

## GOD HAS COME TO SAVE YOU

Hear again the Word of the Lord to His Church on this fiftieth day before the Feast of the Resurrection of our Lord:

*All of you say to the anxious of heart, "Be strong!"*

*"Fear not!"*

*"All of you - behold your God!"*

*With vengeance He will come: with retribution God will come and save all of you!*<sup>1</sup>

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

In these last few days of the Epiphany Season, the Church moves from hearing about Christ's appearance to Jews and non-Jews alike to the reason for His appearance – to be our Savior. It is truly a preparation day for the day of ashes fast upon us. The Word of God for today from Isaiah helps make that transition in our ears as He makes use of the way language is put together in order to communicate God's promise of His return to save His people who are headed into captivity on account of their sins. The word order of the text, while not fully captured in most translations, the Spirit intends to use to draw His hearers into the central theme of each line. To help explain what God moves the faithful to hear, hear now a word-order translation of the first verse from our text today from Isaiah:

*All of you strengthen weak hands, and tottering knees make firm all of you.*<sup>2</sup>

The verse begins and ends with: "all of you." The Word is in this manner addressing you all who are in the Faith. He is emphasizing that He is speaking to all the

---

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah 35:4.

<sup>2</sup> Isaiah 35:3.

faithful who have been trusting in God for deliverance. That which is between the “all of you” is meant for those who see about them their world crumbling on account of sin.

While originally those words to “all of you” were meant for those who were about to lose their homeland on account of the rampant sins of God’s people, they stand true for us today. Many of us are troubled by that which we behold in our cities, our nation, this world. Governments, instituted by God to keep order, to reward the good and punish evildoers, daily prove they are working to do much the opposite. That which God established to restrain the effects of sin appears to be reinforcing morality, norms, and values which run contrary to the Word of God. Entertainment media participates in and encourages societies’ fall into immorality. From the efforts of those who attempt to teach people to think in worldly ways, corruptions of God’s Law have been codified and upheld – under the guise of individual rights – in what used to be called “civilized countries.” Against that, to those who would be faithful, God says,

*All of you strengthen weak hands, and tottering knees make firm all of you.*<sup>3</sup>

What spiritually causes such trembling? Because of the on-going ascendancy of the individual, other gods are being officially placed beside the One True God. Governments, corporations, media, and social groups all attempt to silence those who are called to declare that there is only One God: He Who sent His Son to die to bear the sins of all sinners for all time. In our land, that which was once established to keep our people from the domination of a state religion, has effectively become advocated as

---

<sup>3</sup> *Isaiah* 35:3.

promoting freedom from all but a benign civic religion. The end, then, in effect, is that the individual has become a god -- of course, as long as his or her will does not conflict with popular opinion, the State, or that being advocated by marketers whose appeals are to the sinful desires of individuals. Against that, to the faithful, God says,

*All of you strengthen weak hands, and tottering knees make firm all of you.*<sup>4</sup>

The Lord's Name is despised, even among those who would be called by His Name. His day of rest in His Word is abandoned – not by you here today perhaps, but by many in our Land – as any other activity than resting in His Word is encouraged. The First Table of the Law has been privatized, so it appears: officially by our government, media, and society in general. All of these violations of the First Table seem to have been allowed and encouraged by “we the people.” How many times have you have heard, or perhaps parroted, phrases like these: “That is fine for you to believe, but I believe...,” or, “That is true for you, but this is true for me...?” The will of the individual is socially codified, and the will of God is set aside. Today we have only named a few examples of our violation of the First Table. Against that, to those who would be faithful, God says,

*All of you strengthen weak hands, and tottering knees make firm all of you.*<sup>5</sup>

Move your consideration to the Second Table, and the sins against that Word. The primacy of the individual in our culture appears to multiply sins against those Words exponentially. Parents are daily dishonored. Many are murdered, killed by funding taking from our wages, and most of these killings are not in pursuit of God's

---

<sup>4</sup> *Isaiah 35:3.*

<sup>5</sup> *Isaiah 35:3.*

command to government to punish evil-doers. Marriage is degraded, both in form, nature, and substance. Theft is rampant – in the marketplace, in the neighborhood, in the land. Lies are sanctioned. And, coveting, well, not only has that become a spectator sport, it is encouraged as greed and the desires of the individual are held to be the supreme goal of life. (Feeling good about yourself, your land, your corporations, your government? I pray not! You need a Savior! We need a Savior! The world needs the Savior! That is the message of the first part of this day's text)! Isaiah still calls out to the faithful who recognize our need for Him to fix the sins we have participated in, sanctioned, and codified into the marketplace and law:

*All of you strengthen weak hands, and tottering knees make firm all of you.*<sup>6</sup>

How is that to be done? Will the free marketplace do it for us? Will some beneficent government do it for us? Will humans freely, of our human nature do it for us?

God still calls out to the faithful, distressed by sin in the world, by sin amongst us, by sin in ourselves. He calls us back to the center. He wants you to strengthen one another's hands spiritually with the proclamation that He promised to come, He has come, and He will come again. God desires that you make firm, through the life in the Good News, knees tottering on account of the trials of the pressures of this world, our governments, our corporations, and your own sinful flesh. God does not expect you to do all that on your own. Rather, He gives you His Word of promise as you

---

<sup>6</sup> *Isaiah 35:3.*

actually behold and acknowledge and confess the sins of the world, and your own sins.

(See how this day truly prepares us for the coming day of ashes)? God still says:

*All of you say to the anxious of heart, "Be strong!"*

*"Fear not!"*

*"All of you - behold your God!"*

*With vengeance He will come: with retribution God will come and save all of you!*<sup>7</sup>

God calls to you – by that I mean with the words for today – He calls to all the faithful over the past twenty-five centuries to know that He desires to strengthen us – to take away our fears, as we behold Him, our Savior. God calls out to His people, to those who have been shaken to their core on account of anxiousness about the things we are experiencing, that which we fear is to come in our world. He encourages us to say:

*"Be strong!"*

To those whose hearts are trembling, those are easy words to say. But, they are just words. Without the power of God, His Word, in them, they will only cause more anxiousness as we try to be strong in ourselves. In the Faith, you know that the command to, *"Be strong!"* must be rooted in something other than our efforts. We need divine strength against the immorality, poor values, and ungodly norms of our society. To be strong in the Lord, we need His strength, and as the text declares with emphasis:

*All of you say to the anxious of heart, "Be strong!"*

*"Fear not!"*

*"All of you - behold your God!"*

*With vengeance He will come: with retribution God will come and save all of you!*<sup>8</sup>

God says to those troubled on account of sin, on account of their own sins,

---

<sup>7</sup> *Isaiah 35:4.*

<sup>8</sup> *Isaiah 35:4.*

*"Fear not!"*

More words, more command: more Law. How can you fear not when you know how bad this world is, how bad you are?

Consider the command, *"Fear not!"* and how God so often has inspired those words to be used in His Scriptures. *"Fear not!"* is the Word of God that He gives to the faithful whenever He personally appears, or when He sends His spirit messengers.

*"Fear not!"* was spoken to Abraham; to Hagar; to Isaac; to Jacob. Those times were to be called to mind by the first hearers of today's words of encouragement in a world full of sin, in a land full of sin, in the faithful who daily discovered sin in themselves.

*"Fear not!"* spoken to New Testament believers, also brings with its command remembrances of the angels' words. That phrase was spoken to Zechariah, to Mary, to Joseph, to the shepherds at Jesus' birth, and lastly from God to John who witnessed Jesus as the resurrected, ascended and ruling Lord of the Universe. From the words which remove fear, the encouragement of the prophet continues for God's faithful, yet anxious people:

*"All of you - behold your God!"*

See Him here. How weak His hands must have been when the nails pierced them. How tottering His knees were as they strained to help Him draw each breath. How contorted they would have been by the affixing of His feet to the wood of the cross. How anxious of heart He is recorded to have been as the Father looked away from Him as He hung in your sins, my sins, and the sins of the whole world.

*"All of you - behold your God!"*

He paid the price demanded for any and all breaking of each one of those holy words engraved in stone. God's grace for sinners is manifest even in the words the prophet uses, *"All of you - behold your God!"* That cry goes out to those who are sinning in fearing, trembling and anxiousness – all trespasses against the whole counsel and Law of God. Here you behold your God fulfilling the prophecy:

*With vengeance He will come: with retribution God will come and save all of you!*<sup>9</sup>

Long ago, in the time of Isaiah, the faithful looked forward to the day of God's vengeance and retribution. In time, a few beheld the price God paid to effect those things. They beheld the Christ dying in sin, not His sin, but in our sins.

We New Testament believers know that we are living in the times of God's vengeance and retribution. We believe that Jesus has come, has saved us by taking the full wrath of God upon Himself: that we need not die in it. In this place, we hear a reminder of that each Divine Service, in the exhortation, or admonition, to communicants. From that reminder that Christ has saved us, by shedding His blood into death, on a cross, we hear that the wrath of God, sin, death, and hell itself have, in Christ, no longer any eternal hold on us.

Then, from the fruits of the crucifixion of our Lord you receive His gifts.

Your reception of them in the Faith declares that you believe that the retribution of God

---

<sup>9</sup> *Isaiah 35:4.*

has taken place for all you have ever done, or will ever do, to offend Him and His Holy Word. You confess that to be true because you have heard and believe these words:

*Then shall be opened eyes of blind men and ears of the deaf men unstopped.<sup>10</sup>  
Then will leap like (a) hart lame man, and sing tongues of mute. For they will  
break forth in desert, waters, and streams in arid places...<sup>11</sup>*

Today, in the Gospel, you have heard again another eye-witness testimony of Jesus fulfilling many of those words. Most of you know of other recorded instances of those prophecies being fulfilled by Jesus. To reinforce that, beginning with the first Wednesday in Lent, many of you will weekly hear of Jesus performing signs, miracles, and wonders. They show Who He is, and why He was brought to a mortal end. It is from those realities, culminating on the cross, that we await in the Faith the Last Day, when these words will be eternally true for all those who are of the Faith:

*And will become the burning sand into pools and thirsty ground into springs of waters, (the) haunt of jackals, where each found its resting place, (there will be) the grass for reeds and rushes.<sup>12</sup>*

This fallen world will be restored to purity. That which is, even now, so full of sin, will be purified. And so we, from the promise just heard, continue to say, "Come, Lord Jesus and complete our salvation!" For we know that God has come to save you!

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

Quinquagesima (Lutheran Service Book one-year series)

Isaiah 35:3-7; I Corinthians 13:1-13; Luke 18:31-43

February 10, 2013

*Pastor Michael H. Merchouse*

**Soli Deo Gloria**

---

<sup>10</sup> *Isaiah 35:5.*

<sup>11</sup> *Isaiah 35:6.*

<sup>12</sup> *Isaiah 35:7.*