

INI - SDG

1st Sunday in Advent

November 28, 2010

Prince of Peace Lutheran Church

Hecla, SD

Text: Isaiah 2:1-5 *The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. 2 It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be lifted up above the hills; and all the nations shall flow to it, 3 and many peoples shall come, and say: "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths." For out of Zion shall go the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. 4 He shall judge between the nations, and shall decide disputes for many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore. 5 O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the Lord.* (ESV)

Series: THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ISAIAH

Theme: I. God's Kingdom is Coming
- An exalted Kingdom
- A Kingdom for all people
- A Kingdom of peace

Dear fellow redeemed in Christ Jesus,

What do you know about the Old Testament prophets? Seems like there were a lot of them, doesn't it. Some prophets are only spoken of once or twice in the Scriptures. Other prophets are very prominent in the Old Testament, like Isaiah, Elijah, and Jeremiah. All of them had a difficult calling. God called them to bring a message to His people and usually His people didn't want to listen to what He had to say. In fact, when the LORD called Jeremiah to be His prophet He told Him at the beginning that no one was going to listen to him, yet the message needed to be spoken. Thus His prophets were not the most popular in the land. Times were so rough for Elijah that he seriously thought he was the last believer on the planet and now the King of Israel was out to kill him too.

Whoever the prophet of the LORD was, he was a prophet because he had a message from the LORD for His people. They were the preachers of the Old Testament. Most of them preached the Law and repentance to God's people when they rebelled against Him. In the very first chapter of Isaiah, we find this prophet of the LORD bringing the Law hard and heavy to the people of Judah. They needed the Law because they were a wicked and rebellious people. They mixed their worship of the one true God, with the worship of the false gods of the world. Through Isaiah, the LORD told His people that He was sick of their sacrifices and offerings. The LORD went so far as to say that His soul hated their new moons and appointed feasts (1:14). And now because of their sin and unrepentance the LORD, through Isaiah, told Judah that He would not look on them to help them nor listen to their prayers. Imagine being the man that God chose to be the bearer of that message!

Yet, Isaiah did not only preach the Law. When he did preach Law, it was to call the people of God to repentance and faith in God for the forgiveness of sins. Isaiah was also a prophet of the Gospel. Isaiah told of the good news of forgiveness and the undeserved love of God in the coming Messiah. Though Isaiah lived nearly 700 years before Jesus was born, no other Old Testament prophet has so much to say about the person and work of Jesus than Isaiah. For this reason Isaiah is often referred to as the Fifth Evangelist - along with Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. From the virgin birth to being wounded for our transgressions, the prophet Isaiah has a great deal to say about the redemptive work of our Savior Jesus.

This Sunday we are going to begin an eleven week series on the book of Isaiah entitled, "The Gospel According to Isaiah." If the Lord so wills it, during these coming weeks we will look at the various Gospel promises found in the book of Isaiah. The Gospel promise we want to examine this morning is the promise that God's Kingdom is coming. It is an exalted Kingdom, a Kingdom for all people, and a Kingdom of peace. As we begin this series we, we ask for God's blessing. We pray that He would be with us and increase our faith in Jesus as our Savior from sin. ***"O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the LORD."*** Amen.

AN EXALTED KINGDOM

Our history books tell of many great kingdoms of the world. Less than 200 years after Isaiah served as a prophet, the kingdom of Babylon would rise to prominence as King Nebuchadnezzar and his army would defeat many nations, including Judah. After Babylon, the Persian Kingdom rose to power, then the Greek Kingdom, and then the mighty Roman Empire came into existence, ruling over much of Europe, parts of Asia, and Africa. In more modern history one of the great kingdoms of this world was the British Empire. So large was the British Empire that it was the case that the sun never set on the British Empire. Somewhere in the world, the sun was shining on a British Colony.

As great as all of these kingdoms were at one time, what do they all have in common? None of them are in existence today. Though Great Britain exists, there is little, if any, Empire left. All of these once mighty kingdoms have crumbled. Yet towering over the wrecks of time is the kingdom of which Isaiah speaks of in our text. The Kingdom of God, or more specifically, the Kingdom of the Messiah. His is an exalted Kingdom.

Verse 2 of our text, ***"It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be lifted up above the hills."*** Isaiah speaks of something coming about in ***"the latter days."*** What the LORD is showing Isaiah is the Kingdom that Christ would establish. The mountain and the hill Isaiah sees is the one on which the Temple of the LORD was built in Jerusalem - Mount Zion. While Mount Zion is not the highest mountain peak in Palestine, in the latter days Isaiah sees it lifted up higher than all other mountains of the world.

What Isaiah sees is the exalted Kingdom of God, the Church. In the Old Testament the LORD would meet with His people and they would worship Him at His Temple on Mount Zion in Jerusalem. The Temple was a picture of Christ. Christ comes to His people and sets up His throne in their hearts. The Christian is a temple of the Holy Spirit.

This exalted mountain that Isaiah sees is the Church, it is Christ ruling in the hearts of His people. There is no kingdom higher than the Kingdom of God. No earthly kingdom and no spiritual kingdom is as high and lifted up as the Kingdom of God. None of the false religions of this world can atone for our sins. All those false religions can do is tell you how hard you must

work to get yourself in heaven, but can never promise heaven. They cannot promise it because you cannot earn eternal life. If we are to be saved eternally, God must do it for us. For **“God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them”** (2 Cor 5:19). God was at work in Christ to forgive us all our sins and make our relationship right with Him. In Christ God does not count our sins against us. This makes the Kingdom of God the highest of all the mountains and lifts it up higher than all the hills.

A KINGDOM FOR ALL PEOPLE

In the church basement we have a nice laminated map of the world. What will you find if you study that map? Besides the shape of land masses you will find borders. Borders which limit the size and scope of the various nations of the world. While one nation may invade another and try to expand its borders, the kingdoms of this world will always be limited. Not so with the coming kingdom of God that Isaiah saw. The kingdom of the Christ will be for all people and all nations.

The end of verse 2 and beginning of verse 3, **“All the nations shall flow to it, and many people shall come, and say: ‘Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.’”** The Kingdom of God is not just made up of descendants of Abraham, it is made up of all people of all the nations of the earth. There are Gentiles of German descent, Gentiles of British descent, Gentiles of Nigerian, Indian, and Chinese descent. Jews and Gentiles alike flow to the Kingdom of God.

Why do all nations flow to the Kingdom of God? They are drawn by the Word of God. They want God to teach them His ways and they want to walk in His ways. Is this not faith? Is this not what we desire? This is the Holy Christian Church that Isaiah sees. The Church which has a living and active faith created by the Holy Spirit. The members of the Kingdom of God are fed and nourished spiritually by the Word of God.

This is why Christ commissioned His disciples to go into all the World with His saving Gospel message. Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. He had died for the sins of the whole world - for every single man, woman, and child that had ever been born or ever would be born - and Jesus wanted all the world to know what He had done for them. **“Make disciples of all the nations,”** and **“Preach the Gospel to all creatures,”** He told His disciples. There is forgiveness and salvation for all in Christ.

And on Pentecost the message went out. Remember how on Pentecost there were men from different corners of the world hearing in their own language **“the wonderful works of God?”** (Acts 2:11) This was the very thing that Isaiah saw some 700 years earlier when God revealed to Him, **“For out of Zion shall go the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.”** This happened literally after Pentecost when the Gospel went out from Jerusalem to all nations. But it continues to happen today when the spiritual Zion and Jerusalem, the Church, spreads the Kingdom of God as it spreads the Gospel. There are no borders in the Kingdom of God. It is for all nations and all people.

A KINGDOM OF PEACE

In less than a month, we will rejoice to hear once again the message of the angels on the night of Jesus' birth. We will hear those familiar words from the multitude of angels, **“Glory to God in the highest and on earth, peace, goodwill toward men.”** (Lk 2:14) Some have

misunderstood the angels' message to mean that Jesus came to bring peace on earth. If that were the case, isn't it odd that Jesus Himself says, ***“Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword.”*** (Mt 10:34) The Word of Jesus will cause divisions in homes between family members. No, as long as there is sinners on earth there will be no peace.

While Jesus did not come to bring peace on earth, He did come to bring peace. John 14:27, ***“Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”*** The peace Jesus gives is a peace that this world knows nothing about. It is the peace of sins forgiven. It is the peace of a conscience freed from guilt and shame. It is peace between God and man. All through Jesus. Through His death, which paid for our sins, and His resurrection from the dead, we have true, lasting, eternal peace. Another and possibly better translation of what the angels said on the night Jesus was born is this, ***“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased.”*** (ESV) Peace for the people of God.

This is precisely what Isaiah saw in the coming Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God is not involved in physical confrontations and warfare. The Kingdom of God is a kingdom of peace where weapons of warfare - swords and spears - are beaten into agricultural tools - plowshares and pruning hooks. This is the peace that Jesus brings. The peace of sins forgiven and the peace of God which surpasses all understanding.

When we talk with one another we hear each others words, we don't see each others words. But when God talked with His prophets, like Isaiah, they saw His words. And what a sight these words of the LORD to Isaiah must have been! Isaiah saw a coming kingdom that was exalted above all others. He saw a kingdom which would be a blessing for all the people of the earth as God sent a Savior for all people. And he saw a kingdom of peace. May we ever continue to go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths! May Christ continue to rule us by His gracious good favor! Amen.