Good News Brings Rejoicing
Isaiah 52:1-2, 7-12
SS Lesson for 11/30/2014

Devotional Scripture: Luke 15:8-10

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Introduction

Overview and Approach to Lesson

The lesson reviews how Good News Brings Rejoicing. The study's aim is to appreciate God's proclamation task, for which He commissioned His forgiven agents. We must accomplish His mission by proclaiming a message of good news. The study's application is to assume the commission Jesus gave us to proclaim the gospel of salvation from sin to a lost and fallen world. (Adapted from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary).

Key Verse: Isaiah 52:7

7 How beautiful upon the mountains Are the feet of him who brings good news, Who proclaims peace, Who brings glad tidings of good things, Who proclaims salvation, Who says to Zion, "Your God reigns!"

Commentary from Barnes Notes

[How beautiful upon the mountains] This passage is applied by Paul to the ministers of the gospel (see Rom 10:15). The meaning here seems to be this: Isaiah was describing the certain return of the Jews to their own land. He sees in vision the heralds announcing their return to Jerusalem running on the distant hills. A herald bearing good news is a beautiful object; and he says that his feet are beautiful; that is, his running is beautiful. He came to declare that the long and painful captivity was closed, and that the holy city and its temple were again to rise with splendor, and that peace and plenty and joy were to be spread over the land. Such a messenger coming with haste, the prophet says, would be a beautiful object. Some have supposed (see Campbell on the Gospels, Diss. v. p. 11, Section 3.4), that the idea here is, that the feet of messengers when they traveled in the dust were naturally offensive and disgusting, but that the messenger of peace and prosperity to those who had been oppressed and afflicted by the ravages of war, was so charming as to transform a most disagreeable into a pleasing object. But I cannot see any such allusion here. It is true that the feet of those who had traveled far in dry and dusty roads would present a spectacle offensive to the beholder; and it is true also, as Dr. Campbell suggests, that the consideration that they who were coming were messengers of peace and safety would convert deformity into beauty, and make us behold with delight this indication of their embassy. But it seems to me that this passage has much higher beauty. The idea in the mind of the prophet is not, that the messenger is so near that the sordid appearance of his feet could be seen. The beholder is supposed to be standing amidst the ruins of the desolated city, and the messenger is seen running on the distant hills. The long anticipated herald announcing that these ruins are to rise, at length appears. Seen on the distant hills, running rapidly, he is a beautiful object. It is his feet, his running, his haste, that attracts attention; an indication that he bears a message of joy, and that the nation is about to be restored. Nahum, who is supposed to have lived after Isaiah, has evidently copied from him this beautiful image: Behold upon the mountains the feet of the joyful messenger, Of him that announceth peace; Celebrate, O Judah, thy festivals; For no more shall pass through thee the wicked one; He is utterly cut off. (Nah 1:15.)

[That publisheth peace] This declaration is general, that the coming of such a messenger would be attended with joy. The particular and special idea here is, that it would be a joyful announcement that this captivity was ended, and that Zion was about to be restored.

[That bringeth good tidings of good] He announces that which is good or which is a joyful message.

[That saith unto Zion, thy God reigneth] That is, thy God has delivered the people from their captivity, and is about to reign again in Zion. This was applied at first to the return from the captivity. Paul, as has been already observed, applies it to the ministers of the gospel. That is, it is language which will well express the nature of the message which the ministers of the gospel bear to their fellow-men. The sense is here, that the coming of a messenger bringing good news is universally agreeable to people. And it the coming of a messenger announcing that peace is made, is pleasant; or if the coming of such a messenger declaring that the captivity at Babylon was ended, was delightful, how much more so should be the coming of the herald announcing that man may be at peace with his Maker?
Commentary from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator

Before airplanes, before paved streets, and before four-wheel drive, if we wanted to go up a mountain, we could ride a horse or a donkey. At some point up the mountain, the terrain would become too difficult, and we would have to walk the rest of the way. Before texting, before e-mails, and before letter writing, the usual mode of long-distance communication was by a selected message runner or courier. Therefore, if a message was to be delivered to someone who lived in the mountains, it required a great journey and was quite dangerous, given the landscape as well as wild animals. In today's well-groomed society, it is easy to picture the beautiful feet as having just received a fresh pedicure. However, our text was written in a time before hiking boots and socks. Shoes were nothing more than sandals. So, the feet were often calloused, bruised, and cut. It was a sacrifice to travel up the mountain, and few were willing to pay the price. If someone was willing to journey up the mountain, he had to have something very important to say. If you lived in the mountains, it was likely that you rarely had the opportunity to see other people at all. It was a cause for a celebration when someone came to visit. Oh, what a little encouragement will do for our spirits! My mother enjoys talking to me on the phone; however, she would much rather see me. That way she can see with her own eyes that I am OK. Isaiah speaks of the watchmen on the walls: "Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing: for they shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion" (52:8). The people will not just hear the report that the Lord has returned; they will be able to see it and experience His reign. In the twenty-first century, we no longer sojourn in quite the same manner as they did in the days before Christ. We have multiple modes of transportation and communication that make traveling to even the most difficult of places faster and easier than it ever used to be. The appeal of our feet is not as imperative as the importance of our message. Jesus said, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:19-20). Do we understand that we are carriers of the good news? Do we comprehend that we offer a message of peace? Do we know that we preach a gospel that brings freedom? We are given an opportunity every day to travel up the mountain, and it is a sacrifice. Our mountains are not literal; more often they are emotional. We live in a world that is held captive by religion, tradition, and greed. Many still have not heard the truth of Jesus Christ along with the love, the peace, and the freedom He offers. However, too often we refuse to share our message of hope for fear of ruffling feathers or stepping on toes. How beautiful are the feet of those who refused to allow our opinion of them to interfere with our need for deliverance and eternal salvation!

Lesson Introduction and Background

From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

It was April 9, 1865 (Palm Sunday), when General Robert E. Lee stepped into the parlor of the Wilmer McLean house at Appomattox Court House to surrender his Army of Northern Virginia to General Ulysses S. Grant. Following the formalities of surrender, Union soldiers in the field shouted in exultation. But Grant put a stop to that. A time of rejoicing would be allowed, but not at that particular moment. The surrender of one Confederate army didn’t mean the end of the war; there was much yet to be done. There is a certain parallel between that incomplete celebration and the end of the Babylonian exile. The remnant of Israel was allowed to return home to rebuild their society, city, and temple (Ezra 1). They would rejoice in doing so (Ezra 3:11-13; 6:16; Nehemiah 8:12, 17; 12:43), but rejoicing in the fullest sense could not occur until the Messiah came in fulfillment of all that Isaiah and other prophets predicted. As Christians, we know that we live in a “now, but not yet” situation with respect to victory. Christ has paid the penalty for our sins through the cross, and for this we rejoice. But our joy is tempered by continuing struggles with sin (1 Peter 1:6). Even so, ultimate victory is certain; future rejoicing will be boundless (Revelation 19:7).

Today’s text is part of Isaiah’s message of hope expressed to people who were yet to be exiled to Babylon (Isaiah 40-55). A voice cried for a high-way to be constructed from Babylon to Jerusalem for the return of God as king (40:3-5). Jerusalem/Zion was predicted to be the focal point of the good news (40:9). Not only Judah but also the whole Gentile world was to have occasion to rejoice (41:21-42:17). Through a series of servant songs (42:1-9; 49:1-7; 50:4-9; 52:13-53:12; 61:1-4), the prophet sketched God’s plan of redemption for the nations. It was to be God’s special servant who would rescue God’s world! In Isaiah, the term servant can refer to different persons or groups in different contexts. The nation of Israel was called to be a servant to the world, but refused (see Isaiah 42:18-24; compare 6:9, 10). In spite of that, God decided to create a new exodus for his people (43:14-21). From political oppression, God delivered his people by means of Cyrus (44:28; 45:1). That man was a servant for God’s purposes. Babylon could no longer hold God’s
people in captivity (48:20, 21). But there was to be deliverance even greater than the one that came through Cyrus—a spiritual deliverance announced in the first servant song (Isaiah 42:1-9). The servant mentioned here was prophesied not only to restore the preserved of Israel, but also to be a “light for the Gentiles” (49:6). This servant was to suffer in so doing (50:6). Rejoicing would finally come to Jerusalem when good news was announced (Isaiah 52:7-12). However, the reason for rejoicing—the basis of the great salvation, and the hope for the future—is not revealed until the servant song of Isaiah 52:13-53:12. There the “righteous servant” is predicted to “justify many, and he will bear their iniquities” (53:11). In this way the entire world would be invited to enter into the kingdom of God. A new David would rule over this kingdom (55:3, 4). This servant, whom we now know to be Jesus, would be king! This is the fitting context for our lesson, which immediately prefaces one of Isaiah’s servant songs, as it falls on this first Advent Sunday.

Major Theme Analysis

(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)

Rejoicing Because of Restoral (Isaiah 52:1-2)

1 Awake, awake! Put on your strength, O Zion; Put on your beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city! For the uncircumcised and the unclean Shall no longer come to you.
2 Shake yourself from the dust, arise; Sit down, O Jerusalem! Loose yourself from the bonds of your neck, O captive daughter of Zion!

Restoral from weakness (1)

Restoral that comes from Jesus (Phil 4:13)
13 I can do everything through him who gives me strength.

Restoral that God provides (1 Peter 4:11)
11 If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen.

Restoral that God arms us with (Ps 18:32)
32 It is God who arms me with strength and makes my way perfect.

Restoral because God is with us wherever we go (Josh 1:9)
9 Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.”

Restoral through God’s mighty power (Eph 6:10)
10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.

Restoral to keep us blameless (1 Cor 1:8)
8 He will keep you strong to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Restoral from captivity (2)

Restoral from captivity because Jesus was sent to proclaim freedom (Luke 4:16-19)
16 He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. And he stood up to read. 17 The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written: 18 "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, 19 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."
**Restoral from captivity through the grace of God (Eph 4:7-8)**

7 But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. 8 This is why it says: "When he ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men."

**Restoral from captivity because the truth of God sets men free (John 8:31-32,36)**

31 To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. 32 Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." 33 They answered him, "We are Abraham's descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?" 34 Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. 35 Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. 36 So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.

**Restoral from captivity through being set free from sin (Rom 6:22)**

22 But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life.

**Restoral from captivity through Jesus destroying the power of death (Heb 2:14-15)**

14 Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death — that is, the devil— 15 and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.

**Rejoicing Because of Good News (Isaiah 52:7-10)**

7 How beautiful upon the mountains Are the feet of him who brings good news, Who proclaims peace, Who brings glad tidings of good things, Who proclaims salvation, Who says to Zion, "Your God reigns!"
8 Your watchmen shall lift up their voices, With their voices they shall sing together; For they shall see eye to eye When the Lord brings back Zion.
9 Break forth into joy, sing together, You waste places of Jerusalem! For the Lord has comforted His people, He has redeemed Jerusalem.
10 The Lord has made bare His holy arm In the eyes of all the nations; And all the ends of the earth shall see The salvation of our God.

**Good news of peace (7-8)**

*Peace through having a mind controlled by the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:6)*

6 The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace;

*Peace through trust in God (Rom 15:13)*

13 May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

*Peace from the God of peace (1 Cor 14:33)*

33 For God is not a God of disorder but of peace. As in all the congregations of the saints,

*Peace through the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:22)*

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

*Peace through Jesus (Eph 2:14)*

14 For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility,
Peace through unity of the Holy Spirit (Eph 4:3)
3 Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.

Peace that transcends all understanding (Phil 4:7)
7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Peace that comes through faith (Rom 5:1-2)
5 Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.

Peace that comes through the kingdom of God (Rom 14:17)
17 For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit,

Good news of redemption (9)

Redemption through Jesus (Rom 3:23-24)
23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

Redemption of our bodies (Rom 8:23)
23 Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.

Redemption that Jesus became for us (1 Cor 1:30)
30 It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God — that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.

Redemption through Jesus' blood (Eph 1:7)
7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace

Redemption that is guaranteed by the seal of the Holy Spirit (Eph 1:13-14)
13 And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, 14 who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession — to the praise of his glory.

Redemption from the dominion of darkness (Col 1:13-14)
13 For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, 14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Redemption from the law (Gal 4:4-5)
4 But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, 5 to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.

Good news of salvation (10)

A salvation that God appointed through Jesus (1 Thess 5:9)
9 For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.
A salvation Jesus will bring with Him at His second coming (Heb 9:28)
28 so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.

A salvation through justification by Jesus’ blood (Rom 5:9)
9 Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through him!

A salvation that is gained through belief in Jesus (John 6:40)
40 For my Father’s will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day."

A salvation that brings eternal life (John 11:25)
25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies;

A salvation that is hidden in Jesus (Col 3:3-4)
3 For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

Rejoicing Because of Returning (Isaiah 52:11-12)
11 Depart! Depart! Go out from there, Touch no unclean thing; Go out from the midst of her, Be clean, You who bear the vessels of the Lord.
12 For you shall not go out with haste, Nor go by flight; For the Lord will go before you, And the God of Israel will be your rear guard.

Returning to righteousness (11)

A righteousness that comes through faith (Rom 3:22)
22 This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference,

A righteousness that comes from being under grace (Rom 6:12-14)
12 Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. 13 Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. 14 For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace.

A righteousness that comes from Christ being in us (Rom 8:10)
10 But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness.

A righteousness that comes from Jesus ending the penalty of sin (Rom 10:4)
4 Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.

A righteousness that is part of the kingdom of God (Rom 14:17)
17 For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit,

A righteousness that is part of the armor of God (Eph 6:14)
14 Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place,
Returning with God with us (12)

_God promises to be with us to the very end (Matt 28:20)_

20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

_The Holy Spirit will be with believers forever (John 14:16)_

16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever

_God will never forsake His people (Deut 31:6)_

6 Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the Lord your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you."

_God loves and will never forsake His faithful ones (Ps 37:28)_

28 For the Lord loves the just and will not forsake his faithful ones. They will be protected forever, but the offspring of the wicked will be cut off;

_When God is with us, there should be no fear but courage (Josh 1:9)_

9 Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go."

Conclusion and Other Thoughts

**Commentary Thoughts from Allen Ross**

_God calls His people to exchange their degraded condition for their position of rightful service (52:1,2)_

The prophet, speaking the Word of the LORD, calls for the people to respond to the call of God. The primary audience, of course, would be the exiles in Babylon who are called to step out in faith and return to their land and their service (and as we said before, Isaiah probably thought his immediate audience would go into exile and then need these words to encourage them and to call them home). Announcing such an oracle would have the impact of warning and encouragement on the immediate (eighth century) audience would be warning and encouragement—warning not to get themselves into the predicament of an exile and have to face all of this, and encouragement that if and when they did a remnant would return (as the message based on the name of the prophet’s child early declared). In other words, no matter how bad the invasion and exile might be, there was a future for Israel—they should expect to return to the land. We know what the oracle meant in Old Testament times; but what does it mean for us today? For the modern application the message could be applied on several levels: (1) just as there would have been unbelievers in Babylon who would come to faith at this call, so too today people might respond to the message (this or any message about the future fulfillment of the promises) and leave their bondage and sin and find themselves in the service of the LORD; (2) Christians who have been living under the oppression of the world (largely due to sin) and being conformed to the world may need to separate themselves and be useful in God’s service; and (3) believers need to watch and be ready for the coming of the LORD, for the passage may be again a picture of the LORD’s calling His people out of the bondage of this world to service above in the final redemption.

_Verse 1_ employs several figures in the call for an appropriate response of faith by the people. The addressee here is “Zion”—hence the feminine forms of the verbs. “Zion” is the mountain on which the temple once stood; so here it is a metonymy of subject for the people of the land who center their attention on Jerusalem. It is possible the prophet is addressing the exiles still; but it is interesting that the provenance of his oracles now shifts to the focus in the land of Israel. The first figure is “Awake”; this is an implied comparison, comparing the waking up from sleep with responding by faith to God’s Word. The idea of “awake” has been used previously in chapter 50 for responding to the Word of God, as well as in chapter 51 for the unfaithful to wake up. Here the word is repeated; the figure of repetition is used to urge the immediate response of the people. “Put on” is another comparison, linking the ideas of putting on
clothes with acting by faith (compare Ephesians 6 with its “put on the whole armor of God”). The idea means to make full use of something. Here that “something” is “strength” probably a metonymy of effect, the cause being the power of God that will give the believers the strength to do what needs to be done (recall the renewing of strength in Isaiah 40). So the point is that by faith they must respond to the Word of God and trust God to enable them to return to the land. They are called to put on their “beautiful garments.” The expression recalls the festive robes of the priests (cf. Exod. 19:14 and 28:40). Rather than be in the estate of the slave (47:1), the people will be restored to their dignified state of a holy nation and a kingdom of priests (see Zech. 3 which symbolizes this restoration by having the filthy garments removed from the priest (who signifies the nation) and clean robes and a new miter or turban given to him (which signifies the renewal to spiritual service after the exile). The explanation given in the verse is that from this time on the un-circumcised and the unclean (probably referring to the Babylonian invading armies among others) will not plunder the temple and the state and desecrate them. Of course, this promise is contingent upon their putting on the strength by faith. Unfortunately, very soon after their return the people lapsed into sin, necessitating the reforms of Ezra and Nehemiah, and even Malachi. Consequently, the un-circumcised and unclean (Seleucids, Romans, and others) did again enter and plunder. Thus, the promise of the restoration to the land and to service must await the end of the age. All the prophets continued to hold out such glorious promises; and the people had the opportunity to fulfill it, to be that generation. But as each generation failed, the people knew that their time wasn’t it—they looked for another. Further references: for the un-circumcised Babylonians, see Ezek. 44:9; for “put on” metaphor terminology, see Isa. 11:5 and 51:9; for the ultimate spiritual fulfillment of this promise that nothing unclean will enter the holy city, see Rev. 21:2,10.

Verse 2 calls for the people to depart from their bondage. “Shake yourself from the dust” is a call to end their mourning. It could be taken as an implied comparison; but if there actually were periods of mourning where real dust was applied, then metonymy of adjunct would work very well. Haggai, Zechariah, and Ezra all address the issue of whether or not the fasts from Babylon were still to be mourned when they were back in the land. So I would prefer the latter figure. The expression “Loose yourself from the bonds of your neck” would be hypocatastasis, comparing being in stocks and bondage with the general idea of exile. They were not actually in such neck-bonds. Now the people are referred to as the “captive daughter of Zion” rather than merely “Zion.” Since cities and locations are usually feminine in Hebrew, the people from Zion could easily be referred to as a daughter (collectively). The implied comparison is meant to indicate that this is the nation from Zion/Judah, what Judah produced.

The LORD will vindicate His name by delivering His people from bondage (52:3-6)

In these verses we have the reason for the LORD’s call for the people to respond by faith—there is nothing to prevent the LORD from reclaiming His people.

Verse 3 introduces the idea that when Israel went into bondage she went because of her own sin, and not because the LORD sold her for a price. Because no price was paid as Israel sold herself for nothing, no price was required to redeem her. Israel was still God’s possession. Verse 3 introduces this theme in a soliloquy of the LORD: Israel was not sold to Babylon for compensation, and so she will be redeemed without money. The adverb hinnam means “free, without cost, for nothing, for nought, gratis”; it is etymologically related to the word for “grace” and so provides a nice illustration of the meaning of grace as “freely” or “gratuitously, without a cause.” But here the adverb simply means “for nothing, for no cost.”

Verse 4 provides two illustrations for the people. The nation had gone down into Egypt, and had been invaded by Assyria—in both cases they were in similar bondage, but in both cases the LORD had not been through with them. The LORD’s reasoning continues in verse 5 as the subject comes back to Babylon—now “what am I about in Babylon?” is what the LORD says. The critical problem in this verse is the verb yehelilu (yeh-lee-loo). The old translations took it as a causative idea: “make them shout,” meaning that the Babylonians made the Israelites praise their gods. All we know, though, is that they taunted them to sing the songs of Zion (Ps. 137). The more recent translations take the verb as an intensive or plural use of the stem, referring to the wild shouts of exclamation with which the Babylonian rulers praised their gods for the victory over Israel. This makes better sense with the last part of the verse, that the name of the LORD was being blasphemed. This means then that the LORD’s character was being brought into contempt, and His works credited to someone else (compare the New Testament idea of blasphemying against the Holy Spirit, meaning that the works of Jesus were credited to the power of the evil one).
Verse 6 repeats the main motivation for the reunion of Israel in her land—that they might know my name—the same idea expressed in Exodus 3 and 6 for the Exodus. By His great deliverance of Israel from bondage the LORD would make His people know His name. Here the meaning of the verb “know” must have the same idea it had in Exodus 3 and 6, “to experience the meaning” of the name. They will be convinced that Yahweh is the one and only God, and that He indeed does speak. He is not like false gods; He is actively at work to bring about His will. The fulfillment of the covenant promises of the LORD will vindicate His reputation and prove that He is completely trustworthy. All the blaspheming and mocking will be suddenly silenced.

There will be great joy over the announcement of the glad tidings (52:7-10)

Good news will be welcomed by the people (7, 8).

Verse 7 is one of the better known verses in this section of the book, thanks to its citation in Romans 10:15 (see also Nah. 1:15). Paul in that section of Romans is talking about the nation of Israel, its ultimate salvation at the end of the age as a fulfillment of the promises, and the basis of that restoration in Christ’s death. So the ultimate meaning of this passage in Isaiah concerns the Gospel of Jesus Christ, even though the immediate context refers to news of Israel’s deliverance from exile. But the parallel ideas are obvious. Here is another example of how the “near view” of a prophecy is but a shadow or preview of the “far view” (compare Psalm 118 and the prophecy of the “stone which the builders rejected” which in the Old Testament refers to Israel overlooked by empires, but in the New Testament signifies Christ rejected by the leaders). The exclamation in verse 7 (“How beautiful”) is a form of erotesis for exclaiming or declaring the prospect in the form of a question. The prophet transports himself to the future in thought and sees the people in Jerusalem (in ruins of course) joyfully welcoming the returning exiles with the exclamation that “God reigns.” The basic theological point of verse 7 is the announcement of the good news of SALVATION (i.e., deliverance from bondage in exile). The cause of that salvation is God’s power over the nations (“God reigns”); the effect of that deliverance is peace and prosperity (“peace” and “good news”). Those who come to Zion with the good news—the returning exiles—are the welcomed messengers. Their feet are beautiful, meaning their coming is wonderful. “Feet” could be taken as synecdoche or metonymy (there is often a thin line between the two figures); the latter would work better to represent the whole person who comes with the good news. The point of the verse is that the people will welcome the approach of the messenger who can declare that God is about to fulfill His promise of redemption. The same point applies to today’s preaching of the Gospel that announces there is a day of redemption coming.

Verse 8 carries the same theme further with a description of the watchmen calling and singing to one another when they make eye contact to confirm the coming home of the exiles. There is no reason not to take the “watchmen” literally in this passage; there would have always been such watchers, whether to safeguard whatever domains were there, or whether the Levites waiting for the dawn in the eastern skies so that they could begin the early morning sacrifice. This verb sapah from which we have “watchers,” is used figuratively for the prophets in Hosea 9:8; Jeremiah 6:17; Ezekiel 3:17, 33:7; and Isaiah 56:10. But I doubt that that is the best meaning for this context, for the verse talks about the watchmen seeing the return. Besides, Brown, Driver, and Briggs do not list this passage with that meaning for “watchers.”

People should break forth into praise because of the LORD’s salvation (9, 10).

Verse 9 is a call to praise the LORD for this great deliverance. People are called to praise because the “desolate places” are no longer such—in fact, waste or desolate places are being called to sing. I would take this as metonymy of subject, meaning that the people who live in the waste places (which are now no longer waste places) will sing for joy. The reason?—the LORD has “comforted” and “redeemed” His people (these two words being major themes for this section of the book). So in the future when the exile is over and the rebuilding begins, people will forget their desolation and rejoice in the power of the LORD.

Verse 10 uses a bold anthropomorphism to express the dominant power of God—“He has made bare His holy arm.” It is the idea of pushing back the mantel and exposing the arm for action. “Holy” arm means that His power is unique, incomparable. There is no “arm” like His, no power like His. It will be a mighty salvation.

God calls His people to respond to His deliverance with purity and confidence (52:11, 12)
Now, in a slight inclusion with the initial “awake, awake” we have the final “depart, depart.” Verse 11 records an address to the exiles that comes from Jerusalem (“from thence” shows that the speaker is not in Babylon), suggesting again the transporting of the prophet in his vision. Since the LORD is present in the march to the holy land, the people must be pure. They must not be defiled by unclean things. After all, they are to be restored as the kingdom of priests. If they truly believe in the LORD, they will separate from the world and follow the LORD’s call to a renewed spiritual service. Thus it is with every kind of deliverance. The prophet holds out for them the promise of divine protection. Unlike the exodus from Egypt, they will not have to go in haste, or by flight, because the LORD will lead them in the way and be their rearguard as well. Compare this text to the ending of Isaiah 40.

(Adapted from URL: https://bible.org/seriespage/announcement-comfort-redeemed-isaiah-521-12)

Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary
Sometimes we find ourselves in situations that seem hopeless, where reasons for rejoicing seem few and far between. We wonder how deliverance will come about, if at all. The problem may involve church conflicts, work difficulties, health issues—the list goes on and on. So, where is any reason for rejoicing? Romans 5:2-5, 10, 11 has the answer: Through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.... For if, while we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! Not only is this so, but we also boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation. The apostle Peter offers further reasons for joyous praise in 1 Peter 2:9: You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Obviously, Peter thinks we can be the people God wants us to be. We are indeed “a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices” (1 Peter 2:5). What a privilege! What a reason for rejoicing to the fullest! The great battle for our souls was fought and won at the cross. Peace has been declared (Romans 5:1). Like the ancient exiles who long ago had to be awakened from their spiritual sleep, “the hour has already come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed” (Romans 13:11). Rejoice!

Practical Points from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator
1. Being holy means refraining from sin, and that comes only through the Lord’s strength (Isa. 52:1-2)
2. We can always rejoice in the good news that our coming Lord reigns even now (vs. 7)
3. The Lord will return and make all things Tight; thus, we can rejoice in everything (vs. 8)
4. God’s chosen people, the Jews, should be the object of our compassion and witness (vs. 9)
5. The Lord’s work on our behalf is an opportunity to make known the salvation of God (vs. 10)
6. We can rejoice fully in the Lord only by departing from evil (vss. 11 -12)