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St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749
Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
November 16, 2014
23rd Sunday Pentecost

Scripture Lessons: 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11, Matthew 24:1-14
Hymns: 242; 604; 755; 309

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord
and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: Isaiah 63:1-9

Who is this who comes from Edom,
With dyed garments from Bozrah,
This One who is glorious in His apparel,
Traveling in the greatness of His strength?—
“I who speak in righteousness, mighty to save.”
2 Why is Your apparel red,
And Your garments like one who treads in the winepress?
3 “I have trodden the winepress alone,
And from the peoples no one was with Me.
For I have trodden them in My anger,
And trampled them in My fury;
Their blood is sprinkled upon My garments,
And I have stained all My robes.
4 For the day of vengeance is in My heart,
And the year of My redeemed has come.
5 I looked, but there was no one to help,
And I wondered
That there was no one to uphold;
Therefore My own arm brought salvation for Me;
And My own fury, it sustained Me.
6 I have trodden down the peoples in My anger,
Made them drunk in My fury,
And brought down their strength to the earth.”
7 I will mention the lovingkindnesses of the Lord

And the praises of the Lord,
According to all that the Lord has bestowed on us,
And the great goodness toward the house of Israel,
Which He has bestowed on them according to His mercies,
According to the multitude of His lovingkindnesses.

8 For He said, "Surely they are My people,
Children who will not lie."

So He became their Savior.

9 In all their affliction He was afflicted,
And the Angel of His Presence saved them;
In His love and in His pity He redeemed them;
And He bore them and carried them
All the days of old. (NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth.
Amen.

In Christ Jesus, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: The world is very evil.

Some days that is so obvious we can't help but comment on it. Turn on the news and one hears all about man's inhumanity to man. Sin not only surrounds us, but is often celebrated. When many in the world defend the evil affections of mankind, children of God find the evil not only disgusting, but a shameful burden upon our society, and our own lives. At times it is even turned against us, that we are evil for not embracing the sinful and spiritually dangerous lifestyle choices that others make.

However, there are other times when we are so seduced by the lusts and greed of this world and swept along with many corrupt values that surround us, not only when we are out in the world, but even invade our homes through the technology of mass communication and social media. In this way also the evil of this world is oppressive as it presses upon our reason with its deceptive rationalizations and allurements.

Where does the child of God turn for deliverance? We turn to the promises of our God. He promises to be with us and to send His

angels to guard and protect us. He promises that the Spirit will continue to strengthen our faith as long as we continue in His Word and Sacrament, and He promises to come again on the Last Day to judge the world in righteousness, and to receive us to Himself, delivering us for all eternity from the evil of this present world.

This leaves us with a sense of eager anticipation --

THEME: Looking for the Day of Our Redemption

Isaiah knew that anticipation of deliverance. Isaiah knew the oppression of evil, and how it had corrupted his own country, and how the faithful had suffered because of the evil. He was given the message of judgment that would befall Judah, and how they would be destroyed by armies of Babylon under the direction of ruthless Nebuchadnezzar. All this was to come upon the country he loved in days yet to come. But Isaiah also received the message of deliverance that was to come. Not only the message of the return from captivity after seventy years, but visions of the greater deliverance that would come at the end, when the Lord would return. That is where our text begins, Isaiah seeing the coming of the victorious Lord among His people. It causes the prophet to ask, "Who is this?" as he sees someone approaching Judah from Edom. Isaiah presents for us --

I. The Coming of the Righteous Lord.

So Isaiah presents to us this image:

Isaiah 63:1 Who is this who comes from Edom,
With dyed garments from Bozrah,
This One who is glorious in His apparel,
Traveling in the greatness of His strength?—
"I who speak in righteousness, mighty to save."

In this vision Isaiah sees someone coming from Edom, and from Bozrah, one of the strongholds considered to be impenetrable by the Edomites. This individual is glorious in apparel and His strength is evident. His power is great to behold. But who is He? Who is this individual whose glorious garments are mysteriously dyed?

The answer is significant. He does not present His name, and yet His identity as the Lord is clear. He is the One who speaks in righteousness. He is the One who is mighty to save. **He is the Lord, the righteous judge!**

It is important for us to understand that all His ways are righteous. Righteousness defines the Lord. There is no injustice possible with the Lord. **That means that sin must be addressed.** It cannot and will not be simply ignored. By the way, we are not only talking about the sin of this wicked world. **We are talking about your sin and my sin too!** We need to remember that as wicked as the world is, so we also are thoroughly sinful. We must confess with the Prophet Isaiah, **“We are all like an unclean thing, And all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags; We all fade as a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, Have taken us away”** (Isaiah 64:6).

It would be only right and natural for us to quake with fear at the thought of the Lord approaching in His glory and His almighty power as Judge of all the earth. However, the Lord gives us hope of life and salvation when He continues to say that He who comes is mighty to save! When Jesus came into the world in His incarnation He did not come to destroy us in our sin and wickedness. He did come to take care of our sin, to address the matter of sin for us since we ourselves are fully incapable of satisfying divine justice before a holy and righteous God. Recall the words which Jesus spoke to Nicodemus, **“God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved”** (John3:17).

Yes, this Man whom Isaiah saw would come first as Savior, as our Redeemer from sin and death, that all who believe in Him might be saved at His second coming. Jesus expressed it so clearly for the Pharisee Nicodemus who had learned to trust in his own works of righteousness, but came to believe and have life in Jesus’ name. He heard Jesus’ blessed assurance: **“He who believes in Him is not condemned;”** But Nicodemus also heard about the sad fate of those who would not believe; **“but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God”** (John 3:18). And that is the message of the next portion of Isaiah’s vision.

II. The Day of the Lord's Vengeance

Isaiah 63:2-6 Why is Your apparel red, And Your garments like one who treads in the winepress? 3 "I have trodden the winepress alone, And from the peoples no one was with Me. For I have trodden them in My anger, And trampled them in My fury; Their blood is sprinkled upon My garments, And I have stained all My robes. 4 For the day of vengeance is in My heart, And the year of My redeemed has come. 5 I looked, but there was no one to help, And I wondered

That there was no one to uphold; Therefore My own arm brought salvation for Me; And My own fury, it sustained Me. 6 I have trodden down the peoples in My anger, Made them drunk in My fury, And brought down their strength to the earth."

In the vision the question is asked about the red stains on the Man's garments. No, they are not the stains that come as a result of the grape harvest as men stomp the grapes in preparation to make wine. There was a different stomping represented by these stains, and that is the sudden destruction that shall come upon those who do not believe. Edom represents the enemies of God's people on earth, those that find pleasure in the misery of the children of God, as Edom did when Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians.

The judgment that will befall the earth will be at the hands of the Lord alone. There will be no one to assist Him in the final judgment any more than there was anyone to assist Jesus as He defeated the powers of evil in His death and resurrection. He bore the cross alone. He shed His own holy precious blood. He offered His life into death and the grave. And He rose victorious to save!

This same Jesus will come again, visibly returning in glory and great majesty to bring righteous judgment upon the earth. And all the enemies of the Lord, all those who profaned His glorious name and refused to submit to the Gospel of peace will find themselves condemned to His wrath, and the eternal destruction that was reserved for the devil and his angels. This is a horrible vision that should make us quake with fear and trembling. **Our God is a consuming fire** (Hebrews 12:29)!

Thank the Lord that we are the beneficiaries of His grace and mercy, beneficiaries of --

III. The Lord's Loving-kindness.

Isaiah's response to this vision is the prayer of the faithful:

Isaiah 63:7-9 I will mention the lovingkindnesses of the Lord
And the praises of the Lord, According to all that the Lord has
bestowed on us, And the great goodness toward the house of Israel,
Which He has bestowed on them according to His mercies,
According to the multitude of His lovingkindnesses. 8 For He said,
"Surely they are My people, Children who will not lie." So He
became their Savior. 9 In all their affliction He was afflicted, And
the Angel of His Presence saved them; In His love and in His pity
He redeemed them; And He bore them and carried them All the
days of old.

The response is one that recalls all the kindness of the Lord, and how He has always faithfully preserved and protected His people. He dealt with His people according to His mercy. His kind acts towards them are numbered in the multitudes. He loves them, and desires their salvation. He saw their affliction. And He sympathized with them; He felt their pain. The Angel of His presence saved them from the slavery in Egypt, and time and again from the enemies that attacked Israel. He knew their sin and their repeated unfaithfulness, and yet He claimed them, and owned them as His people, in spite of their sin. He knew how often they had promised faithfulness and fell again into sin, and yet in His grace declares, "They will not lie." In His love and pity He redeemed them. All this Bible history is not just a bunch of entertaining stories. This is the record of the love and faithfulness of a mighty God. Consider the wonder of His grace. He is able and willing to save. We have the assurance of His faithfulness.

Even as He carried Israel in time of old, so God is faithful to bear us up in His hands. And yes, He know our sin also. He knows how often we have promised to be faithful, and to stop the sin in our lives and how we fall once again, and yet He graciously believes us, and owns us as His children. He keeps us safe. Jesus assures us that no one shall pluck us out of His hands, or out of His Father's

hands. We have the assurance of the greatness of our God and Savior when Jesus adds this thought that He and the Father are One. They are not merely a great alliance. They are more than that. Together with the Holy Spirit these three are one God, **the God of our salvation!** His track record of the Old Testament continues in the New Testament in which we see Jesus triumph over the powers of darkness. This grace and mercy and power of the Lord to save is evident also in our times for the church at large, and in our individual lives. God is faithful! God is with us, the Lord of hosts is with us always. He has, and He will always keep us in His grace and under His protection all the days of our lives.

In the coming Judgment of our Lord, we shall be found worthy of eternal salvation, not because of the greatness of our deeds or the wonder of our glory, but because of Jesus' all atoning sacrifice and His endless mercy that guides us all along the way to our heavenly home. He shall come again, and **"we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is"** (1 John 3:2)!

When we think of the coming judgment, in faith we are led to think of Jesus' coming in the terms expressed by Paul who declared in the confidence of faith:

2 Timothy 4:8 Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.

The Lord the righteous Judge! That concept does not bring fear and trembling to the heart of the believer. For us it is the proclamation of our final redemption when we too shall receive with the Apostle Paul our own crown of righteousness. How is this possible? Jesus has secured it for us by bearing our sins in His own body on the cross. Our debt is paid. A righteous Judge cannot ask for anything more! The Lord our righteous Judge has accepted that payment made in our behalf. On the last Day we who love His appearing shall wear the crown of Christ's righteousness as we pass through the heavenly gates into our eternal home.

AMEN.

And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.