

#53 15-16

Isaiah 12

2 Thessalonians 3:6-13

Luke 21:5-19

Isaiah 65:17-25

Planning Ahead

For I am about to create new heavens and a new earth; the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I am creating; for I am about to create Jerusalem as a joy, and its people as a delight. I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and delight in my people; no more shall the sound of weeping be heard in it, or the cry of distress. No more shall there be in it an infant that lives but a few days, or an old person who does not live out a lifetime; for one who dies at a hundred years will be considered a youth, and one who falls short of a hundred will be considered accursed. They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat; for like the days of a tree shall the days of my people be, and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labor in vain, or bear children for calamity; for they shall be offspring blessed by the Lord – and their descendants as well. Before they call I will answer, while they are yet speaking I will hear. The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, the lion shall eat straw like the ox; but the serpent – its food shall be dust! They shall not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain, says the Lord.

Just to put this in a little perspective – the previous chapters in Isaiah are mostly about miscarriages of justice, and suffering, bloodshed, poor leadership and other such struggles when dealing with imperfect people in an imperfect world. And then, Isaiah brings forth this passage! According to theologian Jack Lundbom, “nothing like it is to be found anywhere else in the OT . . . The prophet is speaking about a transformation of the world as he knows it.”

Another thing to think about, is this scripture set is the second to the last week in the church year . . . we are ending the liturgical year next week. Advent begins in 2 weeks, which starts a new church year! So we can think of this scripture as looking forward to what the next year SHALL bring us! Transformation awaits us! God is good and if we can focus our efforts and our lives on GOD’S promises, God’s realm, we have much to look forward to.

Isaiah is speaking for God here, and it is full of hope and the sense of a promise “I Shall” “They Shall” “I will” “no more Shall” the word shall comes 15 times, and the word will comes 5 times in 18 verses. This is the projection into the future of the covenant that God has with God’s people. And it is beautiful. It is all about creating!

God is creating a time and space where there is no more weeping or distress, good health care, good homes, good harvests, family harmony, natural predators will live in peace, carnivores become herbivores, and evil (the snake) will starve to death – there will be nothing for it to feed on!

Now, these are ancient words, why on earth would our inherited sacred word be continued to be shared, when it just isn’t so. This hasn’t happened. Are we to look at this text and think, well there it goes again – false promises and the opiate of the masses, stuff to keep people in a constant state of expectation, with no real follow through by God.

Should we, perhaps give up hope on this coming while we are on the earth and replace this promise with the expectations of the afterlife?

I believe we should be courageous enough to believe these words attributed to God, because they are 100% true. God the creator has said he is creating this, and we CAN, “be glad and rejoice forever in what [God is] creating,” because we are an integral part of this predation process. In the beginning God created all we know, and we are “knowing” more, every day, as we are parts of God’s creation. We are vital parts of that creation process, and we must remember what we are working towards. God’s plans, because we are in covenant with him, are our plans. So, because we love God, because we are grateful for God’s wisdom, and comfort and power and hope, we can take on these ideals as our priorities too.

Living for a transformation of the world as we know it – may seem like an impossible task, but all we need do is work to transform our souls, our homes, our areas of influence. We do not have to take on the whole world at one time. We plan and work for what is coming ahead. We do not stand stifled and stagnant in the present moment coming up with problems for every solution to our challenges, limiting our solutions to only what we know NOW, what we have already tried. NO! We begin to believe that we CAN work together as one body of Christ with God’s goals in mind, to find CREATIVE solutions – and keep seeking until we have found something inspired – seeking and not giving up!

So God is planning ahead, when he states he is creating, and then uses the future tense of shall and will . . . 20 times in this scripture! He is setting his goals as beautifully, sensitively, compassionately as can be imagined! He is creatively planning ahead, and setting a standard for all of us.

When we do the same in our little worlds, we are helping God fulfill his plans for the rest of the world. When faced with fear, we find creative ways to overcome our limited human thoughts which circle around why we should fear, and we let go of the snake of fear – we do not feed the snake of anxiety, we do not feed the hopelessness of limited possibilities and with joy and delight, we claim our heritage as God’s people and plan ahead to be successful, trusting that together we can find ways to listen to each other, and love each other, to embrace the world of unending possibilities! For this is what we were born into. This is what God created us to be. Not living only for ourselves, but for the joy and the delight of living and serving each other today, and planning ahead for those who follow! This is our destiny ~ to let go of our own worldly self serving goals, so that we can expand into God’s universe of all humanity! This scripture certainly does not seem like the world as we know it. And, it doesn’t make sense that a lion suddenly can be satisfied eating the same food as an OX. These things don’t make sense on a logical scientific level.

But as a spiritual allegory – there is nothing more true and more glorious and more profound to live for in our human endeavors than to create a world of peace, create a world where we care enough about the health of everyone that we make health care more accessible for everyone! These goals are God’s goals! And we cannot give up on them now! We mustn’t give up on them now! God is true to us! He gave us this day, to be with each other, to share our lives with each other – he gave us his hope to get us through this day,, and every day to come, and he gave us tasks to live into. So let us plan ahead with the goal of God’s will, and do not look back! “The former things shall not be remembered or come to mind” Thus sayth the LORD! AMEN!