

Monday, July 15, 2019—Isaiah 25-27

Anticipation is an unusual emotion. Anticipation stirs hope and restlessness as one thinks about what is coming, yet anticipation can motivate one to endure and be patient because what is coming is better than what is present. The hard-working laborer doesn't give up because he knows a promotion is in store. The exhausted mom presses on because the vacation with her husband is in sight.

Those experiencing the judgment of God could anticipate a better day. Strong nations would bow to Him. The poor would find Him as their refuge, and He would be the cloud to cool the heat of the day. He will swallow up death forever (25:8). "In that day the people will proclaim, 'This is our God. We trusted in him, and he saved us. This is the Lord, in whom we trusted. Let us rejoice in the salvation he brings!'" (25:9).

This anticipation builds a strong hope in God and what He is accomplishing. Peace grows in those who trust Him (26:3, 12). "But for those who are righteous, the path is not steep and rough. You are a God of justice, and you smooth out the road ahead of them" (26:7).

Anticipation looks to a day when God makes everything right. In that day, the great trumpet will sound, and God will gather His people to worship Him (27:13). Thank God for the gift of faith and the anticipation it brings. Pray for a life that lives that faith and proclaims it to others.

Sunday, July 14, 2019—Isaiah 22-24

The first command Jesus gave in His ministry was to repent (see Matthew 4:17 and Mark 1:15). He called people to a change of mind that led to a change in action because His Kingdom was near. He called His disciples to something immediately hard that was something eternally good.

During the days of Isaiah, God had called His people to repentance. They were following idols and neglecting the poor, among other sins. The nations around them would face judgment, and without repentance, they would, too. Instead of a change of mind and lifestyle, Isaiah saw dancing and playing (22:13). The people were not interested in fulfilling God's command but their own desires.

The proud will find that God humbles them in time. Tyre, the trading capital of the world (23:3), was going to suffer at the hands of the invading power God would send

to the region to destroy their pride “and show his contempt for all human greatness” (23:14). God enjoys when humans achieve great things but not when they worship themselves.

Because God is a good judge, all who are guilty face judgment. The destruction God was promising would affect all—priests and laypeople, bankers and debtors (24:2). He judges sin in order to purge it from the hearts of the people and to remove its curse on the land.

God will one day rule with such glory that the sun and moon will seem to fade away (24:23b). Praise Him for what He is doing in the present to bring you to continual repentance and what He is preparing in the future.

Saturday, July 13, 2019—Isaiah 19-21

Spiritual victory is powerful, but no victory over sin is complete until the Lord calls believers to their eternal home. Until then, Satan prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking those he may devour. Hurts, habits, and hang-ups from long ago may come back around to be a problem.

The first real nemesis God’s people Israel had known was Egypt, and that relationship had developed over generations. First a shelter from famine for Israel, Egypt eventually enslaved them. God provided miraculous delivery from there through Moses, but they were once again a menacing presence during Isaiah’s day. Power was ebbing and flowing from the nations to the east and west of Israel. God spoke through Isaiah to say that He crushed Egypt once and would do it again (19:1-17). Others would see His might against Egypt and Ethiopia and lose heart (20:1-6).

His work would be so powerful that many Egyptians would turn to Him (19:18-20) and would make the Assyrians and Egyptians His loyal subjects. Growing powers like Babylon would be unable to maintain control of their possessions and not be able to stand against Yahweh (21:1-10). Secondary powers and by-standing nations would face judgment. God would bring thorough and righteous judgment on all who had sinned.

Praise God for His power over sin—past, present, and future. Pray for boldness to resist temptation and courage to face hurts, habits, and hang-ups with faith and self-discipline. Ask Him to use His victory in your life to encourage believers and draw unbelievers to Him

Friday, July 12, 2019—Isaiah 16-18

Seeing justice served is so fulfilling. When the oppressed person finds freedom, people celebrate. When the driver exceeding the speed limit by 25 miles an hour is stopped by a car with flashing red-and-blue lights, drivers smile (and maybe jeer). Seeing wrong made right pleases many.

Isaiah saw a day when Moab, a neighbor and nemesis of Israel, would come cowering to Israel asking for protection (16:3-4). They would cry out to their idols in vain (16:12), but Israel would not gloat. They would mourn for them. The hand of God is heavy on all who suffer judgment.

Damascus, too, would suffer (17:1-3), and Israel would not celebrate. They would not be thinking about themselves. “Then at last the people will think of their Creator and have respect for the Holy One of Israel” (17:7). God would be working to establish a throne for David based on love with a faithful king who always does what is right (16:5).

God brings judgment to force people to see the emptiness of any pursuit other than Him. He is the God who saves, the Rock who can hide His children (17:10). Though powerful armies march, God can break them like waves crashing on the shore (17:13).

One day God was going to crush every army—near or far. The fiercest of warriors would not stand against Him, and peoples who reviled Him would come to revere Him and see Jerusalem as the place where His name dwells (18:7). Justice will come, and justice will be worship-filled.

Praise God for the hope of His justice and righteousness.

Thursday, July 11, 2019—Isaiah 13-15

Around 2008, the United States began experiencing its worst financial crisis since the Great Depression. The stock market suffered. People lost fortunes. There were some companies that many declared to be “too big to fail.” They had been around so long and employed so many people and did so much for the economy that people believed they could not allow them to go out of business. The government intervened and provided loans to bail them out until they recovered.

As Israel fell to Assyria, God’s people were devastated. They were now

controlled by powerful pagans and suffered fear and shame. There were rumblings further east from Babylon, and those people would rise up and conquer Assyria and become the greatest kingdom the world had ever seen. They would bring greater suffering, fear, and shame, and many would believe they were insurmountable. God said their time was short (13:22).

They were not invincible. In time, God would raise up the Medes to overthrow the Babylonians (13:17). Generations later, the “nations of the world will help the Lord’s people to return and those who come to live in the land will serve them. Those who captured Israel will be captured, and Israel will rule over its enemies” (14:2). No nation is too big to fail because God oversees all and has power over all.

The destruction of His enemies is something over which God weeps (15:5). His anger over sin has to be satisfied, but He loves the people He created to know Him. Praise God for His power and compassion.

Wednesday, July 10, 2019—Isaiah 10-12

Chess is one of the most challenging and beautiful games. Opponents move their pieces around a checkered board hoping to capture the queen and win the game. Without a strategy, winning is difficult.

God is the Master of life and has a strategy for accomplishing His mission of building His Kingdom and glorifying His Son. He has enemies who are working against Him, so the battles require strategy or have no ultimate purpose. As Israel and Judah raced toward self-inflicted judgment, God continued to have a strategy for His mission. “After the Lord has used the king of Assyria to accomplish his purposes in Jerusalem, he will turn against the king of Assyria and punish him—for he is proud and arrogant” (10:12). A whip only strikes because of the hand that wields it (10:15).

This strategy looked deeply into the future and planned to bring life from apparent death. A branch would spring from the stump of Jesse, the father of King David. The Spirit would rest on this new life, and He would delight in obeying the Lord. He would rule with holiness, and He would bring the peace of God to His people and salvation to the world. Through Jesus, God was going to restore everything His people had lost and make right all that had gone wrong (11:1-16).

Give praise to God for who He is and all He has done (12:1-6). Great is the Holy

One who works His Kingdom plan!

Tuesday, July 9, 2019—Isaiah 7-9

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a German theologian and pastor in the days before World War II, wrote the classic, *The Cost of Discipleship*. He said when Christ calls a man, He calls him to come and die. Following Jesus is a narrow road filled with choices that are hard and self-sacrificing.

Long before Jesus, God was calling His people to hard choices. He wanted them to be different and to display His goodness and glory. When Ahaz was king of Judah, two kingdoms were marching against him, and God told him not to worry. He would deliver His people.

God told Ahaz to ask for a sign of God's promise, and Ahaz wouldn't. Sometimes, giving in to pressure is easier than standing firm in conviction. God was undeterred and told Ahaz a virgin would have a son, and his name would be Immanuel. "God with us" was the promise of peace and victory. Seven hundred years before Jesus, God was showing His people the way. "Do not fear anything except the Lord Almighty. He alone is the Holy One. If you fear him, you need fear nothing else" (8:13).

Isaiah planned to write down the plan of God and pass it down to his disciples, and they would pass it down to future generations (8:16). The faithfulness of God is the story His disciples tell to make disciples who make disciples. God will place the authority on His Son, and His people will finally have peace (9:6-7). Dying to self is the pathway to true life.

Praise God for life in Christ and the call to die.

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