

The Weekly Word
September 24-30, 2018

Isaiah continues to instruct me. I hope you find his words helpful as well. Happy reading...

Grace and Peace, Bill

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

Monday, September 24: Isaiah 12- The things God has done...

In this delightful chapter of praise and joy to the Lord I wondered where I should stop to meditate. It is all so positive, so life-lifting. I read it over and felt a slight nudge toward the last verses, so that is where I landed for my deep meditation.

In that day you will say: "Give praise to the LORD, proclaim 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. Shout aloud and sing for joy, people of Zion, for great is the Holy One of Israel among you" (4-6).

I started remembering things God has done. About a month ago a ministry I am involved with had a significant fire, destroying its primary facility at its home base. While the fire was not God I could see God's hand in mitigating the loss of life and property. The fire happened just after a few visitors had exited the building to inspect the site of a new prayer chapel being built about 100 yards down the road. Their proximity to the main house meant that the fire was spotted quickly and emergency personnel were on site in about 10 minutes. The building was vacant of people so no human harm happened. And since it is a heavily wooded area, the fire personnel said that had the fire blazed for much longer without notice, the woods could easily have caught fire which could have been catastrophic for the camp and the wooded acreage surrounding the camp. So while the fire was not good, God's hand kept things from being far worse than they were. And we are hopeful that a beautiful and modern structure will rise from the ashes of the old house.

My extended family has had the joy of welcoming a new child into the world... what a joy and gift.

I could go on... to issues of health, and riches of faith. Rather than writing all I simply sat and remembered the many works of God I have witnessed. Just this week I met with a missionary friend who shared stories of conversions and much more in a very difficult land...

God is good and His blessings are new every morning. Great is Your faithfulness, O God, my father. I bless You, Lord, along with Isaiah the prophet: In that day you will say: "I will praise you, LORD. ... Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid. The LORD, the LORD himself, is my strength and my defense; he has become my salvation" (1-2). Through Christ, my Lord, I pray. Amen.

Tuesday, September 25: Isaiah 13- God's rightful judgment...

The entire chapter is God exercising His right to judge. Babylon judged will fall... men, women, children, all will be struck down.

I don't like to read these chapters. They are so different from Jesus in the New Testament. And yet the New Testament discusses the judgment of God as well. God's judgment is declared throughout the entire Bible.

Judgment is never pretty. It is a topic I would avoid but then it comes up in my Bible reading and I can avoid it no longer. Today is one of the days I must consider judgment.

The Lord will avenge sin. The Lord will punish sin. And if it were not for Jesus and His grace, I would receive God's judgment, and rightfully so.

My life is marred by sin. I deserved God's wrath, punishment and judgment. Only faith in Jesus saves me from my deserved punishment. Only faith in Jesus saves me from the fate of Babylon.

If you are reading this blog, then you should ask yourself, "Do I know Jesus? Have I confessed Him to be Lord and Savior of my life? Am I following Jesus as His disciple?" Only an honest and heart-filled 'yes' can save you from the wrath and punishment of God Almighty.

Think about it...

Oh, Jesus, I surrender to you. You alone are Lord and Savior. I believe in You. I will follow You. I will live with and for You... I pray in Your name. Amen.

Wednesday, September 26: Isaiah 14- Jesus is our safe harbor...

It amazes me how our minds make associations and connections with its thoughts. An idea here, a comment there weave our web of thoughts.

As I was reading verses 3 and 4, *On the day the LORD gives you relief from your suffering and turmoil and from the harsh labor forced on you, you will take up this taunt against the king of Babylon: How the oppressor has come to an end! How his fury has ended!* My mind connected these words with the New Testament words "Fallen, Fallen is Babylon." I knew those words were from Revelation, so I looked them up. Sure enough, Revelation 18:1-2: *After this I saw another angel coming down from heaven. He had great authority, and the earth was illuminated by his splendor. With a mighty voice he shouted: " 'Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great!' She has become a dwelling for demons and a haunt for every impure spirit, a haunt for every unclean bird, a haunt for every unclean and detestable animal.*

This chapter of Revelation pictures the judgment of the great harlot Babylon... the name for all that is vile and evil in the world, God's enemy Satan and his kingdom. The judgment spoken in Revelation 18 comes immediately before the Halleluiahs of chapter 19 and the description of the final end of God's enemy and the establishment of God's forever kingdom the new heaven and new earth of chapters 19-22.

Is God in Isaiah foretelling the destruction of earthly Babylon or spiritual Babylon? I am not certain. Either way the overarching message for me is that God will judge all that is evil. And God will establish His people forever and ever. In that day all aligned with Jesus will sing with the multitudes of God's people in glory, *"Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, for true and just are his judgments. He has condemned the great prostitute who corrupted the earth by her adulteries. He has avenged on her the blood of his servants"* (Revelation 19:1b-2).

What a day that will be... what a day that will be.

Lord, I long for Your day, that day when evil is crushed and Your new and perfect kingdom is reality. Until then, Lord, I pledge my life to You. To live for You, to obey You, and to follow You in the power of the Holy Spirit. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Thursday, September 27: Isaiah 15- Our words, thoughts, deeds, intensions, everything will be open for the Lord to see and judge...

I find no pleasure in chapters about judgment. No matter who is being judged by God, God's judgment is a frightful situation. Chapters like this are a constant and stark reminder that God judges everyone. Whether this side of eternity or at the gate to eternity, every person will be judged. Our words, thoughts, deeds, intentions, everything will be open for the Lord to see and He will judge to see if in any way we broke the law. Minor transgression or major it doesn't matter. Once the law is broken, we are lawbreakers deserving punishment and the wrath of God.

This is a frightening realization. And whenever I read about God judging some person or nation, I realize that I, too, will stand before God.

I have broken the law more times than I even know and certainly more than I could count or list. My hearing before God would not be pretty, except for the gift of Jesus, my Lord, carrying my sins on His body as He hung on the cross. Moab had no one to ransom them...frightful. As Jonathan Edwards reminded his parish, it is a frightful thing... sinners in the hands of an angry God.

Sitting here today, reading about Moab's fate, I am eternally grateful for:

- The Father's love that sent Jesus,
- Jesus dying for sinners and His invitation to believe and be forgiven, and
- The Holy Spirit who opened my eyes and heart to the truth of God's redemption through Jesus...

Jesus is the only reason I fear not God's judgment. And I say this not in a cocky way, but completely humbled by God's love and grace for me...

If you are reading this I hope you know the love of God through Jesus Christ, God's one and only Son.

Lord God, Father in heaven, thank You for Jesus and the riches of grace found in confessing Him as Savior and Lord. Thank You, Holy One, for taking the truth of Jesus and applying it to my heart. For wooing and calling me home to Jesus. I pray in the matchless name of my God, Father, Jesus, Holy Spirit. Amen.

Friday, September 28: Isaiah 16- A ray of light shining in the darkness...

In the midst of the continuing judgment on Moab, a momentary ray of light shines amidst the darkness. Verse 5: *In love a throne will be established; in faithfulness a man will sit on it— one from the house of David— one who in judging seeks justice and speeds the cause of righteousness.*

Could this be a prophecy about Jesus? That is certainly the way I read it and heard it in my heart.

I was blessed by the opening words, *In love...* reminds me of John 3:16: *For God so loved the world...* Established in love, built on faithfulness, seeking justice and speeding the cause of righteousness... that is a throne for the ages. That is Jesus, who sits on the throne of heaven and will come to judge the world in righteousness at the Father's appointed time.

Would that all nations aim for a similar goal: Established in love, built on faithfulness, seeking justice and advancing righteousness.

The last line makes me wonder what I could do, if anything, to shape my world as this verse suggests; to bathe my world in love and build it on faithfulness, to be a world that seeks justice and advances righteousness.

Lord, what can I do? What should I do to bring this world, Your world, closer to reality in my neck of the woods? I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Saturday, September 29: Isaiah 17- Dangerous bedfellows...

The chapter begins with a word against Damascus and Ephraim, which is an alternate name for the northern kingdom of Israel. *A prophecy against Damascus: "See, Damascus will no longer be a city but will become a heap of ruins. ... The fortified city will disappear from Ephraim, and royal power from Damascus... (1, 3a)*

Why when prophesying against Damascus would God include the northern kingdom? Why is God prophesying the disappearance of his northern kingdom? Because corruption has taken over and His sword will fall to cut the cancer out.

The northern kingdom has grown chummy with Damascus. As I recall, they even imported the gods of Damascus. So when God judges Damascus, Israel/Ephraim is judged as well.

This makes me think... be careful who you chum around with.

How many shows and stories have I read where friends lead others into bad experiences. Our friends, companions and associates can lead us toward or away from the Lord.

In today's reading friendship with Damascus ends in judgment for Ephraim.

As a Christ-follower I should not cloister myself from people outside the faith. After all I cannot effectively shine the light of Jesus into others lives if I don't associate with them. But at the same time, I need to guard my heart so that their misdeeds don't draw me away from the Lord.

Navigating these relational dynamics can be tricky, still they are manageable if we keep our eyes on the Lord, stay in communion with Him, and listen for the leading of the Holy Spirit along the way.

I remain duly warned to keep my eyes and heart open so that I do not allow others in my life to lead me away from Jesus, my Lord...

Jesus, teach me to rightly evaluate my relationship web. Show me how to be in the world but not of it. Also, help me to be a light for You in my relationships and in my world. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Sunday, September 30, 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.