

Friday, March 22, 2019

Smooth

Isaiah 26-27

The path of the righteous is level; O upright One, you make the way of the righteous smooth. Yes, LORD, walking in the way of your laws, we wait for you; your name and renown are the desire of our hearts. My soul yearns for you in the night; in the morning my spirit longs for you.
Isaiah 26:7-9a

The way of the righteous is smooth and level. This song, which is actually a powerful prayer that I can pray today, recognizes the power and sovereignty of God. Isaiah recalls that righteousness brings one down a smooth road. It is a choice. Peace comes only on this smooth path. As the people sought peace, they looked everywhere except to God. This caused them to ride a rough road. Choosing what was right would have allowed them to walk a level path. What is it that my soul yearns for? When I wake, is my spirit longing for the Lord? Is the glory of God's name the desire of my heart—does my heart break when His fame is cursed? Do I love to walk in His ways and truth so that my path will be smooth or have I listened to the lie that says that living for God is hard? Living in pride against God is a rough road indeed, but living according to His perfect design allows for peace and joy—even in the midst of pain. *The path of the righteous is like the first gleam of dawn, shining ever brighter till the full light of day* (Proverbs 4:18).

O, upright One, keep me from the rough road of pride and disobedience and the pain that comes from choosing sin. Please help me stay on the path of the righteous, that I may be walking close to You on the level and smooth path. Amen.

March 18 - 23, 2019

Saturday, March 23, 2019

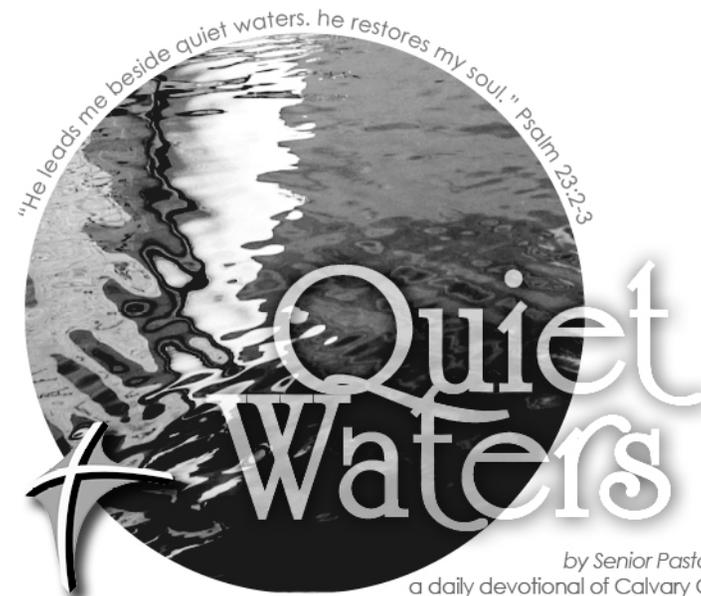
Refuge

Isaiah 28-29

You boast, "We have entered into a covenant with death, with the grave we have made an agreement. When an overwhelming scourge sweeps by, it cannot touch us, for we have made a lie our refuge and falsehood our hiding place."
Isaiah 28:15

After looking at God's sovereignty over the nations, in particular (chapters 13-23) and in general (chapters 24-27), Isaiah turns his attention to Northern Israel (Ephraim) and Judah. They have fallen into the trap of trusting in nations and their kings rather than the King. It is not natural for God to be our refuge. The natural self looks only to the things it can devise for security and strength and refuge. The natural self is totally and completely opposed to God. It is reliance upon self that Isaiah is speaking against. In Isaiah 28:15, we see the natural choice for people: finding refuge in lies and making falsehood and illusion a hiding place. Judah chose to ally itself with Egypt and trust in the drunken power of Egypt—rather than the sobering power of God—to put off the threat that was coming from Assyria. Bad choice. Egypt could no more save Judah than it could save itself. Not only was it a bad choice to trust in Egypt instead of God, it was a bad choice to boast about it. God makes it clear what will happen to their refuge and hiding place (28:17). God will not be mocked. Is He my refuge? Where do I go for a hiding place? My lips may say one thing—but what does my heart say (29:13)? My natural self will not choose God for refuge. Is my refuge, my security, my hope, and my hiding place in anything temporary?

Dear God, I long for You to be my only place of refuge. I am so drawn to provide spaces of safety for myself in temporary things, only to find them very insufficient and unable to keep me safe. Forgive me for not trusting in You alone. Amen.



by Senior Pastor Chuck Cervenka
a daily devotional of Calvary Community Church

Monday, March 18, 2019

Worship

Isaiah 18-19

In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria. The Assyrians will go to Egypt and the Egyptians to Assyria. The Egyptians and Assyrians will worship together. In that day Israel will be the third, along with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing on the earth. The LORD Almighty will bless them, saying, "Blessed be Egypt my people, Assyria my handiwork, and Israel my inheritance."
Isaiah 19:23-25

It is most surprising to come upon these verses amidst the oracles that are being spoken. I think of the situation in the Middle East and all the violence that happens there and the animosity that seems to be prevalent amidst the nations. Yet, here I read that Egypt, Assyria, and Israel will worship together, blessing the earth. Egypt will be called "my people" by God. The very nation that God called His people *from*—by telling Pharaoh to "let my people go"—will now be His people. There are ways in which this prophecy has already been fulfilled. Already, there are Christians within Egypt and Assyria who have been redeemed and adopted into the family of God, who worship Him alone. There are places in the world right now where people from each of these nations worship the one true God together. But it would seem this prophecy speaks of more. In that day... A day is coming when Jesus will reign over all the earth in the millennium. There will be a time, in that day, of great peace, and worship will be happening in all the world. This passage causes me to remember that God's plan is for His people to be a blessing to all people. Am I seeking to do whatever possible to make His name known? Do I pray for those who will one day be His people? I must be careful not to let current events distort my perspective of God's future plan.

Dear God, to think—a day is coming when Jesus will be reigning in great power and all will worship Him freely. Please Lord, remind me that Your ultimate plan is for all people and that, as one who is now one of Your people, I should be reaching out to all who are not. Amen.

Tuesday, March 19, 2019

Extreme

Isaiah 20-21

In the year that the supreme commander, sent by Sargon king of Assyria, came to Ashdod and attacked and captured it—at that time the LORD spoke through Isaiah son of Amoz. He said to him, "Take off the sackcloth from your body and the sandals from your feet." And he did so, going around stripped and barefoot.

Isaiah 20:1-2

Isaiah went about naked and barefoot for three years at God's command. This is extreme. As I read the account, part of me is amazed that God would ask this, but a bigger part, in many ways, is the fact that Isaiah did it! This man is a prophet—and an evangelist. As the oracles have shown, he grieves deeply over the fate of the lost. He has a zeal for the LORD that has not dwindled since the face-to-face encounter of chapter 6. He knows that he has been sent to tell the truth about God. He has met God and so is passionate to make God known. He is ready to go to extreme measures. While I live in a much different time and culture, I believe that God is still calling on me—and the Church—to reach out with extreme measures. I think of the extremeness of the cross. If Jesus was ready to obey the extreme mission—if Isaiah was ready to obey the extreme mission—am I? Have I so sought comfort that I am unable to move into radical obedience to the mission God has for me—even if it seems extreme? Do I care enough about the people around me who are destined for an eternity in hell that I am ready to be thought of as a fool for sharing what I know to be true?

Dear God, You know my heart. I read about Isaiah following You in extreme obedience and I wonder if I am able to have that kind of passion for those who do not know You. Am I too frightened of being thought of as a fool? Surely I need greater boldness, motivated by love. Amen.

Wednesday, March 20, 2019

Instead

Isaiah 22-23

The Lord, the LORD Almighty, called you on that day to weep and to wail, to tear out your hair and put on sackcloth. But see, there is joy and revelry, slaughtering of cattle and killing of sheep, eating of meat and drinking of wine! "Let us eat and drink," you say, "for tomorrow we die!"
Isaiah 22:12-13

The oracles include a word to Judah. The people of God have not set themselves apart. They look so much like the other nations that they must come under judgement as well. The ways that they look like the other nations are in their worship of false gods and their reliance upon the work of their own hands. They believe that they are safe within the city. They have taken steps to ensure that the walls are fortified and that they are secure. The security they feel allows them to have a life that is a party. Eating and drinking without a care about the future. They have so rested in their self-made security that they have taken on a distorted view of death. The Almighty God has called them to realize that only He can protect them, but they have chosen to trust in themselves. Therefore, there will be no atonement for their sin. The teaching in this passage is significant for the world I live in. People live in denial of death and the consequences of choosing to trust in their own wisdom, understanding, and achievements. They live as though they are in charge and that the deception of the devil is truth. They have exchanged the truth of God for a lie and so there will be no atonement for their sin. What am I tempted to call on instead of the LORD?

O LORD, how many things do we run to instead of You? Wake the Church LORD! We are complacent. We are trusting in ourselves far more than seeking You. It is true of my life as well. Please let me see all the things I am tempted to trust instead of You. Lead me to repentance. Amen.

Thursday, March 21, 2019

Marvelous

Isaiah 24-25

O LORD, you are my God; I will exalt you and praise your name, for in perfect faithfulness you have done marvelous things, things planned long ago.
Isaiah 25:1

There is a devastation that is coming to the earth. It will be complete, as described in chapter 24. As I read this chapter, my heart sinks. It is hard to think of the complete devastation that will come because of the sin of the people God created (24:6). There will be a great celebration on the day that God reveals Himself in power and sets all things right. A cry of joy will go out when at last Satan—and all those who have chosen to serve him—will finally be judged and sentenced. All the ends of the earth will sing out, "Glory to the Righteous One" (24:16). All will cry out because of the faithfulness of God and the marvelous things that He has done—things planned before the dawn of time. We will be living forever in the presence of God, without the presence of sin, with all who have been adopted into His family, in the rooms that have been prepared for us—living true life as originally designed. It is hard not to get excited as I think about all that is involved in this promised future. And yet... And yet, like Isaiah, my heart aches for those who will miss out (24:16-18). There will come a day of great rejoicing and celebration in the presence of the marvelous God. I long for that day—but I ache for those who will miss out for all eternity and will be forever tormented.

O LORD, how I long for the day when at last sin is finally defeated and I stand with all the saints in Your presence declaring Your magnificence with a new perspective. I will see You in all Your glory and I will exalt You and praise Your name. And yet, my heart breaks for those who have not yet been set free—and especially for those who never will. Who am I, God, that You would have allowed me to know You? I bow before Your greatness. Amen.