

INI

St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749
Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
November 19, 2017
Saints Triumphant Sunday

Scripture Lessons: 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Matthew 25: 1-13
Hymns: 20; 609; 613; 313:2

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

Sermon Text: Isaiah 52:1-6

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!

³ For thus says the LORD: "You have sold yourselves for nothing,
And you shall be redeemed without money."

⁴ For thus says the Lord GOD:

"My people went down at first Into Egypt to dwell there;

Then the Assyrian oppressed them without cause.

⁵ Now therefore, what have I here," says the LORD,

"That My people are taken away for nothing?"

Those who rule over them Make them wail," says the LORD,

"And My name is blasphemed continually every day.

⁶ Therefore My people shall know My name;

Therefore they shall know in that day

That I am He who speaks: 'Behold, it is I.'" (NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

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

In Christ Jesus, God our Savior, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: Snatching victory from the jaws of defeat!

That is what our text is all about this morning. Isaiah was a prophet that lived about a hundred years before the Babylonian captivity that would befall Judah. The times of which Isaiah prophesied throughout most of his book were hard times, times of judgment at the hands of a cruel nation under the rule of a sadistic and vicious king. The judgment that was to befall Judah because of their sin was going to be dreadful and bloody. While we think of the captivity of the Jews in a foreign land for seventy years as a severe judgment, Isaiah, and then again later Jeremiah, spoke of those people as the fortunate ones because their lives were spared. Most of the people Judah were brutally murdered. Most of the people of power and influence were brought before Nebuchadnezzar and summarily executed. Those are the jaws of defeat, a defeat that ultimately came upon the people of Judah because of their persistent idolatry and their refusal to truly repent and turn away from their sin, a people that God had once called His own.

In our text Isaiah goes forward from that crushing and brutal defeat to days of deliverance by the Lord. While the people were totally without power against the might of Babylon God was not, and so Isaiah foretold of the Lord snatching victory from the jaws of defeat. –

Our text had a great message for its first audience, the remnant that needed hope and the promise of deliverance while they spent those years in captivity. We are the secondary audience for these words, and they also contain a wondrous message of hope and deliverance for Christians today who still live in a world that is often oppressive toward Christians, and hostile to the gospel of Christ. Through Isaiah the Lord calls out to us even as He called out to the Jews in captivity: “Wake up!”

THEME: Open Your Eyes to the Victory.

I. Celebrate Your Liberty in Christ.

Isaiah 52:1-2 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!

The people of Isaiah's day who were faithful to the Lord got the message right away. It is my prayer that we do also. The Lord is presenting a wakeup call with these opening words.

I think we all have found ourselves groggy and inattentive at different times in our lives. It may be that it was just that kind of a dreary day, or maybe we failed to get adequate rest the previous night. Maybe we have such a pat routine in life, and we are so used to things going the same way, and not always in our favor that we fail to recognize when something is different, a *good* different. This is true in our family lives, in our work lives, and I assert most definitely in our spiritual lives.

It is too easy for us to accept the world's reaction to the gospel and to our Christian faith and values. We expect some ridicule. As a result it becomes easy for us to hide our faith, to be quiet about our values. Then we don't catch any flack from the world, we avoid being ridiculed as backward, ignorant, bigoted, hateful, or even immoral, because the morality of the Bible is not the morality of this world.

That is not the way it's always going to be, so please **WAKE UP** to the truth of our God prevailing in this world. Instead of **hiding** your strength **put on your strength**, put on the Lord Jesus Christ! Yes, get dressed in your beautiful garments. Ditch the sad rags and put on the glad rags. You have the most glorious clothing that you can wear before the world. We sing of it in one of our favorite hymns:

“Jesus Thy blood and righteousness My beauty are, my glorious dress. Midst flaming worlds in these arrayed With joy shall I lift up my head!” (The Lutheran Hymnal 371:1)

And why should we be in such a joyous state of mind and heart? Because the Lord has declared victory over the devil and the evil of this world. Now, for those Jews caught in the Babylonian captivity this announced that the Lord would destroy their enemies and restore Jerusalem as a place for God’s people, and only God’s people. This is where it becomes apparent that this prophecy is not only looking at the return of the remnant of the Jews to their homeland, but also to the establishment of the New Testament Church and the victory over the world, for only the called of the Lord are within the gates of Zion. That the uncircumcised and the unclean will no longer come to Zion assures us that the Lord shall preserve His Church from the oppression of this world, all believers in Christ Jesus shall be secure within Zion.

The expression, “Shake off the dust.” is really a call for putting an end to mourning. The Jews were mourning the destruction of Jerusalem, mourning their own deportation, mourning the tragedy that had befallen their nation, and after a time, many were finally led to mourn their own sin and guilt.

Sometimes we also mourn for the things that we lose in this in this life, but the Lord comforts us with His love and hope. Hopefully we also are brought to repentance so that we mourn our sin. But we have a Savior who took our sins away. We have a Savior who bore our sins in His own body and endured the curse of the law in our stead. We have a Savior who died on the cross and then rose again on the third day so that we might have cause for rejoicing, not just on one Sunday each spring but every day of our lives. Shake of the dust of mourning and shake loose the chains the devil fastened around your neck enslaving you. It reminds us of Luther’s words in one of his hymns,

“Fast bound in Satan’s chains I lay Death brooded darkly o’er me.
Sin was my torment night and day, In sin my mother bore me
Yea, deep and deeper still I fell, Life had become a living hell
So firmly sin possessed me.” (The Lutheran Hymnal 387:2)

Sin doesn't possess us any longer! The chains have been broken! Why should we leave them hanging around our necks by either continuing in sin, or by failing to see the fullness of our salvation in Christ Jesus. It is now time to –

II. Celebrate the Wonder of the Lord's Salvation.

The Lord saw the forced servitude that the people were enduring and the Lord understood the cause of that servitude far better than the Jews in captivity. We read in our text:

Isaiah 52:3-6 “For thus says the LORD:

‘You have sold yourselves for nothing,
And you shall be redeemed without money.’

⁴For thus says the Lord GOD:

‘My people went down at first Into Egypt to dwell there;
Then the Assyrian oppressed them without cause.

⁵ Now therefore, what have I here,’ says the LORD,

“That My people are taken away for nothing?

Those who rule over them Make them wail,” says the LORD,

“And My name is blasphemed continually every day.””

The Lord said the Jews had sold themselves into slavery. That they had done this by their idolatry and their impenitence. They thought they had the right to do anything their evil hearts desired, and they thought that made them free. What they had actually done was enslaved themselves in a cruel slavery. Not only did they end up in captivity in Babylon but that was how they ended up enslaved to sin, death and the devil. So the Lord said that since they had sold themselves for nothing, He would redeem them without money. And so He did! His right hand and His holy arm have gotten Him the victory.

The Lord was not ignorant to what was going on. He never was, not throughout the entire history of His people. He saw their plight way back in the days of Moses when they were enslaved and oppressed by the Egyptians. In the right time and in His own way the Lord delivered Israel with a mighty hand. The Lord saw the oppression of the Assyrians, the nation that had taken away the northern kingdom of Israel, and besieged Jerusalem in the days of good King Hezekiah. He observed them in their blasphemous ways

and the Lord heard Hezekiah's prayer for deliverance, and sent His angel to kill 180,000 soldiers of Assyrians army. And so the Lord also saw all that was going on with Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians. And in *His* time the Lord brought judgment upon Babylon for their sins against Judah and many others. The Lord raised up Cyrus the Mede who ruled over the Persians and they overthrew the Babylonian empire. Then Cyrus, as directed by the Lord in prophecy written over a hundred years before Cyrus, sent the remnant of the Jews back to Judah.

Yes, the Lord saw. He saw it all, and in our text He declares, **“What have I here?”** He sees wickedness, and the Lord directs the course of history to overthrow wickedness. He saw the wickedness of Egypt; He saw the wickedness of Assyria; He saw the wickedness of Judah, He saw the cruel wickedness of Babylon, and the Lord said, **“What have I here?”** That was a call to judgment, like a parent finding a child in mischief, might declare “What have I here?” or “What’s going on here?” and everyone knows justice is about to be served!

But while that delivered the people from the hand of the Babylonians it only fixed the external symptoms of a much more serious situation. The Lord would redeem His people from the slavery of sin death and the devil, and He would do it without money, but not without cost. Peter wrote of this in his first epistle:

1 Peter 1:18-19 “You were not redeemed with corruptible things, *like* silver or gold, from your aimless conduct *received* by tradition from your fathers, ¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.”

We also were redeemed without money even though we also had sold ourselves into bondage with our sin. Sin is serious. Sin is dangerous. Sin enslaves the soul. Jesus this taught clearly when He said *“Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin.”* (John 8:34) Thanks be to God that we also have been redeemed not with silver or gold, so highly valued by man, but with something far more precious than money, the holy precious blood of Jesus. He has purchased our release from the prison house of hell. He has delivered us from the bondage of sin and death. Now that is something to celebrate. In Christ we are triumphant,

victorious over sin, and even as Jesus was victorious over the grave so we also shall rise glorious and triumphant.

This is now the foundation of our relationship with God. He initiated a new covenant not based on the law, but on grace, so then not based on the works which we have done, but all that God has done for us that He might make us His own special people zealous of good works. He has revealed Himself to us in His grace as He declares in the closing verse of our text:

Isaiah 52:6 “Therefore My people shall know My name;
Therefore they shall know in that day
That I am He who speaks: ‘Behold, it is I.’”

Now we know our God and Lord. We call Him by name even as He knows us by name. We know and are assured that not only is the Lord aware of what is going on, and able to deliver, but we know that it is the Lord who directs all things by the power of His Word. When the Lord speaks He is true to His Word, for He who speaks is no one less the great “I AM!” This is the God of our salvation. This is the God we worship and adore, and His salvation is the joy and hope of our lives now and forevermore.

AMEN.

“Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” Amen. (Romans15:13)