

Are You Drained?

4th Sun. in Lent – 03/27/22 – Mt. Calvary Luth.

Text: Isaiah 12:1-6 Pastor Keith Besel

vv. 2-3 “...for Ya Yahweh is my strength and my song, and He has become my salvation.’
In joy you will draw water from the spring of salvation.”

Introduction

✘ Have you ever become so overwhelmed with trouble or grief or despair or guilt...or all of the above that you feel you are so “drained” by all of it that you can’t think straight? That you listen to yourself think and talk and it all just sounds like nonsense? That your entire body and soul just feels as parched as if you were crawling across the Sahara desert with no water or help or hope in sight?

→ This is the picture that comes to mind for me as I read about the people of God earlier in Isaiah when he comes to them by God’s command to issue God’s judgment against them. You see, they have allowed themselves to become fully assimilated into the culture of this world, much like so many of God’s people now today.

→ They have completely embraced the man-made gods of wood and stone, as well as the ever-present idol that I like to call the “PPP”, that’s the Powerful and Popular People to whom we bow down and allow them to tell us what we should and should not believe or what we should think when we set our priorities in life.

✘ It had become so bad that Isaiah came back to God with a report of what God already knew in chapter two: “For You have rejected Your people, the house of Jacob, because they are full of things from the east and of fortune-tellers like the Philistines... Their land is filled with silver and gold, and there is no end to their treasures; their land is filled with horses, and there is no end to their chariots. Their land is filled with idols; they bow down to the work of their hands, to what their own fingers have made. So man is humbled, and each one is brought low – do not forgive them!” (Is. 2:6-9).

→ Wow! You know things are bad when the prophet that God sends to call you to account for your sin and disobedience goes back to God and says, “do not forgive them!”

I. Drained and Estranged

✘ But still Isaiah did the job that God sent him to do. He spent a large part of the previous 11 chapters leading up to our text today, outlining the terrible situation in Israel and prophesying to the impending destruction that is coming to them from Assyria because of their sin.

→ Yes these people are now spiritually “drained”. Everything seems to be going wrong – one problem after another, one attack after another, but they are clueless as to the cause. They complain; they blame others; they can’t figure out why it all is happening to them.

→ It’s much like a plant struggling to survive without water. Even the hardiest of desert plants cannot survive forever without hydration. These people had separated themselves from the pure, sweet supply of the spiritual water of life – Yahweh, the One and only true God. Instead they were feeding their souls poisonous, toxic things like false gods, false beliefs, destructive ideas and the withering ways of the world, so that now they were completely drained – sucked dry of all life.

✘ That’s what happens to those who are under the slavery of sin. Eventually it ruins our relationships with those around us because the only person we think and care about is ourselves, and it separates us from God – not by His doing but by our own.

→ In verse one of our Old Testament Reading, it refers to God's necessary response to sin. It says, "though You were angry with me, Your anger turned away...". The Hebrew word and concept for "anger" raises a very vivid picture indeed. The word is, "aph" (אֵפ) and it literally means "nostril" or "nose". Though it doesn't do so in this text, it is often accompanied in Scripture with the word for "burning" or "fire" so that it conjures up the image of God's anger being so intense that His nostrils are flaring and spewing out fire against the one who is opposing Him and/or rebelling against Him in sin.

→ For example, listen to how Psalm 21:9 describes God's "wrath" using the Hebrew word and concept of "aph" (אֵפ): [Speaking of God's enemies, David says,] "Yahweh will swallow them up in His wrath (אֵפ), and fire will consume them".

⊗ Clearly the relationship between God and His people here in our text is extremely strained, just as it is anytime that you and I turn away from the LORD in our poor attitude toward our Creator; when we spend our time in worship or in Scripture wishing that we were doing and thinking about something or somewhere else.

→ It is so easy for us to become estranged from the LORD just as the people were before Isaiah. It can drain us emotionally, physically and spiritually to core.

II. We need to be reconciled

⊗ When we feel this way; when we find ourselves drained, the only answer for relief is for us to be reconciled with the one from whom we've been separated. This is true with any relationship in life, whether it's a friendship, a work relationship, a family member, a romantic relationship or our relationship with God.

→ Children and parents, for example, who are at odds with each other need reconciliation in order to function as God has set the family up to operate. Whether the conflict exists because of some foolish or rebellious thing that the child did or said, or because of some failure or overreach in authority on the part of the parent, the way to reconciliation is the same. The one(s) at fault must swallow their pride and humbly admit their sin to the one whom they have hurt and they must ask for forgiveness.

→ Then upon that confession, the other person, must quickly and lovingly (without dwelling on the guilt) embrace that person in forgiveness and love!

⊗ If this doesn't happen, just as a plant progressively wilts, dries up and dies, so resentment, bitterness and anger drains the relationships in our lives so that they wither up and die as well.

→ You see, relationship is the primary reason that God first created human beings in the Garden of Eden – yes, so that we could have healthy and loving relationships with each other, but first and foremost for us to be in a perfect and fulfilling relationship with God.

→ And just as a plant without water will not thrive and will eventually die, so humanity without God will not thrive. In fact, eternal death is guaranteed for all who are not reconciled and in communion with God.

III. Restored to God and His well of salvation

⊗ That, my friends, is the place where Isaiah now starts in his prophecy that we look at here today. He starts out by referring to "that day", and what he's talking about is the day that he promised in Chapter 11:11 where the Lord promises to "extend His hand...to recover the remnant" of believers; those who still exist among all the various nations after He has brought His burning wrath against the idolaters and rebels who turned away from Him in unbelief.

- And how would God “recover” His remnant of believers? How would He bring about reconciliation between Himself and His people? In Isaiah 7:14, The Lord promises He “will give...a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel”. This Son who would be both God and man, Isaiah said in chapter 9:6 would be “the Prince of Peace” and in chapter 11:1-2 he calls Him “a shoot from the stump of Jesse; ...a branch from His roots” upon whom “the Spirit of the LORD will rest”.
- That points us all to “the day” that Paul talks about in our Epistle Reading in 2 Corinthians 5:19, when “in Christ God was reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them”. That day is when Jesus hung, battered and beaten and nailed and pierced upon the cross.
- ✘ This is how Isaiah can now say in verses 1-2, “I will give thanks to you, O Yahweh, for though You were angry with me, Your anger turned away, that you might comfort me. Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not be afraid; for Ya Yahweh is my strength and my song, and He has become my salvation.”
- You heard that right, I didn’t stutter there when I said, “Ya Yahweh is my strength and my song...”. That’s how it is actually written in the original Hebrew. It’s just that the English translators – and probably even more their editors – couldn’t bring themselves to use the same name for God back to back. But that’s what Isaiah wrote – first an abbreviation of the Lord’s personal name, “Ya” followed directly by the entire name after it, “Yahweh”. Why? Because that’s how the Hebrew language expresses something that it wants us to know is very, very important – it repeats it, just like I did with two “verys”, back to back.
- So, to say, “Ya Yahweh is my strength and my song” directs our attention to Yahweh, as if to say that He alone is God. Our God is not some idol of wood or stone; not some other person in whom we’ve decided to place our trust; not any other thing in all of the world, including ourselves, that we know to be the source of our strength and the reason to sing out in praise! No, He is only Yahweh; “Ya Yahweh” to be most accurate!
- ✘ He alone has repaired and restored our relationship by sending His Son to die for our sins in our place. Just as the loving Father ran to embrace and forgive the prodigal son in our Gospel Reading today, so our God gives us a cause to leap and run and shout out in great joy and celebration.
- In fact verse three tells us that God’s love and power is so immense and limitless that Isaiah literally calls it “the spring of salvation”. His promise never runs dry for those who remain connected and close to Jesus as the source of forgiveness and eternal life.
- Jesus told the Samaritan women at the well that He was Himself the source of the water of eternal life. “Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again,” Jesus said, pointing at the well. “But whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life” (Jn. 4:13-14).
- ✘ And because Jesus did all of the work for us on the cross, even declaring out loud that “It is finished” (Jn. 9:13) so that we should not think there is anything left for us to do to be saved, we hear Him emphasize how this great gift of restoration lasts into eternity in heaven when Jesus says in Revelation 21:6, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment”.
- What a great comfort; what a wonderful relief for all of us with drained souls to hear, right? No wonder Isaiah breaks out in a beautiful song of faith and praise in verses four through six.
- Thanks be to God, in Christ Jesus our relationship with God is made right; we are reconciled to our Father! We are no longer spiritually drained. Instead we are filled to brim and more with

the love and grace; with the forgiveness of Jesus! He is my salvation right now today and forevermore!

✘ So with Isaiah we sing:

“Give thanks to Yahweh, call upon His name, make known His deeds among the peoples, proclaim that His name is exalted.

“Sing praises to Yahweh, for He has done gloriously; let this be made known in all the earth.

“Shout, and sing for joy, O inhabitant of Zion, for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel”
(vv. 4-6) Amen!