

The Weekly Word
Nov 19-25, 2018

Happy Thanksgiving week and happy reading...
Grace and Peace, Bill

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

Monday, November 19: Isaiah 60- Out of darkness into God's light...

Immediately the words of Isaiah caused connections to fire within me. *"Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD rises upon you. See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the LORD rises upon you and his glory appears over you. Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn (1-3).*

The themes of light and darkness connected with the Messianic prophecy of Isaiah 9:2. *The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned.*

In my heart I found myself reflecting upon Jesus, God's son, the light the world, Who has come. I pray that nations come to His light. I pray that people in darkness will find His light.

Thinking about people in darkness, I remember Colossians 1:13-14: *For he [God] has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.*

I was at one time a person living in darkness, under the rule and reign of the prince of darkness. But then Jesus revealed Himself to me in the witness of a friend. Then God, the Holy Spirit, began to work in me, taking the message of Jesus and making it plausible and real. As my heart accepted Jesus' Gospel, I called out to Jesus as Lord and put my faith in Him. In that moment God, according to Colossians 1:13, transported me into the kingdom of Jesus. No longer was I in the domain of the evil one, instead I am not in God's kingdom. Light has dawned and I am set free.

I know my Redeemer lives and I am forever grateful that He saved me...

Thank You, Lord God, for saving me and taking me into Your kingdom... Your kingdom of forgiveness, redemption and love. In Jesus, my Savior's name, I pray. Amen.

Tuesday, November 20: Isaiah 61- Setting people free...

Five words into this passage I thought "Jesus." And a smile grew on my face!

The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor... (Isaiah 61:1-2a).

These are the words Jesus read when He was in the synagogue recorded in Luke 4. Then after rolling up the scroll Jesus said, *"Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing"* (Luke 4:21)

Jesus is the fulfillment of the Word. Jesus was anointed to proclaim good news to the poor. Jesus proclaimed freedom to captives and release to those in darkness (wow, how this ties in with yesterday's read!!!). Jesus proclaims the year of the Lord's favor.

Jesus is the answer for the world today as the song goes.

I found myself considering Jesus... who He is and what He came to do.

Then I realized that in Jesus' name I get to do these same things as His ambassador in the world today. I get to proclaim good news, freedom, release and proclaim the year of God's favor!

What a calling... what a Savior... I get to announce to the world!

Jesus, praise be to You, my Lord and my God. You set me free and now You invite and empower me to set others free in Your name. Give me unction to do just that, I pray. Amen.

Wednesday, November 21: Isaiah 62- Nothing earned...

I realize that this word was written directly to Jerusalem, but this morning as I spent time with Jesus, I took the promises spoken to Jerusalem as a word to me.

For Zion's sake I will not keep silent, for Jerusalem's sake I will not remain quiet, till her vindication shines out like the dawn, her salvation like a blazing torch. The nations will see your vindication, and all kings your glory; you will be called by a new name that the mouth of the LORD will bestow. You will be a crown of splendor in the LORD's hand, a royal diadem in the hand of your God (1-3).

I sat imagining the ultimate vindication of the Lord, to hear His ultimate bestowal of salvation. I imagined entrance into the formal marriage feast of the Lamb and the Lord announcing my presence with a name He bestows upon me.

Not one bit of this earned in any way. It is all grace and mercy of God. The Lord God did it all. Jesus paid my ransom. The Holy Spirit brought me home.

I sit literally shaking my head at the wonder of God to save a wretch like me. God saved me... what a gift and what a calling, to be among the saved of the Lord

Bless the Lord for His good and wonderful gifts... gifts of love, mercy, grace, kindness, vindication, and a new name... a name of His choosing. A name connected to my God. Lord, may I live well as Your son, Your ambassador, Your servant. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Thursday, November 22: Isaiah 63- One grain of salt in God's saltshaker...

I found this chapter to be perplexing; I wasn't sure what the prophet was saying. I struggled to find a connection to my life. I read. I thought. I investigated more deeply. I read again.

Then like an old Polaroid picture I began to see a faint word for me. Verse 7 caught my eye. *I will tell of the kindnesses of the LORD, the deeds for which he is to be praised, according to all the LORD has done for us— yes, the many good things he has done for Israel, according to his compassion and many kindnesses.*

Before I can tell others of the kindness of the Lord, I have to acknowledge them. I sat and thought. I reviewed my life, my history, noting many of the fingerprints of God in my life.

God has been there in my life in so many ways and at so many times. His kindnesses have left a mark over and over again.

Now will I tell of His kindnesses? Will I, do I proclaim them, announce them and share them so that others may see the wonder and kindness of the Lord?

I found myself considering different ways I can tell of His kindnesses. One-on-one conversation, from the pulpit, in notes, emails and communications. I can also offer kindness to others and then, given the opportunity, I can reference God who has been kind to me.

Our world needs a healthy dose of kindness. I think God is reminding me that I am one grain of salt in His saltshaker and I am to season His world with kindness.

Jesus, tenderize my heart so that kindness flows through me to the world around me. In your name, Jesus, I pray. Amen.

Friday, November 23: Isaiah 64- Coming to grips with the honest self...

Being honest with oneself is often difficult. Personally, I often inflate my goodness and diminish my brokenness and sin. In simple terms I think I am better than I am.

I found myself thinking about this because Israel, through Isaiah's pen, seems to be honest about herself and God's sadness over her sin.

Since ancient times no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you, who acts on behalf of those who wait for him. You come to the help of those who gladly do right, who remember your ways. But when we continued to sin against them, you were angry. How then can we be saved? (4-5).

Israel recognized that she was not living up to God's standards. She had fallen into sin, and even more so, she had persisted (*continued to sin*) in sin.

This line caused me to consider myself, whether I willingly face my sin and particularly my 'continued sin.'

Am I honest with myself? Am I willing to face my darker side?

Israel wonders, *How then can we be saved?*

Fortunately, the New Testament answers that question. Through Jesus! He paid the penalty for my sin and the sin of everyone who puts their faith in Him. Isaiah and the Jews of His time didn't yet know the answer. God had not yet made it clear.

By God's grace, I live in a time when the answer is known. The suffering servant of earlier chapters has come, lived and died for the sins of the world.

Oh, the wonder of Jesus...

The more I face the truth about myself, the more I appreciate the amazing gift and love of Jesus.

Thanks be to God for Jesus... Lord, God, Savior, and Redeemer. Halleluiah. Amen.

Saturday, November 24: Isaiah 65- I have not abandoned you ...

God says to Israel, I have not abandoned you. Imperfect as you are, I remain your salvation. God will create a new heaven and new earth (17). All things will be made new.

Despite Israel's sin, despite MY sin, God will bring salvation. The Lord says, *a day is coming when Before they call I will answer; while they are still speaking I will hear. The wolf and the lamb will feed together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox, and dust will be the serpent's food. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain," says the LORD (24-25).*

A day of no harm or destruction... a day when God hears and answers before we even speak... a day natural enemies will dine together.

Oh Lord, I long for that day. So much violence, so much bickering, backbiting and badmouthing is happening in this world. It seems that people in my country are polarizing and dividing. Enemies are not dining together, they are trying to annihilate each other. Civility is a disappearing commodity.

Lord, I long for the day of Your coming. I long...

I hear the prayer of St. Francis in my mind, 'where there is hatred let me sow peace...' Oh, God, even as I wait for Your day and Your righting of all wrongs, prompt me to, by Your grace and strength, be an island of hope and civility and care and love in my world. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Sunday, November 25, 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.