

Epiphany 4, 2017
Will the Real Rabbi Please Sit Down
Isaiah 61 and Luke 4:16-32
St. Andrew's Church – Jacksonville, OR
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“The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God;” (Isaiah 61: 1-2).

Once again we find ourselves in the book of Isaiah, a book of prophecy where we see the ups and downs of God's chosen people as they grapple with their sinful dispositions, while simultaneously being pulled into the light of truth. Three Sundays ago I took us through some important chapters in the Book of Isaiah and we found that God deals fairly and sternly when his people choose to disobey. And we also learned that he provides great comfort and peace when these same people listen and follow his guiding commands. In today's reading, the prophet's message is good news and that should excite us because we are in the 61st chapter of Isaiah's book and there are only 5 more chapters to go...its nice to be so close to the end and to be given so much hope and promise. Can you imagine this great book of God ending with a simple, “Good luck, I warned you”? God doesn't give up does he...its we who give up and fall back. The book of Isaiah is a prophetic story of mans constant failing and God's continual and persistent assistance.

The particular chapter we are in right now is, my mind, the most uplifting and sustaining of all the prophetic books. The meek, the broken hearted, the captives and the bound of this world are given hope! God's people are going to be set free from their own transgressions and find redemption in a world that seeks to suppress them. But, wait, this is an Old Testament writing meant for the people of that day isn't it? Yes, of course it is, but the promises found in Isaiah are not limited to only the people of Isaiah's time, it is meant for all generations since it will affect all generations...hence its prophetic nature.

So, what are the prophet implications of today's reading? Listen once again to the promise; "...*he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound.*" That's what Isaiah is to do; to bring everyone together...to proclaim...to share some 'good news'! And what is that good news? I was hoping you would ask☺. "*To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord and the day of vengeance of our God!*" And the crowd goes wild!!! Why? In their very ears they just received word of the activation of the first Advent, God's imminent intervention into the affairs of mankind. You see, this 'acceptable year of the Lord' is the favor of God that will be found in the person of Jesus Christ. In Isaiah's day they are given great relief by these words...a messiah will come and it will be a time of everlasting refuge in the One who can heal all wounds, in the One who can lead us through the narrow gate. Exciting times...and yet...we are still 700 years from the fulfillment.

Have you ever stopped to think how blest we are to be alive this side of the First Advent? We have the fortunate hindsight to be able to look back and acknowledge that we live in eternal life even now! Its true! We may still die in this world, but we know that Christ has prepared a place for us so that we may be with Him and He with us. That is the promise we are graced to have through the hope found in Christ's birth and resurrection...Amen. So, let's look for a moment at the promise found in Isaiah come to life in the Gospel of Luke:

*"And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord. **And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him.**" (Luke 4:16-21).*

What just happened here? Jesus entered the Temple as he always did

and, as everyone was used to, he got up to read the scripture for the day. But, today's reading would be different...today there is something different in Jesus' actions that have caused a stir.

What actions? We can gain a great insight of what is going on from Matthew chapter 23:1-3, *"Then spake Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples, Saying The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not."*

The Scribes and Pharisees were the authority and only they could sit in Moses's Seat...a position of power. Jesus had always gotten up and read and returned to his place, a place of obscurity, (similar to what our readers do here) but apparently there was something in his actions on this day that caused everyone to stop and stare because at this point he had not yet made his claim of fulfilling the scripture. So what was it that Jesus did to warrant so much attention? After reading Isaiah's prophecy Jesus rolled up the scroll and sat down.....there must have been something different this time when Jesus took his place. You see, Jesus didn't just move back into a place of insignificance and turn the service back to the Scribes and Pharisees. No, Jewish teaching illumines that after rolling up the scroll, Jesus sat in the chair next to the pulpit which was designated for the Rabbi...Moses's chair! This was the place of authority and Jesus just sat down in a posture of proclaiming ultimate authority. This was a huge move by Jesus, a move that had never taken place before, and the reason why so many eyes are upon him.

And now, within the Temple walls...sitting in the chair of the Rabbi, Moses's chair...Jesus speaks, *"This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears."* Leaves you speechless...Jesus Christ who speaks these words in shouldered authority is the physical embodiment of these the Old Testament prophecies spoken by Isaiah 700 years before...and, as you know, some will not be happy about that. You know the rest of the story...

But we are not done! The first Advent has come, Isaiah's prophecy has been revealed in Jesus Christ and he has just claimed authority. Our Lord Jesus Christ has just proclaimed the acceptable year of the Lord in the temple...next we await the vengeance of our Lord, the Second Advent, when Christ returns as King and Judge. The Word of God, being

manifest among us, has led captivity captive and brought redemption to the world...we are safe in Christ Jesus. But sin must still be dealt with...this is the vengeance of the God.

In the book of Genesis we read, *“And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel”* (Genesis 3:15). This is between Jesus and Satan.

In Paul’s letter to the Romans we read, *“And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen”* (Romans 16:20). This is between us in Christ and Satan.

And from Luke’s Gospel we are told how powerful we are having the spirit of Christ within us, *“Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you”* (Luke 10:19).

In Christ, with Christ and through Christ, as members contained in one body which is Christ Jesus we have the power to overcome sin and pin the devil down under our feet. We were given a choice in the Garden of Eden and we failed to meet the mark...but, God had a plan and we were going to be part of it. Jesus sat in the Temple to read and proclaimed his Messiah-ship and ever since has been building up his body...and destroying Satan’s rule.

Isaiah’s prophecies have come true and we believe because we believe the witnesses and we are drawn by faith. But, let us not get too complacent in the victory while we are still in the midst of the battle. John’s prophetic visions in the book of Revelation remind us that the second advent has not yet come...*The vengeance of our God!*” We must continue to strengthen one another and seek the power from within that is Christ Jesus.

The Comforter rests in each of us. As we prepare ourselves daily in a process of continual sanctification, may we be ever mindful of the blood that was shed for us on Calvary. The gathering of ourselves together to come and worship and kneel together at the Altar of God should not be something taken lightly...it is our God-given pleasure granted by the

grace of the Almighty. We see Old Testament Bible prophecy come true in the New and we can be assured thereby that New Testament Prophecy is coming to light every day. When you next come to the Table to consume so precious a gift...remember all that Christ has done for you and what plans he still has in store.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.