Isaiah 62:1 For Zion’s sake I will not keep silent, for Jerusalem’s sake I will not remain quiet, till her righteousness shines out like the dawn, her salvation like a blazing torch.

So, do you have any idea who is doing the talking in this set of verses? I think that is an important question to ask. Because one of the principles of working with scripture is that one must pay attention to the context of a passage. So who is speaking here, would be very important to know. And you know it is important because clearly as you read these words what is said is important. Someone or something is going to be exulted, raised up, given a new name, praised and delighted in.

So who is speaking? Last week we heard a sermon on Isaiah 60, where we were told to be excited and enthusiastic because as that text said, **“Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you.”** You heard that the Light that is coming, that the Glory of the Lord that is going to shine upon all of us will be the Messiah, the promised Savior of the world. What is fun is how the Lord God spends that whole chapter talking about what the Savior will bring.

Then comes chapter 61. Chapter 61 starts with these words, **“The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor and the day of vengeance of our God.”** Now I will bet that most of you as you heard those words you said to yourself, “Yeah, I know those words, those words are important. Now where do I know those words from?” Let me remind you. As Jesus was on this earth, do you remember the time he went to Nazareth, the city where he grew up? He did this in the very early part of his ministry. On the Sabbath, Jesus went into the Synagogue and was invited to preach. He was given the scroll of the Prophet Isaiah and it was Isaiah 61 he read. Then he said to the people there, which caused quite a stir, **“Today, this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”** Jesus told them that Isaiah 61 was about him. That’s right, Isaiah 61 is literally a prophetic message of the Messiah, with the Messiah speaking.

Well, that Messiah keeps on speaking even into chapter 62. There is your answer. God is speaking. More specifically, it is the Messiah or Jesus who is speaking and revealing things to us in chapter 62. And what awesome words. Words of hope and excitement. Words of comfort and joy. Words that speak of coming righteousness and glory. I think you will agree that these words will prove enlightening to us. Our theme will be: **HEY, IT’S A WEDDING! 1st. Who the Bride is. 2nd. Who the Groom is.**

You can catch the flavor of this passage just by first turning your attention to verse 5. **“As a young man marries a maiden, so will your sons marry you; as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so will your God rejoice over you.”** It is in these words that we grasp the excitement and joy of a wedding. God wants us to think of what is being described as being a wedding. And who here doesn’t have a wedding somewhere near and dear to their heart? Weddings are a day of change and new life. Weddings mark a new journey often because we have now fully and clearly, for all to see, joined together with our wedded partner. And in truth, our wedding day is to be the more earnest beginning of the growth of love and companionship in our lives, each bearing with the other for the good and happiness of the other. It is to be a new life, a happy new life.

So, since this is a wedding, we want to know about the bride. I wish I had good news to begin with but I must start with what God’s Word has already declared. We will go all the way back to chapter 57:7ff so that we can hear words that fit our picture. Here is what is said of Israel there. **“You have made your bed on a high a lofty hill; there you went up to offer your sacrifices. Behind your doors and your doorposts you have put your pagan symbols. Forsaking me, you uncovered your bed, you climbed into it and opened it wide, you made a pact with those whose bed you love and you looked on their nakedness.”** What those words do is describe the people of God as prostitutes and adulterers, as those who have forsaken and turned away from the True God and his love for them. In other words, the bride is not exactly a pious and holy bride, but rather wicked, loose and adulterous in every way.

Just to make sure you grasp this truth, let me also quote from chapter 59 of Isaiah. There God further describes his people. **“But your iniquities have separated you from your God…your hands are stained with blood, your fingers with guilt. Your lips have spoken lies, and your tongue utters wicked things…their deeds are evil deeds, and acts of violence are in their hands. Their feet rush into sin, they are swift to shed innocent blood.”** I share all of this with you because I want to make sure you grasp the nature, at this point, of the bride. She is utterly wicked and stained. There is nothing at all in her or about her that is good or worthy. And then comes the chapters where God is giving his promise of the Savior, the promise of the Light coming, the Lord’s favor proclaiming Good News and redemption for his people. And with all of that comes the picture of our verses.

Our verses say of the bride, **“Her righteousness shines out like the dawn, her salvation like a blazing torch. The nations will see your righteousness, and all kings your glory; you will be called by a new name that the mouth of the Lord will bestow. You will be a crown of splendor in the Lord’s hand, a royal diadem in the hand of your God.”** Do you see the change? The bride has gone from being the most wicked to the most righteous. The bride has gone from doing evil to being filled with splendor, yes, to being a creation of beauty in the hand of the Lord. The bride has been completely changed with this wedding. Changed so that she bears a new name. Changed so that now, she will serve and be the very delight of the Lord.

I want you to know that the bride is really the Old Testament Church, the people of God who were supposed to follow and love the Lord. But they did not do that. They followed sin and got lost in its horror and disobedience. But don’t get on your high horse here. For in truth, as God’s people today, I don’t know that we are any better or more faithful than they were. In truth, all too often we are willing to turn away from the Lord and dance with the devil. All too often, in the name of some high sounding ideal like love, peace or freedom we are eager and willing to cast aside the Word of our God and walk the path of evil all the while proclaiming it good and right. We have a Nation that mourns the horror of Sandy Hook upon children and yet promotes the greater horror of abortion that makes Sandy Hook look like nothing. And how I wish all of us were innocent of disobedience and spurning of the Lord, but we are not. We neglect his worship, don’t have time for his word and spurn the service and time we definitely owe Him. In truth, even today, we are much like the bride of old that wicked bride that God would take to be his own.

And that brings us to the Groom. The groom is none other than God himself, really, God our Savior Jesus Christ. A number of times in the New Testament the Church and Jesus are referred to as the Bride and groom. The beautiful bride. The splendid bride. The bride adorned in righteousness and arrayed with glory. The bride the nations will see and acknowledge. The bride that causes the Lord our God to shout aloud about and rejoice in.

But make no mistake, the bride is not these things in herself. The bride is all of these things because of the Groom. Listen again to what the Groom will do! **“Nations will see your righteousness, and all kings your glory; you WILL BE CALLED BY A NEW NAME THAT THE MOUTH OF THE LORD WILL BESTOW. YOU WILL BE A CROWN OF SPLENDOR IN THE LORD’S HAND, A ROYAL DIADEM IN THE HAND OF YOUR GOD. No longer will you be called Deserted, or the name of your land Desolate. But you will be called HEPHZIBAH, and your land BEULAH. FOR THE LORD WILL TAKE GREAT DELIGHT IN YOU.”** As you listen to those words do you see, did you hear how everything that happens will be done to, will be given by the Lord? The Lord adorns the bride. The Lord gives the bride her righteousness. The Lord makes her splendid and filled with beauty. The Lord bestows on her a new name. Please note that Hephzibah is a word that means “my delight is in her” and Beulah is a word that means, “married!” These are really terms that tell us what the Lord our God will do for us and with us.

God has done those things in Jesus. In Jesus, because He died for our sins and was raised for our justification we have the forgiveness of sins and eternal life. In Jesus our salvation is made sure and certain, not because we are no longer sinful but rather because we no longer have our sins counted against us. The key to all of this is God’s marriage to us. That God has declared us his. That God has made us his possession and love. God has done this by his grace through Jesus our Savior.

Do you remember the words of Ephesians here? Here is what God says to husbands about their wives and their duty to them. **“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.”** Do you see how that description fits Isaiah’s words? God first gave us the example of exalting the bride, or making her a joy and delight, righteous and without blemish. And then note that verse 32 of Ephesians says, **“This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church.”** We are told that what Christ has done and is doing for the church we are to do for our brides!

And we are the Church. We are given that new name, “Christian.” And with that name we know that Christ loves and forgives us. When we stumble and fall, he is gentle and humble and with love calls us to repent and turn to him for comfort and hope. He erases our guilt, overcomes our fears, strengthens our resolve to follow him and he pours his love into us that we might love him back. Yes, Jesus has made us the beautiful bride, the shining example of his love and care. He has given us the garments of his righteousness so that we shine with the holiness and wonder of his grace. Here is the picture that Isaiah is painting. That royal wedding of Jesus to the church, that promise of hope, love, care and redemption that only God can grant and give. And he has in Jesus.

No wonder we are called upon to rejoice and be glad in Jesus. He is our Savior, our Bridegroom who has adorned us, forgiven us, and redeemed us with his precious blood. Amen.