



Sermon delivered by  
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“What to Say?”  
(Isaiah 40: 1-11)

Saying the right word at the right time is not always easy. What is a lot easier is to say the wrong word at the wrong time. And yet, the easiest thing may be to say nothing at all, but to fall silent, to be speechless. I have witnessed more than once the moment when someone should have said *something* but said nothing, at least not what should have been said. In today’s culture, I remain surprised at how hesitant some Christians are to employ the greeting, *Merry Christmas*, for fear of offending. Instead, some prefer the safer route by wishing friends and neighbors a “Happy Holiday” or “Season’s Greetings,” both of which leave much to be desired when it comes to Christmas and the meaning of Christ’s birth.

Now, stay with me because I am taking us back to Palm Sunday. St. Luke’s account of Palm Sunday tells us that Jesus’ disciples greeted Him with songs of praise, not so unlike what we are about, today. They sang, *Blessed is the King Who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest heaven!* That sounds a lot like Christmas, doesn’t it? In response, the Pharisees looked at Jesus, and in no uncertain terms they told Jesus to silence His disciples: *Teacher, order Your disciples to stop singing.* To which Jesus replies, *If my disciples stopped singing, the very rocks and stones would break into song.* You see, some things are **not** meant to be kept quiet. Some things are meant to be made known, to be proclaimed, to be sung, to be made very, very public. One of the Christmas songs we sing is, *Go, Tell It on the Mountain.* That hymn is a bold proclamation of faith. It pulls no punches about the meaning of Christmas. Christmas is news that must be proclaimed. *Go, tell it on the mountain, over the hills and everywhere that Jesus Christ is born!* Not “Happy Holidays,” not “Season’s Greetings,” but the Eternal has been born. The extraordinary has become the ordinary, and that calls for celebration. We are called to make such news known! What God has done for the sake of the world demands that we *Go, tell it on the mountain* because this world needs to know that kind of good news. What is seen and heard on the news, all the violence, all the conflict, all the hate, *all of that* pales to the news God has given us in Jesus

Christ. Christ is the news, and in Jesus Christ God has rescued and redeemed the world from all the violence, all the conflict, all the hate, and that is why we refuse to remain silent, not just at Easter, not just at Christmas, but *all* the time.

Long ago, the Spirit of God told the prophet Isaiah to go public with what God was planning to do for the life of the world. The Spirit told Isaiah to cry out, to make known, to announce God's plan for the world, and curiously the prophet responds by saying, *What shall I cry?* I have always, *always* found that response to be odd. How would you and I have responded? Surely, we would have told the news that every valley would be lifted up, and the glory of the Lord would be seen by everyone, not just by some, but by everyone. How would we have responded? More to the point, how *are* we responding?

My friends, the news of Jesus Christ is too good to be left unsaid and unspoken and unsung. Of all the words, of all the news heard today, is there any doubt that the news of Jesus Christ is THE news that needs to be spoken and sung? Now is no time to fall silent. Now is no time to hedge on what we believe. Now is no time to pretend all is right with the world and nothing more needs to be said. Now **is** the time for the church to make known what God is doing in Jesus Christ and what the risen Christ is about through the mission and witness of His church.

We have received the mantle from the prophet, and our mission and witness is not to announce "Happy Holidays" or "Season's Greetings," but to be faithful heralds of the good news that Christ is born in Bethlehem.

Two thousand years later, we know what to say and what to sing, don't we? We will tell what we believe on the mountain and over the hills and everywhere. We won't wait for the anyone or anything else to say it for us. We will proclaim that Christ is born, that Christ is risen, that Christ is our peace, the peace God knows we need, and which we sing about, today!

**Let us pray:** Holy God, inspire us to be bold in our faith, in our words and in our singing. Help us to open our lips and to fill the air with the message of *Your* news, that Christ is our peace, the peace we need, want and desire for the life of a world so loved by You through Jesus, the Saviour of the world. Amen.