

March 10, 2013  
Lent 4

*"Surely God Is My Salvation"*

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### **ISAIAH 12:1-6**

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*In that day you will say: "I will praise you, O LORD. Although you were angry with me, your anger has turned away and you have comforted me. <sup>2</sup> Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid. The LORD, the LORD, is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation." <sup>3</sup> With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation. <sup>4</sup> In that day you will say: "Give thanks to the LORD, call on his name; make known among the nations what he has done, and proclaim that his name is exalted. <sup>5</sup> Sing to the LORD, for he has done glorious things; let this be known to all the world. <sup>6</sup> Shout aloud and sing for joy, people of Zion, for great is the Holy One of Israel among you."*

In the iconic musical *Westside Story*, two love struck teenagers long for a place where they can be together safely without being threatened by rival gangs, the Jets and the Sharks. They wistfully sing to each other about a somewhere, a time and place where there will be peace and quiet.

Inside of all us there is this yearning for somewhere, a place where there is more peace and quiet, greater closeness and greater love. There is an ache for life the way it once was in the Garden of Eden before Paradise was lost and sin ran rampant in our world.

The word of God before us this morning speaks to us about a time and place, a day when the Lord provides his salvation for us. Chapter eleven of Isaiah describes this salvation as the wolf living with the lamb, and the leopard will lying down with the goat, and the lion eating straw like the ox. It speaks of a day when the Lord will provide a shoot from the stump of Jesse and the Spirit of the Lord will rest on him. This Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for all people. The place of his rest will be glorious. In that day people will not harm and nor destroy on God's holy mountain.

When will that day come? That day is upon us right now. Our God has provided a place for us where he loves us with an intense unfailing love, not because of anything we have done, or said or accomplished. His love is real to us. It is changing our lives at this time and this place because of the sacrifice Jesus made at the cross for sin and because he triumphantly rose from the dead. Every day of life on this earth is an opportunity to sing about this salvation in the words of this great song of Isaiah: "Surely God Is My Salvation."

#### **A song we sing every day**

"In that day you will say: 'I will praise you, O Lord. Although you were angry with me, your anger has turned away and you have comforted me.'" In the verses previous to this our God pictures his anger turning away by speaking of a time when he dry up the Egyptian sea and send a scorching wind to sweep over the mighty Euphrates River and make it so shallow you can walk across it in sandals. God's people were constantly exposing themselves to God's wrath and anger. Then the Lord heard their cries for mercy,

turned away his anger and delivered them. The God who said he was going to dry up the Egyptian sea and dry up the Euphrates River is the loving God who is dries up your sin by placing it all on his Son so you can escape his wrath.

"Although you were angry with me, your anger has turned away and you have comforted me." God had every right to be anger with his people for their unfaithfulness to him. In the beginning chapter of Isaiah he says, "Hear, O heavens! Listen, O earth! I reared children and brought them up, but the have rebelled against me." The father had every right to be anger with his son who took his portion of the inheritance and spent it in wild living. Imagine taking off with half the assets of the family farm. That was a disastrous economic blow. How do you run a farm or any business when suddenly half the assets are taken away? Instead of investing the hard earned money he spends it in wild living. When I hear God condemn his people for their rebellion, I wish I could say that I have not rebelled against the Lord. Think of all the choices you made this past week with did not put the Lord first in your life. Lord, have mercy on us. Christ, have mercy on us.

Picture yourself tied down to train track with a train barreling down on you. There is no way to escape. You are destined to a die a gruesome and painful death as the steel wheels crush you to death. So it is with sin. It puts us in a position where God must punish us. Then at the last minute someone throws a switch and the train is diverted onto a different track. That's what happened to you at the cross. God had a day. He had a certain time and place when he took your sin and transferred it on Jesus. The full fury of his wrath fell on Jesus. You were spared. The prophet Isaiah tells us, "The punishment for our peace was upon him."

When we were little children we enjoyed opening boxes of Cracker Jacks not just because of the Cracker Jacks that were a treat to eat, but also because of prizes inside. The favorite prize was the little magnifying glass. Maybe you can remember using it to concentrate the rays of the sun and burn a hole in paper or maybe even put some heat on an unsuspecting ant. Our God directed his full wrath for our sin on Jesus. The whole book of Isaiah, the whole Old Testament, and all the many sacrifices of animals in temple at Jerusalem point to the sacrifice that Jesus would make in our place.

Because of that day, that time and place, that somewhere where God provided this amazing salvation, we can live each day celebrating that blessing which is ours. We can say with Isaiah, "Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid." We don't have to hide the way Adam and Eve did when they hid themselves from God when he came to them in the cool of the day. We don't have to torment ourselves as Martin Luther once did as he tried to earn his peace with God by the life he tried to live. We don't have to live in daily uncertainty as the Muslim does when he hopes with uncertainty that Allah will be merciful and gracious. We can say, "Surely God is my salvation. I will trust and not be afraid."

How awfully miserable my life would be if the daily song of my life were, "I am my salvation." So we ask ourselves this morning, "Just how much of my salvation is dependent on God?" Is the song of your life, "God does his part and I do my part?" Last summer we sang a beautiful little song in our Star Bible Camp that still sticks with me and also some of you. Living, loving, dying, rising Jesus did it all for me." Even the faith to believe in what Jesus did is also a gift of God. The song of your life is God is my salvation from start to finish. The Revelation takes us to heaven and shows us a great multitude that no one can number

from every nation, tribe, people and language. They stand before the Lord wearing white robes and the hold palm branches in their hands. And they sing, oh how they sing and cry out with loud voices, "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb." Salvation does not belong to me. It belongs to God and he gives it to me as free gift. That is why you can be sure of where you are going when you die.

What about the struggles of life? The God who is your salvation is also your strength. "The Lord, the Lord, is my strength and my song." Because you know the past is forgiven and the future is guaranteed, this does not mean you will be free from struggles in this life. Yet we can say the present is exciting even if I have to bear a cross for Jesus because the Lord, the Lord is my strength and my song. This past week a man and woman living in the valley came home to find their twelve year old dog dead. It was still tied to a tree where it had been attacked by killer bees. The closer you walk with Jesus the more Satan will send his evil angels to attack you and torment and try to destroy your faith. With Isaiah we can say, "The Lord is my strength." With Paul we can say, "I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength."

"With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation." Ancient people loved their wells, especially if the well tapped into an underground spring which the Bible calls living water. Picture in your mind the people of a village going out each day to draw water from the well. It is some of the best tasting water in the world. It is not the stale and musty rain water from cistern. They are proud of their well as the woman of Samaria was when she sat by the well and talked to Jesus. They draw water from that well with joy.

Dear Christian, your best days of life on this earth have been those days when you have drawn water from the wells of salvation. You have dipped into God's Word and realized how much he loves you and cares about you. I recently talked with a lady who is going through serious health problems that have almost disabled here and made it impossible to work. Now she finds herself spending more time in the Word and finding greater joy in the kindness and goodness of your God. Think of the lost son coming home to a father's unconditional love. What was it like for him the next morning after the big celebration, and the day after that, and the day after that? How often did he touch the ring that reminded him of his father's love? Stand by the well, drop your bucket down, drink deeply from wells of salvation.

### **A song we want others to hear**

Now it is time to sing about the salvation that your God has provided for you so others will hear and take notice. "In that day you will say; 'Give thanks to the Lord, call on his name, make known among the nations what he has done and proclaim that his name is exalted. Sing to the Lord, for he has done glorious things; let this be known to all the world.'" God's people were known all over the world for the songs that sung in Zion in the temple of the Lord. In Psalm 137 we hear God's people say, "By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept when we remembered Zion... our tormentors demanded songs of joy: they said, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion." Maybe you have gone through times when it has been hard to sing. How different it was for Paul Silas after they were severely beaten and thrown into the inner prison. At midnight the prisoners and the jailor heard them praying and singing hymns to God. I wonder what they were singing. I think I know. They were singing about their God as the source of the salvation and the source of the strength. They sang of his

unfailing love, just as we do in every one of our worship services.

The people of this world are longing for a place where things are different, a place where there is peace and quiet and love and belonging and meaning and purpose in life. They need to hear us sing to them about our God and his salvation. They need to hear us singing with Isaiah, "Surely God is my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid." Amen.