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St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749
Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
September 15, 2019
14th Sunday after Pentecost

Scripture Lessons: Hebrews 12:18-24; Luke 13:22-30
Hymns: 224; 415:1-4; 315:1-5; 309

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

Sermon Text: Isaiah 66:18-24

18 "For I know their works and their thoughts. It shall be that I will gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come and see My glory. 19 I will set a sign among them; and those among them who escape I will send to the nations: to Tarshish and Pul and Lud, who draw the bow, and Tubal and Javan, to the coastlands afar off who have not heard My fame nor seen My glory. And they shall declare My glory among the Gentiles. 20 Then they shall bring all your brethren for an offering to the Lord out of all nations, on horses and in chariots and in litters, on mules and on camels, to My holy mountain Jerusalem," says the Lord, "as the children of Israel bring an offering in a clean vessel into the house of the Lord. 21 And I will also take some of them for priests and Levites," says the Lord.

22 "For as the new heavens and the new earth Which I will make shall remain before Me," says the Lord, "So shall your descendants and your name remain.

23 And it shall come to pass
That from one New Moon to another,
And from one Sabbath to another,
All flesh shall come to worship before Me," says the Lord.

24 "And they shall go forth and look

Upon the corpses of the men Who have transgressed
against Me.
For their worm does not die, And their fire is not
quenched.
They shall be an abhorrence to all flesh.” (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: Talk it up! --

When your business is a good business you don't stay
quiet; you talk it up! Most people like to talk about the
things that are important to them, or the things that get
them excited. Sometimes that's family news; somebody
had a baby or got a new job or a promotion. Sometimes its
world news, we hear of a great disaster, and we share that
news with others. We especially like good news! Should
we be silent about good news? We don't when it's about
things that don't really matter that much. We aren't silent
about the Twins or the Vikings when they're winning.
We're ready to talk about that with anybody? Hey! Did you
see the game? Wasn't it a great game? Did you see Sano's
grand slam home run? If you got something to say go
ahead and say it! Right?

When it comes to the greatest news ever, when it comes
to something that matters more than anything else in the
world, when it comes to something as exciting as going to
heaven, then we get all tongue tied and have little or
nothing to say. That's true not just when it comes to
talking to strangers or co-workers, but when it comes to
talking to people close to us, people we care about and
love.

If you got something to say, say it! What? You're not sure
you have something to say? When it comes to God you're

not sure what you should talk about? Talk about God's glory.

There are so many people around us that are quick to talk about the false gods of this world. Sometimes people are so clueless when it comes to religion they don't see that the gods of this world are idols; idols that can't see, that can't hear, that can't respond to anything that's going on in this world. And yet everyone oos and aahs at the wisdom of the Dalai Lama, a Buddhist monk from Tibet as he makes appearances around the world.

Our God isn't like that. Our God is in heaven. He does whatever He pleases. (Psalm 115:3-8) He is the Almighty God! He has created the worlds. He has and does respond to what's going on in the world. He promises justice as well as righteousness. He sent His only begotten Son into the world that we should live through Him. Don't you see, we do have something to say, indeed something to *proclaim* to the world. In our text the Holy Spirit gives us plenty to tell others about our God and He is glorious!

THEME: Proclaim the Glory of God to the Nations.

We may begin with --

I. The Glory of His Judgment

Our text is the closing verses of the Book of Isaiah, and it is a powerful conclusion!

Isaiah 66:18-24 "For I know their works and their thoughts. It shall be that I will gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come and see My glory.

With these words God is concluding the prophecy of judgment that began in the verses preceding our text. He promises judgment would come upon the people of Israel who had turned away from serving the true God in favor of the gods of this world. Why would people do this when they knew the only true God? Because everybody else

around them was serving idols and they felt like outsiders, missing out on something. It was more fun to serve the idols of this world. The worship of idols often included spectacular sin, sin that was appealing to the coarse carnal nature of man. Besides all that the world appeared to prosper as they worshiped false gods. Many in Israel and Judah fell away, and refused to heed the Lord's calls to repentance and His warnings of impending judgment. False prophets arose that declared, "Peace, peace," when there was no peace with God! (Jeremiah 6:14) They actually thought, "God would never destroy us, destroy Jerusalem, destroy the temple."

God's response was revealing and important for us to notice for ourselves; "I know their works and their thoughts." (v.18) They weren't getting away with anything. They weren't "pulling the wool over God's eyes" by maintaining Sabbath worship and festival observance. God knew their sin and their impenitence, as well as the people's conclusion that they were going to "get away with it all." God would send such a judgment that the nations of the world would take note. This prophecy is one for which you can see a double fulfillment. At the hands of Nebuchadnezzar Jerusalem was laid flat, even the temple was razed to the ground with all its gold and treasures hauled off to Babylon. Centuries later, after the Jews rejected Jesus, the judgment of God befell Jerusalem again in such horrors at the hands of the Romans that it is still spoken of yet today. Again many, many people lost their lives and the city and the temple were destroyed. It was not coincidence that these things happened. They could only happen because the Lord not only allowed them to happen but had foretold that He would use the nations of the world to bring judgment because of Israel's sin and impenitence.

There is glory in the judgment of the Lord. There is greater glory in His grace. We should also be ready to proclaim --

II. The Glory of His Grace

Isaiah 66:19-21 I will set a sign among them; and those among them who escape I will send to the nations: to Tarshish and Pul and Lud, who draw the bow, and Tubal and Javan, to the coastlands afar off who have not heard My fame nor seen My glory. And they shall declare My glory among the Gentiles. 20 Then they shall bring all your brethren for an offering to the Lord out of all nations, on horses and in chariots and in litters, on mules and on camels, to My holy mountain Jerusalem," says the Lord, "as the children of Israel bring an offering in a clean vessel into the house of the Lord. 21 And I will also take some of them for priests and Levites," says the Lord.

God's speaks of a sign that He would set among the people. It brings to mind the sign of which Isaiah prophesied to King Ahaz.

"Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel." (Isaiah 7:14) The Lord had scattered the remnant of the people among the nations. They took the message of the gospel out into the world. They proclaimed the glory of the Lord to the gentile nations. If they hadn't spoken up, if they hadn't proclaimed the good news of life and salvation in Jesus as our crucified and risen Savior, then you and I would not know the Lord in His grace today. But they **did** proclaim the glory of the Lord and the Lord has gathered His people from the nations of the world. We need to appreciate what a wonder of grace this is for us. We are included among God's people. He has made us a part of His holy nation, His own special people. Peter wrote of this to people just like us, Gentiles who had come to faith because those who had been scattered from Jerusalem proclaimed the glory of the Lord in His grace in the gospel. And so Peter told them, and remember this includes also us: *"You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; ¹⁰ who once were not a*

people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.” (1 Peter 2:9-10)

Now Isaiah talks about the Gentile nations’ response to having received this grace of the gospel. Isaiah prophecies of the Gentile converts, people like us, bringing the brethren of the Jewish believers to the Lord. We are the ones to whom the Lord has entrusted the gospel, that we might declare the praises of Him who has called us out of darkness. **We** are the ones who should be busy proclaiming the glory of the Lord to people, and leading them back to the Lord as our thank offering for the grace we have received. We need to be careful in our attitude towards people of different false religions. It isn’t appropriate to think They have their religion, that’s good enough!

In their convention this summer the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (the ELCA) adopted a proposal declaring other religions as legitimate paths to God and life and salvation. They no longer believe, teach, or confess that Jesus is the only way to God. That is sad. They no longer see a need to proclaim the gospel or lead others to Christ. That is more than sad. That is tragic. What we are being told in our text is that the finest offering we can bring to the Lord is to confess His name to a lost sinner, and lead that lost sinner to Jesus so that he might be saved. The Lord says this is such a wonder of the grace and power of His gospel that He will call church workers and priests from among these people who before were not a people, but now are the people of God.

Finally, what lies ahead for you? Are you ready to proclaim --

III. The Glory of His Heaven?

We should be, because while we cannot yet fathom the wonder of what God has prepared for those who love Him

we are told enough of its glory, that is the glory of the Lord in heaven.

Isaiah 66: 22-24 “For as the new heavens and the new earth

Which I will make shall remain before Me,” says the Lord,
“So shall your descendants and your name remain.

23 And it shall come to pass

That from one New Moon to another,

And from one Sabbath to another,

All flesh shall come to worship before Me,” says the Lord.

24 “And they shall go forth and look

Upon the corpses of the men Who have transgressed
against Me.

For their worm does not die, And their fire is not
quenched.

They shall be an abhorrence to all flesh.”

This is such an amazing prophecy with which to close Isaiah. There will be a new heavens and a new earth which the Lord will make, and they won't be temporary. God's people will be before Him in bliss and worshipful praise. They will remain before the Lord forever. They will untouched by sin and its curse. There won't be any sorrow, pain, or death, or any disappointment. The Apostle John also reports this glory of the Lord in Revelation 21;

Revelation 21:1-5 “Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. ²Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

³And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God *is* with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them *and* be their God. ⁴And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.” ⁵Then He who sat on the throne said, “Behold, I make all things new.”

Perhaps the Glory of the Lord appears to shine brighter when we look at the alternative. Isaiah points to the alternative ending so that we might know the glory of God's grace in or eternal salvation in heaven. Their worm does not die. Their fire is not quenched. The sufferings of hell eat away. The sufferings have no end, no end. Abhorrence, living in constant hatred and abhorrence is pure misery. That is what the Lord delivered you from, when He translated you to the blessings of faith and eternal life. Treasure that grace and hold it dear, and make sure your children hold it dear so that no one deceives you to take it from you, neither dare you let it slip away by choosing the pleasures of this life. We have life forevermore, and we shall live in the midst of the glory of the Lord and live before His face forevermore.

We really have something to talk about, to share with anybody and everybody because this is good news for all. Proclaim the glory of the Lord and know His salvation.

AMEN.

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