

The Weekly Word

Nov 5-11, 2018

Isaiah continues to speak and God continues to speak through him. Happy reading...
Grace and Peace, Bill

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

Monday, November 5: Isaiah 48- If only...

This is what the LORD says— your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: “I am the LORD your God, who teaches you what is best for you, who directs you in the way you should go. If only you had paid attention to my commands, your peace would have been like a river, your well-being like the waves of the sea. Your descendants would have been like the sand, your children like its numberless grains; their name would never be blotted out nor destroyed from before me” (17-19).

If only... two convicting words.

While the Lord spoke these words to Israel, immediately I heard them in my own heart as if spoken to me. *If only you had paid attention to my commands, your peace would have been like a river, your well-being like the waves of the sea...* How often my sin, my waywardness and my self-centeredness create pain in my life and in the lives of others. If only I followed God's commands. If only... if only... my life would have fewer scars.

As I ponder this I am so grateful that God in His mercy has mitigated some consequences of my ill-founded behavior.

Lord, thank You for grace, mercy and forgiveness. My life is blessed because of You. Lord, I am praying for increased strength and will to be more attentive to Your voice so that I have less 'if onlys', and more faithfulness, to You in my life. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Tuesday, November 6: Isaiah 49- God's love...

Earlier this year my daughter gave birth to our first grandchild, a daughter. I have some favorite pictures. One captures my wife holding our granddaughter, the two of them gazing into each other's eyes. Another is my daughter cuddling her daughter. Her hand is lovingly holding my granddaughter's head... the tenderness of her hand holding her daughter is palpable. My daughter's eyes gazing at her daughter is so tender. Care, attachment and love radiate out from every pixel of this photo.

These moments and particularly the latter exploded in my thoughts as I read verses 15-16. *Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you! See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands; your walls are ever before me.*

As much love as my wife has for her granddaughter, God loves us more. As much love as my daughter has for her daughter, God loves us more. Where our human love reaches its limit, God's is limitless. *God is love* (1John 4:4&16) we are told. This is the only attribute I can recall of which we are told God is. So profound is God's love for all and particularly His people.

For God so loved the world... John writes (John 3:16)

My hunch is that we have all read or heard stories about the wonder and power of love. Exponentially greater is God's love and the wonder and power it produces in life... Today I bask in God's love.

Thank You, Lord. Bless You, God, for Your love. Through Jesus, I pray. Amen.

Wednesday, November 7: Isaiah 50- A Call to people lost...

The chapter has some natural divisions. Verse 4 marks the beginning of a new section, a song of the servant who will become prominent in the coming chapters. In the midst of the servant's words, verse 10, God extends a hand to those in darkness. *Who among you fears the LORD and obeys the word of his servant? Let the one who walks in the dark, who has no light, trust in the name of the LORD and rely on their God.*

Trust in the name of the Lord; yes, rely on God. God extends Himself to those who are lost, who are wandering in darkness. Trust. Rely on God.

This thought is reminiscent of Jesus' Word, *For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost* (Luke 19:10).

God longs for all to know Him and find their true home in Him. So, Jesus, the suffering servant, came to seek the lost and bring them home to God, the Father.

I am so thankful this is true, because Jesus sought me and found me and led me home. As John Newton penned, I was lost but now am found, was blind but now I see. (Amazing Grace).

Lord God, thank You for your amazing grace which drew me to You and saved me. I was lost but now am found... all due to Your love and Your grace and Your mercy. Through Jesus, my Savior, I rejoice in You. Amen.

Thursday, November 8: Isaiah 51- Are you listening for God?...

Even given their sad and disobedient history, God continues to call out to Israel. This chapter is an 'all points bulletin' calling Israel home. *"Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness and who seek the LORD: Look to the rock from which you were cut and to the quarry from which you were hewn; ... "Listen to me, my people; hear me, my nation: Instruction will go out from me; my justice will become a light to the nations* (1,4).

As God called over and over again to Israel, God, likewise, calls to me, to you, to all... *"Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness and who seek the LORD... "Listen to me, my people; hear me, my nation: Instruction will go out from me; my justice will become a light to the nations.*

Listen to me... am I paying attention to the Lord? Am I honestly listening to His voice or am I simply feigning interest in the Lord? Will I really follow the Lord and His word? Listening to the Lord is more than hearing His words, it is ingesting His word and following His word.

You who pursue righteousness... can that honestly and fairly be said of me? Do I pursue righteousness? Am I seeking righteousness and justice for others??? Those who know me, would they say of me, "Ahh, Bill lived for righteousness?" Would that be one of the first things they note of me????

These questions are probing. And I believe I come up wanting as I seek to answer them honestly.

Lord God, this morning's look at self is difficult. It is painful. How greatly I need a savior. How greatly, Lord, I need You. I love You, Lord God... and I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Friday, November 9: Isaiah 52- Good news...

The familiar ring of verse 7 invited my mediation. *How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, "Your God reigns!"* (7).

Immediately I recalled Romans 10:15 which quotes this verse in the context of sending people to spread the Good News of Jesus. Yes, it is beautiful when good news is spread. This was true of Jesus, the servant mentioned in Isaiah. And it is true for every one of us who advances God's name around the earth.

Next I thought about the angelic pronouncements at Jesus' birth in Luke's gospel. *But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you **good news that will cause great joy for all the people.** Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; Jesus is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."* Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, *"Glory to God in the highest heaven, and **on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests**"* (Luke 2:10-14). The Good News of Jesus will bring joy to all people.

From here my thoughts bounced to another Lukan passage Luke 4:18-19 a quote from Isaiah 61: *"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because Jesus has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. Jesus has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."* Again good news highlights the passage.

With all this about good news I sat and pondered the Good News of Jesus and all faith in Him has brought into my life. Blessings like:

Peace in times of trouble

The weight and guilt of sin lifting from my life

Never being alone in life; always knowing Jesus is with me

Guidance regularly through life

An invitation to be 'a good news sharer' with my world

Being at peace with God

I cannot imagine life without God always being present. The joy and peace promised in those words about God's Good News is true. I proclaim it. I feel it. I have experienced it.

Jesus, thank You for taking on the life of the servant and for saving me and hundreds of millions of others who confess You as Lord and Savior. In Your name Jesus, I pray. Amen.

Saturday, November 10: Isaiah 53- Jesus...

Reading Isaiah 53, I kept inserting Jesus' name in for all the references to 'he.' As I did this, the prophetic potency of this chapter became all the more clear to me.

Isaiah 53 with Jesus' name added appropriately into the text... Read it deliberately. Read it slowly. Read it intentionally. And read it again and again as God leads you...

Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? Jesus grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. Jesus had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. Jesus was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. Like one from whom people hide their faces Jesus was despised, and we held him in low esteem.

Surely Jesus took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. But Jesus was pierced for our transgressions, Jesus was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds

we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Jesus was oppressed and afflicted, yet Jesus did not open his mouth; Jesus was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so Jesus did not open his mouth. By oppression and judgment Jesus was taken away. Yet who of his generation protested? For Jesus was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people Jesus was punished. Jesus was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though Jesus had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth.

Yet it was the LORD's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the LORD makes his life an offering for sin, Jesus will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand. After Jesus has suffered, Jesus will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and Jesus will bear their iniquities. Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and Jesus will divide the spoils with the strong, because Jesus poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For Jesus bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

Thank You, Jesus. Thank You. Thank You. Amen.

Sunday, November 11, 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 Living Hope Community Church website you can send questions or request being placed on the weekly email list by emailing Lisa at office@livinghopect.org.

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