past, perhaps you will see how God was guiding and directing you through the bad times, or perhaps preparing you for challenges that were yet to come.

In all things, bad and good, we are to look back and be reminded of God’s grace. He has dealt with the most challenging thing of all—our sin.

Remembering his abundant compassion and great mercy in providing our salvation, we can tell everyone what he has done.

The shepherds who were the first on the scene to worship the Savior couldn’t help but go and tell others about Jesus. They returned to their homes, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told by the angels.

What a privilege it is to have opportunities to tell others the story of the Christchild who was born to die, but lived to tell about it. God bless you as you go and tell. Amen.