*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

November 16-21

The One Who Brings Salvation

**Monday, November 16 Isaiah 49:1-6**

*“My salvation to the ends of the earth”*

    We can imagine Isaiah’s readers saying, as they come to the end of what is now chapter 48, “Alright, we’re listening and we can believe that God can and will restore us from Babylon by means of king Cyrus. But who can restore us to God? That’s the real problem.” The answer is the Servant of God who has no doubt of his call (v. 1), his divine enablement (vv. 2-3), or his ultimate vindication (v. 4). He has been called from the womb, so his vocation is no secondary thing. Furthermore, he is perfectly suited for whatever task God may have for him.

The Messiah will be “Israel” as Israel was meant to be. He will display the Lord’s splendor (v. 3) as an obedient Israel might have done, and in so doing, he will be the One “who restores the tribe of Jacob” to the Lord. How that will be done is still to be answered, but whatever it is will be so far-reaching that it will extend to the ends of the earth, including the Gentiles in its scope (v. 6). For God to “save” the world it is necessary for him to save it from the bondage sin holds over it; this will be the task of the Servant.

*Sin is strong, Lord, but salvation through your Servant is stronger.  Amen.*

**Tuesday, November 17 Isaiah 49:7-13**

*“I will give you to them as my covenant with them”*

In these verses God addresses the Servant, declaring that although the Servant is despised and reduced to the level of a slave, a day will come when kings and princes will honor him because of God’s faithfulness in his life. (See the New Testament version of this promise in Philippians 2:5-11.) In particular, the Servant’s task is to be a representative of God’s covenant with his people. Like a new Joshua he will settle the people in a land of freedom and abundance. People of all sorts from all kinds of places will find restoration to God through him.

The announcement of the work of the Servant results in an outburst of praise in verse 13. Nature is called on to sing the praise of its Creator and Redeemer. As nature has involuntarily experienced the effects of our human sin, so also it will experience the effects of our redemption. The terms “comfort” along with “his/my people” are reintroduced here for the first time since chapter 40; they will recur several more times in the immediately following passages. Isaiah is showing how God’s Servant is able to bring comfort to God’s people.

*You, Lord Jesus, are the Servant of God given for our salvation. Amen.*

**Wednesday, November 18 Isaiah 50:1-11**

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

The transgressions of Israel (vv. 1-3) are contrasted with the obedience of the Servant (v. 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. 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 being abused. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

November 16-21

The One Who Brings Salvation

**Thursday, November 19 Isaiah 52:7-12**

*“Good News”*

Isaiah here utilizes a graphic illustration to make the point that God has saved his people. He pictures a besieged city waiting for news from a delivering army. Will the army be able to break through the besiegers? If so, there is hope; if not, all is lost. 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 bared his holy arm, defeated the enemy, and redeemed Jerusalem.

Nothing remains but for Israel to lay hold of this promise in faith and to leave behind the old way with its sin and uncleanness. This is not some furtive sneaking off from the besieged city, lest the enemy discover what is happening and prevent it. No, the enemy is completely defeated and can do nothing to retain its hold of the former captives. They are free, free indeed, through the power of God. Both the ability and the desire of God to restore his people to himself have become topics for joyful song.

*We rejoice, Lord, that you have freed us from captivity to sin. Amen.*

**Friday, November 20 Isaiah 52:13-15**

*“They were amazed when they saw him”*

Who is the Servant of God who makes possible the glorious invitation to come to God for release from captivity? By what means is the alienation of sin overcome? Isaiah 52:13-53:12 tells us. The section begins with a note of triumph. The Servant will act in such a way as to succeed. There is no question about the outcome of the Servant’s work. It will be total victory. But, it won’t look like victory, certainly not any victory that proud, dominating humans can conceive of.

The disfigurement of the Servant will be utterly shocking. He is not the attractive figure that so many of the world’s conquerors have been or pretended to be. The kings of the earth are struck dumb by the thought that this unassuming, humble, and abused man has actually come to bring justice, and they are appalled when told that he will do so by means of his own injury and abuse. They have never heard of such a thing, yet now they will see it.

*We highly exalt you, Lord, for you have done all your Father asked. Amen.*

**Saturday, November 21 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. Third, 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.*