

The Weekly Word
September 17-23, 2018

Isaiah took me on a fruitful journey this week. I hope you have a deep experience, too.
Happy reading...

Grace and Peace, Bill

To hear the Bible read click this link... <http://www.biblegateway.com/resources/audio/>.

Monday, September 17: Isaiah 6- ...Oh, to see the Lord

I sat and wondered what it would be like to see the Lord as was Isaiah's privilege... *In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne; and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him were seraphim, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another:*

*"Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty;
the whole earth is full of his glory."*

At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke.

"Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty."

Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. With it he touched my mouth and said, "See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for."

*Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?"
And I said, "Here am I. Send me!"*

He said, "Go and tell this people... (1-9)

I imagine my heart beating wildly, fear, yes, actual FEAR mixed with reverence and awe covering me. I doubt I could speak. And when the Lord speaks I wonder if I could hear, not for lack of interest or anything like that but because I am overwhelmed.

Isaiah stood, fully cognoscente of his sin, his lack, his unworthiness. I'm sure I and any human would be there, too.

Often when I think of heaven, I think of being overwhelmed in the presence, physical, actual presence of perfection. Isaiah had a taste of that here on earth and it marked his life forever.

Oh, God, I don't know that I even dare to pray that I have an experience like Isaiah. It is too wonderful and the responsibility thereafter too great. I will pray for a sense of Your presence. I will pray for a growing sense of Your presence in and around my life from now until You bring me into your full presence. Through Christ, my Lord, I pray. Amen.

Tuesday, September 18: Isaiah 7- Man up, God is with you ...

Isaiah says in effect to Ahaz, 'Man up, God is with you.'

How often that is what God has to say to me...

When I worry about this, that or another thing, God needs to remind me, 'Man up, I am with you.'

When a witnessing situation presents itself and I stumble for words I need to hear, ‘Man up, I am with you.’

“I am with you,” are power-filled words. The God of heaven and earth, creator of all there is and ever will be, is with me. I recall at one point in Moses’ life God said he would bless Moses but would not go with him into the Promised Land. And Moses replied, “I will not go if You will not go with me (see exodus 33:15)”. The blessing of God was not enough; Moses knew he needed the presence of God!

To Ahaz God said, “I am with you”...

And we, children of the New Covenant, have the presence of God by the indwelling Holy Spirit with us all the time! What a gift. What a blessing.

“Man up today, Bill (readers add your own name), I am with You. Live like you know that!”, says the Lord.

Oh, God, may I live understanding You are with me. May I radiate Your presence and follow Your lead faithfully. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

Wednesday, September 19: Isaiah 8- Don’t take God’s grace for granted...

The last straw has been broken; Israel (the northern kingdom) will be judged, overrun by the Assyrians. For too long Israel has gone her own way. She will not listen to God’s call to return. She will not revere the Lord. God Himself will be a stumbling stone on which Israel stumbles... Judgment comes if we don’t trust and honor the Lord

The LORD Almighty is the one you are to regard as holy, he is the one you are to fear, he is the one you are to dread. He will be a holy place; for both Israel and Judah he will be a stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall. And for the people of Jerusalem he will be a trap and a snare. Many of them will stumble; they will fall and be broken, they will be snared and captured.” (13-15)

Reading this chapter, the words of Isaiah in verse 13 hit me. The Lord is the one I am to regard as holy. The Lord is the one I am to fear and dread. Recently I remember preaching the story of Ananias and Sapphira. In that passage and again today, through the words of Isaiah, I was confronted with the power, majesty and justice of God. He is to be feared. He alone is the holy and mighty one and God is not to be trifled with... ever.

For too long Israel refused to grant God His due and worship Him alone. Eventually God’s hammer fell with the sword of Assyria.

God is gracious, but God’s grace must not be taken for granted. When God calls me (us) to repent; we must repent. When God reveals our sin, our response should be ‘forgive me, Lord. Cleanse me, Lord.’ It is in those moments that we need to fall on our faces before the Lord and reach out for His forgiveness. Over and over God extended His hand to Israel but they swatted it, reaching for a false god instead.

May their error be a reminder not to do as they did. Instead accept God’s gracious invitation to confess and be forgiven...

Oh, Lord, I have not loved You as I ought or loved my neighbor as myself. I have not kept my way pure... I turn to You and reach for Your forgiveness, believing the promise of 1John 1:9, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.” Thank You for this gift of forgiveness, I pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Thursday, September 20: Isaiah 9- Lead in the right direction...

Following hard on the heels of one of the greatest prophecies in the Old Testament about the coming of Jesus (2-7), the Lord begins to describe His anger against Israel (the Northern Kingdom). God called to them... *But the people have not returned to him who struck them, nor have they sought the LORD Almighty. So the LORD will cut off from Israel both head and tail, both palm branch and reed in a single day; the elders and dignitaries are the head, the prophets who teach lies are the tail. Those who guide this people mislead them, and those who are guided are led astray. Therefore the Lord will take no pleasure in the young men, nor will he pity the fatherless and widows, for everyone is ungodly and wicked, every mouth speaks folly. Yet for all this, his anger is not turned away, his hand is still upraised* (13-17).

When I read these words, God's comment about the leaders struck me hard... *the elders and dignitaries are the head, the prophets who teach lies are the tail. Those who guide this people mislead them...* God is angry with Israel's leaders because they led Israel astray! Leaders bear the responsibility to lead rightly and will be judged harshly when they do not.

Everyone is responsible for his or her own life. However, leaders are doubly responsible. They are responsible for their own lives and also that they lead people toward deepening faith in the Lord. I remembered the words of James in the New Testament. *Not many of you should become teachers, my fellow believers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly* (James 3:1). As a pastor and teacher these combined thoughts strike a deep nerve.

Lord, am I leading people to You? Am I living faithfully before You?

Two questions we can all ask of ourselves... think about it

Guide me, O thou great Jehovah... guide me in my own daily living and guide me as I lead Your church, Your flock, Your people. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen,

Friday, September 21: Isaiah 10- Woe to those who make unjust laws ...

Often when I listen to the news I think how sad. Blacks v Whites both looking for an edge to gain over others. Lawmakers writing laws that favor the 'haves over the have nots'. Minimum wage is not a livable wage. Then in news from other lands I see those with power oppressing those without power. Clamoring to get ahead of others seems a universal human activity and putting others down along the way is just what one does.

With these thoughts as my background I read, *Woe to those who make unjust laws, to those who issue oppressive decrees, to deprive the poor of their rights and withhold justice from the oppressed of my people, making widows their prey and robbing the fatherless. What will you do on the day of reckoning, when disaster comes from afar? To whom will you run for help? Where will you leave your riches? Nothing will remain but to cringe among the captives or fall among the slain. Yet for all this, his anger is not turned away, his hand is still upraised* (1-4).

God desires a different approach. Help those who are deprived. Watch out for people who have no personal clout in the world.

It is all too easy for me to begin pointing fingers at politicians and others as I read these verses forgetting or minimizing what these words say to me! I play this game too frequently, noting others' failures rather than my own. Recognizing my fault, I lay Isaiah words upon my life... Do I dis the poor? Do I vote for people who will care for me at the exclusion of widows, orphans and the fatherless? Do I revel in my advantages while having a stone heart toward those not as fortunate? Would I legislate differently were I in a seat of power and influence?

Lord, these questions penetrate. Thank You for not allowing me to get off easily. Probe me and know me, correct any wicked way in me. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Saturday, September 22: Isaiah 11- A wonderful day is coming...

It was as if verse 9b was written in neon script on the page as I read. *For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea* (9b, see similar Habakkuk 2:14). Oh, what a day that will be, the world filled with the knowledge of the Lord.

God known... no veils, no cloaking, no twisting... only truth, the knowledge of God widely known. What joy, what wonder, what delight...

I sit imagining what this will be like, but my imagination can only go so far. I know the reality will be far greater than I can imagine.

I also know I will experience this when God greets me and leads me into eternity... Oh, the wonder and glory of that day.

*Lord, thank You for these glimpses of Your day to come. I bless and praise You through Jesus Christ, my Lord.
Amen*

Sunday, September 23, 2018, Sunday Worship

If any of my thoughts or the Bible readings spark questions send an email reply and I will do my best to answer all questions from people on the list... I will answer personal questions privately; general questions will be answered in a subsequent email installment.

If you are reading along with me from the PCOG website you can send questions or request being placed on the weekly email list by emailing Lisa at office@pcogonline.org.

Click here for a link to my sermons on the web. Sermons are generally posted within 2 days.