*DEVOTIONAL*

November 19 - 24

*The Messiah in Isaiah*

**Monday, November 19 Isaiah 49:1-12**

*“Before I was born the Lord called me”*

 Because of their sinful disobedience, the people of Israel have been in captivity in Babylon. The prophet has been assuring them that God can and will restore them to their homeland. Now the question becomes, “Who can restore us to God?” The answer is in these verses. It begins with a call to “listen.” The prophet is continuing to unfold God’s plan, which calls for yet a further obedient, believing response. But now it is the Messiah Servant himself who calls for the entire world to listen to what he is going to reveal.

 The Servant has no doubt of his call (verse 1), his divine enablement (verses 2-3), or his ultimate vindication (verse 4). He has been called from the womb, he is perfectly suited for whatever task God may have for him, and even though his servanthood will seem futile to many, he knows that God will not fail him. There will come a day when kings and princes will honor him because of God’s faithfulness in his life (verse 7). In particular, the Servant’s task is to fulfill God’s promises to his people (verses 8-12).

*Jesus Messiah, God’s Servant, in you I place my trust. Amen.*

**Tuesday, November 20 Isaiah 49:13-26**

*“The Lord has forgotten us”*

 The people are encouraged to rejoice in God’s promises of deliverance through his Servant. Instead, the people declare that the promises are in vain because it is plain to them that the Lord has forgotten them. To this God replies that he can no more forget them than a nursing mother can forget her baby. He goes on to declare that the proof of his love for them will be seen in the abundance of descendants that will be born to Israel when she thought herself forever barren. God will cause the nations to bring the lost children home.

 But these promises elicit another pessimistic answer: Who can break the grip of the captors? Again God responds that he can do that very thing. While the immediate context is the return home of the exiles from their current captivity in Babylon, the larger issue is their return to God. God has not forgotten his ancient promise to Abraham. The patriarch will indeed have more children than the stars of the heavens or the sand of the seashore. Even if Israel’s sin and exile make it appear as if Abraham’s descendants have come to an end, that is not the case.

*No matter how far we drift from you, Father, you do not abandon us. Amen.*

**Wednesday, November 21 Isaiah 50:1-11**

*“Who among you obeys the Lord’s servant?”*

 The transgressions of Israel (verses 1-3) are contrasted with the obedience of the Servant (verse 5). Revealed here is that the Servant’s obedience to God will result in suffering for him. He will reveal God’s message through speech. But when he declares the message he will be abused, and the Servant is willing to bear that abuse because he knows that God will vindicate him in the end. No one will be able to successfully accuse him of either disobeying God or of falsifying the message. Nor will those who beat him be able to make him stop obeying his God. In fact, his accusers will be unable to stand at the end.

 To “fear the Lord” is synonymous with obeying the word of his Servant, and vice versa. Clearly, one’s response to the Servant is in the nature of a watershed. Those who have no light can walk safely if they will entrust themselves to God in the way that he has revealed. But those who reject God’s revealed way and try to manufacture their own light will find that the way they have chosen leads to great torment.

*I will declare your message, Lord, even if it leads to abuse. Amen.*

*DEVOTIONAL*

November 19 - 24

*The Messiah in Isaiah*

**Thursday, November 22 Isaiah 51:1-23**

*“Listen to me, all who seek the Lord”*

 These verses expand on the theme of listening to/obeying the words of the Servant. The ones being addressed are those among the Israelites who are inclined to put their trust in God, who pursue righteousness and seek the Lord, who know what is right and have God’s law in their hearts. The message that the Servant will reveal is for them – and it is a message of deliverance. But the deliverance is not primarily from Babylon for, as is the case with the whole human race in every time and place, they need deliverance from the bondage of sin.

 Furthermore, it is plain that God’s deliverance goes beyond sincere obedience and well-motivated living. If those qualities of life could take away divine-human alienation, there would be no need for further deliverance. But in fact, it is particularly persons with those characteristics who will be able to receive that further deliverance. Their heartfelt commitment to the law of God does not deliver them from their alienation, but it means they are in a position to receive that deliverance if they will.

*My ears are attuned to hear you, Lord, for you are my salvation. Amen.*

**Friday, November 23 Isaiah 52:1-15**

*“How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news”*

 Here we come to the climax of God’s promises not to allow his people to remain alienated from himself, and it is significant that Babylon itself is not mentioned. This suggests again that it is not merely physical captivity that is the problem God must solve. Verses 1-6 declare that just as God demonstrated his unique deity in delivering the people from Egypt, so he will do again in delivering them from their bondage to sin. Verses 7-12 bring to a conclusion all that has been said about redemption.

 Isaiah pictures a besieged city waiting for news from a delivering army. Will the army be able to break through the besiegers? Suddenly, the watchmen on the walls of the city begin to shout for joy. They have seen a messenger far away on the mountain, and he is signaling the good news of victory. God has defeated the enemy and redeemed the city. Nothing remains but for God’s people to lay hold of this promise in faith and to leave behind the old way with its sin and uncleanness. They are free, free indeed, through the power of God.

*You have broken the power of sin, Lord, and I am free in you. Amen.*

**Saturday, November 24 Isaiah 53:1-12**

*“The Lord laid on him the sins of us all”*

 The One who will bring about our salvation from sin looks nothing like the stereotypical conquering hero. Especially after the exultant tone of chapter 52, the somber notes of the present chapter come as a shock. While the Servant is the deliverer that God has promised, he will be disbelieved. Why? Three answers are given: First, he comes onto the scene in a quiet and unassuming way. Second, he has no extraordinary beauty or attractiveness to draw people to him. Thirdly, he is rejected because he takes on himself the pain and suffering of the world.

 We find suffering disturbing, both because we do not know what to say in sympathy and because it reminds us of our own vulnerability. So we try to ignore it (“we looked the other way”) and not to think about it (“we did not care”). The Servant has come to take away the sins of the world, but no one pays any attention to him. It is our suffering that he bears, though he is innocent, and it is for our rebellion that he is pierced, though he has done no wrong. In our place he dies so that we may be saved.

*I praise you, Jesus Messiah, for taking my sin upon yourself.  Amen.*