

FIRST things FIRST... *Daily Devotions*

Devotional Guide for February 3-7, 2025

Offered by next week's Preacher to prepare for the message.

Monday: Feb. 3rd "The Vision Concerning Judah and Jerusalem"

Scripture: Isaiah 1:1-2

Prophets are called by God, often having visions. Sometimes, but not always, prophetic visions tell what the future will bring or foretell, but every time visions tell forth, meaning that they always speak for God, no matter if they predict the future. The prophet Isaiah's Call/Commission is not recorded until chapter six! There we'll share his encounter with God which gives Isaiah both understanding of the Lord and of the mission to which the Lord calls him. Like Paul's encounter with Jesus Christ on the road to Damascus, Isaiah's meeting with the Lord is very dramatic! We may not "prophetically" be called like an Isaiah, but we certainly are what Paul calls the "saints" [N.T. Greek, "hagios"] of God. [Eph. 1:1 & Philip. 1:1] And so as such, we are "set apart" to witness to Jesus Christ.

Q: Have you ever had a "prophetic" word from God? Do you understand your calling as a living saint? Do you witness by the words you speak and by the way you live?

Tuesday: Feb. 4th "The Mountain of the Lord"

Scripture: Isaiah 2:1-5 and 12-18

Mountains are locations of great significance throughout the Bible. Mt. Ararat was the resting place for Noah's Ark after the flood where the dove eventually returned with an olive leaf in its beak, announcing dry land. [Gen. 8:3-12] In Psalm 121 the psalmist cries out, "I lift up my eyes to the hills – from where comes my help?" Because all around on the hills he saw pagan altars! He answers himself... "My help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth." [Ps. 121:1-2] Altars to our God were built on mountains as well! God gives the ten commandments on Mt Sinai. [Ex. 19:20-20:17] Often Jesus goes up a mountain to pray alone. And His transfiguration took place upon a mountain. Mountains were believed to be points where heaven and earth met. For centuries Celtic Christians have taught about "thin places," spots where the heavenly and earthly meet, where we experience close encounters with God. Isaiah foresees the day when one holy mountain will stand supreme; a place of peace where all nations, where all peoples, will come to Zion. However, that reality arrives only after nations willingly submit to God and God's Word.

Q: Do you have a particular place to which you retreat for "quiet time?" Recall some "thin places" where you've experienced the Holy. Prayerfully thank God for those moments now.

Wednesday, Feb. 5th "God's Judgment"

Scripture: Isaiah 3:1-5, 13-26 and 4:1

Scholars have noted that every intervening judgment of God is a "day of the Lord." [Barry G. Webb, The Bible Speaks Today.] Of course, finally, an ultimate Day of the Lord shall

arrive. God is portrayed as a righteous Judge before whom leaders and elders of Judah and Jerusalem stand. God, as Judge, is on the side of the poor, who have been plundered by those leaders and their wives. And those leaders and wives benefitted, literally, richly. Words of God's condemnation are profuse! Those are cautionary words for our day as well. It is not money [riches] that is the root of much evil, rather the "love of money!" [1 Timothy 6:10] Further Timothy says that such love causes some to "wander...from faith!"

Q: We inhabit such an abundant nation. Is the temptation, then, greater here to "love" our fortunes? How do we use what we have to serve God and others? Jesus praised the widow who gave her mite, all she had! Was she not "rich" beyond understanding?

Thursday: Feb. 6th "A Planting and A Promise"

Scripture: Isaiah 4:2-6

For the remnant of God's people in Zion, here are hopeful images. Brief, but powerful, these include the "Branch of the Lord." While "the Branch" technically means the "Messiah," it won't be emphasized as such until much later in Isaiah. However, the images describe God's saving ways: land [always significant, even to this day], fruit, a visible, taste-able grace, the holy city, where David and his descendants ruled, where God's people came to Temple, the canopy an overarching sheltering protection! This implies the final encampment of God's people...as the spiritual Fred Pershing sang last month, "Deep river, my home is over Jordan; deep river, Lord, I want to cross over into campground..."

Q: How are our lives like those of God's people in Isaiah's time? What images and what promises of God throughout Scripture give you hope?

Friday: Feb 7th "Six WOES and Four THEREFORES"

Scripture: Isaiah 5:1-30

Finally: the chapter just before Isaiah's Call and Commissioning! The image is a "Song," a parable of the vineyard. Scholar Barry G. Webb's point is both true and telling: "Isaiah lives always within the tension between what will be and what is; between the glorious destiny which beckons Israel and the awful reality of its present condition." The prophet's beloved is the Lord and Israel [Judah] is the Lord's vineyard. Despite the Lord's perfect tending, the vineyard produces only worthless "wild grapes!" Six woes describe the "bad fruit," the peoples' sin. This condition reflects society during the reign of King Uzziah [Azariah]. The vineyard's destroyers will be foreign invaders, primarily Assyria, attacking at God's express command – a "WHISTLE!!" [5:26] The indignity of it all!

Q: Where do we see ourselves in Israel's story? God has perfectly tended and provided for our lives. How do we waste / corrupt all those wondrous gifts? But, God has a plan...

Sunday, February 9, 2025

Luke 5:1-11 & Isaiah 6:1-13

Pastor Aimée's message: "God's Hidden Glory"