

#16 15-16
Psalm 63:1-8
1 Corinthians 10:1-13
Luke 13:1-9
Isaiah 55:1-9

Assured Hope

The Old testament lesson for today is called the “Hymn of Joy and Triumph.” It was written about the time when Israel was split between Judah (called the Northern Kingdom) and Jerusalem (called the Southern Kingdom) and this bit of scripture is about the anticipation of those two parts being restored to each other and how that was going to happen!

Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you that have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food. Incline your ear, and come to me; listen, so that you may live. I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David. See, I made him a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander for the peoples. See, you shall call nations that you do not know, and nations that do not know you shall run to you, because of the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, for he has glorified you. Seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near; let the wicked forsake their way, and the unrighteous their thoughts; let them return to the Lord, that he may have mercy on them, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

“And my thoughts are higher than your thoughts.” Well they would have to be to make sense of the first sentence! “You who have no money! Buy” What? Buy wine and milk without money? What is this all about?

Isaiah is trying to prepare people for a renewed Kingdom. Much of the scriptures from around this period are sad, mournful, lamenting words: for they were once a strong and mighty nation and now they are split, and subject to foreign leadership. So Isaiah is encouraging the Jewish people to not think in worldly terms - not be so focused on our meek human thoughts, but to contemplate God - grow in striving to know what you don't know, and trusting in that.

So the people are worried about how they are going to regain the worldly power and wealth they once had, and Isaiah says, buy things without money. And he asks them why they, who have limited energy and resources, spend what they have on things that in the end don't really satisfy. If only they would spend their thoughts, their time and energy ~ trying to find out who God is and how we can live as a human being on this earth more like the profoundly sacred being that God is! For those of us who live on a limited income, worrying about how we can afford milk and wine and bread, we can get focused on that being the equivalent of our standard of living and think that we are poor.

But Isaiah is saying that for those who know and live and are comforted in God's presence and striving to live God's word, we know a luxurious life that is beyond anyone who has unlimited resources could ever know.

Chapters 56-66 in Isaiah are (Oxford Annotated Bible) confronting the sobering realities of the resorted community, but on this day, we have been asked to contemplated that moment right before things start to change ~ when people are concerned and split and desperate and feeling hopeless. And Isaiah is telling

them to hang in there, rejoice even! Basically, “if you weren’t worrying so much about what worldly things you were going to live into, you could be joyously living into a very rich life of faith!”

But we want to say, hold, on . . . we have been given responsibilities on this earth and there is only so much money to go around and we need to think on the realities and . . . and . . . and . . .

And God is saying that we may need to put a little less effort into thinking about what is happening with the concept of money on this earth, and more into trusting in the assured Hope that God has given God’s people since the beginning of our faith history, when the Israelites were wandering nomads! Because life is always growing and changing. Sometimes it is frightening for us, because just when we think we have our lives all understood and in control ~ things change. And we cannot control or change or even understand those changes.

Often we face those changes with fear. This is a normal reaction, the unknown is frightening. You would have thought that during our lifetimes of seeing and dealing with changes we would have gotten used to it by now! But fear of the unknown is a very normal experience. And it is because of our lack of knowing as God knows, our fear of the unknown, and our awareness of how limited we are as human beings that Faith in God is so important. And not only that, but faith in this church is also so important. This church, this manifestation of God in Hyattstown for 175 years, is going to guide us through the changes and be our protective ship through the storms.

For this church is more than who we are and who we have here. This church is a power and force which takes all that we are and mixes it with all that God is and the intentions of all who have come before us in this place and this church will guide us into the future. She will show us how to be the Body of Christ, how to live extraordinary hospitality and how to stay eternally curious about what is to come.

For we all know a lot more about life and ourselves today than we did decades ago. The proof is abundant that we are a growing learning folk. When I was a child, racially mixed marriages were terrifying! And today they are commonplace. And Downs Syndrome people were considered an embarrassment for the families who were graced with them. And today they are out of the homes and in the public with confidence pride!

I’m going to take a break from reading my sermon right now and ask you to shout out - something that has changed in your lifetime - something that was once shame based and is now seen as OK. Or something that was once considered wrong that is OK now or vice-versa ~ big or small things ~ like it used to be considered bad, when I was a child to come to church in anything but your Sunday Best - and today, we are so relieved to be in God’s house in comfortable clothes, with our mugs of coffee, and not be judged by it, being ourselves in God’s house and feeling the love and acceptance from each other.

So what we were just sharing is some proof that changes have happened in our lives and we could be getting used to them. And instead of facing changed with judgment or fear, we can trust our God of ‘wisdom beyond our comprehension’ and this church, and we could be facing into the future with anticipation and joy! For what we know today may be seen as archaic down the road, yet HOW we live - in grace, compassion, curiosity, openness, easy to forgive, THIS is God’s realm and is ETERNAL!