

July 23, 2017
Sermon for the Seventh Sunday after Pentecost
St Peter Lutheran Church
Bowie, TX
Larry Knobloch, Pastor
Isaiah 44:6-8

J.J.- Jesu Juva—Help me, Jesus

Isaiah 44:6–8 (ESV)

Besides Me There Is No God

⁶ Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel
and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts:
“I am the first and I am the last;
besides me there is no god.

⁷ Who is like me? Let him proclaim it.

Let him declare and set it before me,
since I appointed an ancient people.

Let them declare what is to come, and what will happen.

⁸ Fear not, nor be afraid;
have I not told you from of old and declared it?
And you are my witnesses!

Is there a God besides me?

There is no Rock; I know not any.”

Grace, Mercy, and Peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

Amen.

A few years ago, some television commercials for a new VISA check-cashing card were pretty funny. The commercials featured several well know stars including Daffy Duck, James Bond and even President Trump back in the 1990's. These famous individuals enter a retail store or restaurant and is immediately recognized by many people, including the cashier. Recent events are discussed, autographs are obtained, and finally the famous person wishes to pay the cashier. When the person wants to write a check, the cashier's tone changes to an all business look and says: "I'll need to see some ID!" My favorite one was with a father buying a couple of rabbits for his daughter and by the time the check was cleared the whole store was full of baby rabbits.

Despite knowing the star or celebrity, they still had to prove their identity! Many of us today people today are like the cashier in the commercials.

They know about God. They know the claims of God. They know the Biblical accounts of what God has done over the generations but they still need a little verification before they could ever think of believing it?

Wouldn't it be nice if God would give just a little more proof, a little more evidence,

a little more ID that He **really** is who He claims to be?

That was the situation we find in our text for today, Is 44:6–8.

The Assyrian empire was on the rise, and the Northern Kingdom (Israel) had fallen (722–721).

Some in Judah (Southern Kingdom) became even more secure in their indifference to God and apathy to sin.

This could never happen to them. They had the city of Jerusalem and the true worship in the temple. However, God, through Isaiah, prophesied that Judah's sin would bring captivity at the hands of Babylon.

To lose the temple and the Holy City were unthinkable for the children of God. Did this mean God had abandoned them?

Did this mean the promises of God were no longer valid?
How could they be sure?

In the midst of Law and judgment, God speaks to them (& us) a Word of hope.

God is still God, and they are still His people. Their sin has brought just punishment, but the love and mercy of God are supreme; and He will bring a remnant back.

Continue to trust in the one true God. His Word is sure and certain and true.

When everything around us seems to be telling us one thing, it is often difficult to believe something else.

It was difficult for the people of Isaiah's day, and it is no less difficult for us today.

We have God's promise of love and forgiveness. We have His assurance that He is in control and the ultimate victory is His, but our eyes tell us that maybe God has things mixed up. And the devil begins to play ... and we begin to wonder. Sin and evil seem to have the upper hand, not God.

We often feel as if we are the ones in exile, far from the reality of God and His promises. God seems awful far away...Hmmm, maybe the “idols” of wealth and material goods, selfish desires, and self-centeredness would serve me better.

Maybe God isn't God after all.

In our text God issues a challenge to any would-be gods, and to us.

He invites us to remember who He is and what He has done.

He is our King, Lord of hosts, and Redeemer. God's names do not only tell us who He is, but also tell us what He does. (V. 6)

As “King of Israel” we see both His relationship to His people in terms of majesty and loving concern. A true king is always mindful of the condition of those under Him.

“LORD of hosts” declares that this kingship is not localized, but universal. He is the Lord of all that exists in heaven and earth (by calling himself the first and last he emphasizes that this kingship spans all of time as well; cf. Rev 1:8, 17).

The most significant name is “Redeemer,” (*go'el*), in this verse literally “His redeemer.” This is standard incarnation theology! The Incarnation of the Messiah, Jesus Christ! The King of the universe, who is above time and space, the King of Israel, who rules and cares for His subjects, this King is also our kin.

God is the closest relative of Israel, the kin who redeems (cf. Ruth).

The rescue of Israel at the time of Moses is recalled throughout by the prophet, but the title also points forward to the great Kinsman-Redeemer, Jesus Christ.

Remember it, believe it, cling to it. God is truly is who He claims to be.

Yesterday, today and forever!

He boldly calls the idols what they truly are, nothing. If they have any power, let them show it. If they have any ability, let them prove it. As He says in our Text:

“I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is no god.”

“I was there at the beginning of time. Were you?”

In God’s Word, He has been with us; with you throughout all of time since creation. He guided the Christians that came before us and He will continue to guide all of His children through His Word.

God has revealed these events to us in His Word. *“Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son...”* (Hebrews 1:1–2a, ESV)

We have the sure and certain knowledge, that even when our eyes are tempted to believe something quite different, God is still who He claims to be, despite our wandering eyes and thoughts. He is our Rock of safety and security.

From the top of a rock called Mount Sinai He gave us His holy and perfect Law. And when we were unable and unwilling to trust and obey, He sent His only-begotten Son to another rock called Calvary, to suffer and die in our place, after He fulfilled the Law that we could not.

Sin and death and Satan could not hold Jesus in the carved-out rock of a tomb. He burst forth from that rock and lives again.

What idol could do that!

As God quenched the thirst of Israel in the desert by bringing forth water from the rock, He quenches our spiritual thirst as He gives us to eat and drink from the rock called Jesus in the Holy Sacrament.

Holding fast to the rock of our salvation, our King, Lord, and Redeemer, our worries and fears are driven away. Our trust in the one true God grows as we see the things of this world for what they really are: just things!

As we close, this would probably be a good time to remind ourselves of the First Commandment, the one from which all the others flow. “You shall have no other gods before me”. What does this mean? We should fear, love, and trust in God above all things.”

Can we really say of ourselves today “in God we trust”? Through the gift of faith, we examine our hearts for the things that are getting in the way of our faith, our walk with God.

By faith, we see them for what they really are, things, things created and controlled by God.

We cast aside our personal idols, broken to pieces by the Rock of our salvation.

Grace gives us faith, and we build our lives on the solid Rock, Jesus Christ, our Redeemer, King, and Lord.

Amen.

The Peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Amen.

S.D.G.—Soli Deo Gloria