

REPENTANCE AND REST TO ENTER THE NEW YEAR

Hear again the Word of the Lord to His Church on this Eve of the Name of Jesus:

Thus says Adonai YHWH Holy One of Israel, "in returning and rest all of you shall be saved, in quietness and in trust shall be your strength...."¹

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ

Merry Christmas, Day Seven – not much of a day for swans to swim – at least outdoors! Yet, it is a day for the Holy Spirit to give His gifts to God's Holy People through His Word. (Some people, at least since the end of the last century, think that those swans represent the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit. If you have ever been up close and personal with swans, you might think it a stretch to name them: prophecy, ministry, teaching, exhortation, giving, and mercy).² Indeed, those gifts are present wherever the Holy Spirit is operating through the Word of God.

God is giving them here tonight. From the Psalms through the Gospel reading, in chant and hymnody, the Holy Spirit has been active. He has opened your ears, hearts, and minds to that which God is declaring this night of watching and waiting. The Spirit is proclaiming the means that you are able to have godly trust and quietness. That means, He is declaring Jesus the Christ. We are hearing, once again as people are preparing to turn the calendar from December to January, from a passing 2012 to the swiftly approaching 2013.

¹ *Isaiah 30:15a.*

² *Romans 12:6-8; cf. I Corinthians 12:8-11.*

In the Church, we are already in the second season of the year. We greeted one another with “Happy New Year” about four weeks ago. In those weeks, we have heard of the coming of our Savior: into Jerusalem to save us from our sins; into His creation on the Last Day; and into His Creation in our flesh (among other teachings about Jesus coming for His people).

This evening, we are hearing of the will of the Lord to give His people repentance and rest, even when they, we, do not desire it. This is shown in the setting in the Old Testament era in which Isaiah’s words for tonight were first set. They came when God had wanted to deliver His people from their enemies, and give them rest in the land. It is to those who looked to worldly, human solutions to the trials, temptations, and tribulations which were besetting them, the Word of God says:

Thus says Adonai YHWH Holy One of Israel, “in returning and rest all of you shall be saved, in quietness and in trust shall be your strength....”³

Isaiah declares the Speaker of the words which follow. He uses God’s full Name, His title, and the Name of His Office. In four words used in the ancient Biblical Hebrew, the Great I AM is described as Lord, and Holy One of Israel. He is declared such so that those who are sinning might know Who is speaking to them, and hear again God’s conditions for salvation: 1). Turn from your self-chosen way to effect peace in your life; and 2). Take a break, rest, from being self-confident in your own work in the order of salvation.

³ *Isaiah* 30:15a.

The Lord, I AM, the Holy One of Israel calls His chosen people to know their sins against, Him, and to will to turn from them. After all, as we pray to acknowledge that God gives every good and perfect gift, and that He does defend us from all dangers and adversities. For the Israelites, that would be in terms of the foreign powers pressing in upon them.

For us, it might be worries about “the fiscal cliff,” about taxes; about whether or not our plants will survive tonight’s cold snap; or whether we will have enough household income to pay our medical bills, our charge accounts from a frenzy of gift-giving; or any number of other concerns that might be pressing in upon us. God’s Title, Name, and Office are declared that His people, you, might pause from your worrying and let Him do that which He desires to do... pour out His blessings of rest and quietness. He does so that you might have the benefits that He gives to the truly repentant – forgiveness, and the gifts he gives to those who are, under His forgiveness, able to still their heart-thoughts that He might grant them His strength. That His people might do that, He offers them the Good News, the Gospel, in His Name.

Why, the very next word after God’s Office over His people is the word that may be, and often is, translated, “in repenting.” God, having no doubt about the meaning of His Title, Name and Office, is calling His people to turn from their sins – in particular of trusting in any power or principality other than Him for salvation.

This same call to repentance stands for His people today. The Name of God, the Lord of all Creation, the One Who causes all things to be, the Holy one of His people,

rings out to call us, who would trust in worldly rulers, to repent, to return to our God. That is so even if we believe we elected them to provide for the common defense and keep our nation from full and complete bankruptcy.

God, “The Lord, I AM, the Holy One of Israel,” declares His love in offering His salvation freely to His people. He, who has the Name above all Names, has the power to save us from all the effects of sin in this fallen creation!

Look to Jesus, whose Name will be declared into the fallen creation on the eighth day of His incarnate life from the womb. His eternal role is Savior. Learn from the lesson of the Israelites, who, upon hearing the words that repeatedly called them to repentance, turned from God to try to find their own saviors!

The Lord knows that temptation to look to others for earthly hope, peace and rest runs high and deep. That is why, to help us in our watching and waiting for His return, He continues to have His Word proclaimed, even as God cries out to you this evening, in promise and warning:

Thus says Adonai YHWH Holy One of Israel, “in returning and rest all of you shall be saved, in quietness and in trust shall be your strength....”⁴ “but all of you would not!”⁵

God’s call is for faith in His Name, in His Word and Work on behalf of His people. God wills to deliver them, to deliver you, from all your enemies. God brings salvation, declared and effected in His Name alone. He calls us to not be like the Israelites twenty-seven centuries ago.

⁴ *Isaiah* 30:15a.

⁵ *Isaiah* 30:15b.

They would have none of this call to repentance. As a result, rest and quietness fled from them. Trust, in God, in His Holy Word, would not be their strength. Hear their answers to God's call to repentance and God's response:

But all of you said, "No! On horses we will speed!" Therefore all of you shall speed away. And, "Upon swift ones we will ride." Therefore shall be swift...

[A] thousand at the threat of one, at the threat of five all of you shall flee until you are left like a flagstaff on top of the mountain, like a sign on [a] hill.⁶

God turns the people's plans for their own salvation against them. The swift horses they counted upon to carry them away from their enemies, would actually carry them to swift destruction. Their self-confidence and self-worth were dashed at the threat of just one of their enemies. The voice of five foes would cause the complete desertion before their enemies. The only things remaining would be denuded signs of their former presence symbolized by a lone pine tree (the flagstaff) where a forest once stood, and a signal lifted with no one to rally around it.

Yet, even in those images, for those who hear and believe the Word of God, there is hope. That lone tree became, one day, a tree outside the walls of Jerusalem. Hanging naked upon it, stripped of all His earthly trappings save the flesh into which He was conceived and born, hung the Savior of God's people.

A lone signal, accompanied by death, stands as a memory... and it serves as a promise. On that staff, with that signal, God now draws you to Him. Here, denuded of earthly glory, is the signal you heed, the One Whose Name that you adore. Here is portrayed the means of the power of God for you to turn from sin, to walk in newness of

⁶ *Isaiah 30:16-17.*

life, to be saved in His stillness, and to trust in God for deliverance this night and Forever. You are free to go forth from here, to wait on the Lord in rest and quietness.

Happy New Year!

The peace which passes all understanding guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus

Eve of the Name of Jesus (*Lutheran Service Book* one-year series)

Isaiah 30:15-17; Romans 8:31b-39; Luke 12:35-40

December 31, 2012

Pastor Michael H. Merdhouse

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