



THE STORY *continues...*

*Join us each week as God weaves His Story into the fabric
of our daily lives.*

Chapter 16 The Beginning of the End

Listen to *The Story*

Read Chapter 16 of The Story this week.

“The greatest of the writing prophets, Isaiah, began his work in Jerusalem (capital of Judah, the southern kingdom) in 740 BC ... Isaiah achieved prominence during Hezekiah’s reign, helping the king to stand-down the Assyrian threat by **relying on God alone**. Such a strategy must be founded on rock solid faith, and this kind of faith Isaiah clearly practiced and developed. His call to service came in a powerful vision—an apt start to a prophetic vocation that would span nearly 60 years ... Isaiah’s prophecies foretold not only of God’s judgment but also the promise that the Israelites would return home from Babylon and rebuild their nation, clearly revealing that the Lord God was in control of world events ... Isaiah’s best prophecies were of **God’s greater plan for giving His people endless freedom and glory**. Isaiah’s prophecies ended with **promises of a suffering Servant, the Messiah**, who would usher in **a glorious kingdom without end.**”

~ Excerpts from The Story Chapter 16

Learn *The Story*

*Look for ways in which God’s story and your story
connect this week.*

Isaiah’s prophecies included judgment, hope and freedom.

As you live your life this week, look for stories in your home and beyond ...
... that have consequences for making selfish decisions. Identify and confess.

... that have hope of a better future yet to come. Identify and wait in eager expectation.

... that resonate with freedom and forgiveness. Identify and celebrate!

Our lives and our world have all three of these realities unfolding constantly ... and God is fully present in all of them. Our God is in control, no matter how out of control we feel. Our God can be relied on *fully*. He has proven himself faithful relentlessly ... especially in Jesus.

Love *The Story*

Intentionally take a step forward in faith.

“I will not forget you! See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands ... those who hope in me will not be disappointed.” No matter where you find yourself today ... feeling the Lord’s judgment ... or clearly entrenched in the freedom and glory that knowing Jesus brings. Remember God’s promise that He will not forget you. No matter where you find yourself in your own faith journey’s story, you will not be disappointed how the story ends.

To help you remember: take a Sharpie marker and create a temporary tattoo in the palm of your hands with Jesus’ name. Each day, renew the mark and renew the prayer: “Thank you, God, for not forgetting me!

Thank you for engraving me on Your palms! Thank you for taking the nails in my place! No matter what circumstances I find myself within, enable me to rely on You alone. For Jesus’ sake. Amen.”

Luther's Explanation

Whenever God calls people into service in the Bible (something referred to by scholars as a "Call Narrative"), there's a certain pattern to it. There are normally five basic elements of these:

- 1) a situation of distress or crisis in which God confronts the person;
- 2) the commissioning of the person for some action or message;
- 3) objections raised by the person in the form of inadequacy for the task;
- 4) assurance of God's help, often in the formula, "I will be with you"; and
- 5) a sign to confirm the commission, often with the content of the commission.

The call of the prophet, Isaiah, in Isaiah 6:1-8, is a great example of this. The objection Isaiah raises is that he and the people surrounding him are people of "unclean lips." True to form, God helps through a seraph (a type of angel) that touches Isaiah's lips with a burning coal that makes him clean.



Martin Luther, who enjoyed deciphering these kinds of texts, writes this: "Then comes the seraph, that is, the preacher of the Gospel, which is the fiery coal, and promises the forgiveness of sins for Christ's sake and lifts one up to righteousness. Therefore, 'through the Law comes knowledge of sin [Romans 3:20], through the Gospel comes the knowledge and reception of grace and righteousness. The glowing coal is the Word kindled by the Holy Spirit in love, whereby those who have been put to death are revived by the cry of the seraphim. To touch the mouth is to strike the heart with the Gospel, which is sweet to the bitter heart. Then the heart is a fit vessel for honor, because it will go for the Lord, that is, it will be His instrument for teaching others..." (*Luther's Works*, Vol. 16, p. 77)

When you sense a call from God, rest assured—God may not use a seraph with a burning coal, but God will provide everything you need to answer the call!

PROMISE

This week, cling to God's promise for you:
"Do not be troubled...I have saved you!"

The EXTRA Mile



The words of Isaiah's prophecy have been put to music by Chris Falson and Maranatha in the song "I See the Lord."

Check out that song on YouTube:
<http://youtu.be/R2xLvQW59OI>