

Dec. 21, 2014 – Isaiah 7:14 (OT: 2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16 Epistle: Romans 16:25-27 Gospel: Luke 1:26-38)

ISAIAH'S ROYAL PROPHECIES
IV. This King Will Be God-With-Us

This Advent season we have looked at three prophecies of the coming King that God gave through Isaiah. This King brings peace – peace with God and peace from God, both here and ultimately in heaven. This King brings forth justice – the justice in us that God requires and justice for us by conquering all our enemies, even death. And this King brings peace and justice with mercy – He will not break our bruised reeds nor put out our smoldering wicks, but rather He heals us, strengthens us, and fills us with faith and hope. Today we look at one final prophecy about this King, the prophecy found in Isaiah 7:14.

The context of this prophecy is rather interesting. Ahaz was king of Judah in Jerusalem. He was a wicked and idolatrous king. Samaria and Syria, two kingdoms to the north, were amassing an army to attack Judah. We are told that heart of Ahaz and hearts his people were “*moved as the trees of the woods are moved by the wind*” (Isaiah 7:2). But God sent Isaiah to reassure Ahaz and to tell him not to be afraid. God will not let the plans of Syria and Samaria come to pass. God said to Ahaz: “*Ask a sign for yourself from the Lord your God; ask it either in the depth or in the height above*” (7:11). But Ahaz, in a false show piety replied, “*I will not ask, nor will I test the Lord!*” (7:12). It is then that the Lord says that He Himself will therefore give this sign of the virgin who will bear the Son – a sign that would not be fulfilled for over seven hundred years. God goes on to say in v. 17 that He will bring Assyria upon Ahaz and his people because they had turned from the Lord.

Why did God give Ahaz this sign that neither he nor his people would live to see? That seems strange, does it not? And it is a striking sign, literally: “*behold, the virgin pregnant.*” This sign, really a promise, was a call to faith. It was a call for Ahaz and the people of Judah to trust that the Lord would bring about what He said would happen, no matter how illogical or unexpected. It was a call to trust and believe God even when the Assyrians were attacking.

It is also a call to faith for us. While this sign has been fulfilled, we were not there see it with our own eyes; it happened over two thousand years ago. And a virgin pregnant isn't something that we would expect either. That is why the Lord makes it clear that it is He Himself who would bring this about and He has done it.

In this prophecy God tells us that this Son, born of the virgin, would be called “*Immanuel*”. Immanuel is Hebrew and means “*God with us*” (see Matthew 1:22-23). While God was with His people throughout their history, at Jesus birth, God was with us in a new and unique way. Being conceived from God the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary, Jesus is both God and man. As we read in John 1:14 the Word which was in the beginning, which was with God, and was God, “*became flesh and dwelt among us.*” Jesus is God-with-us.

This fact is important for a number of reasons. If Jesus had been just a man, what good would his life have been? What difference would his death have made? He would have been just another teacher, with perhaps good things to say, who died a martyr.

But Jesus was not just a man. He was God as well. He was God-with-us. Because He is God, His perfect life and innocent death have infinite merit, so that His righteous life can be accounted to all of us, and His death can pay for and take away the sins of the whole world. He didn't come to show us the way, He is the Way! He didn't come to simply give us truth, He is the Truth. And He didn't come just to show us how we should live, but He is our Life (John 14:6).

All these are important truths. They deal directly with our salvation. Without Jesus' righteousness and His death on the cross, we would be lost, for we have no righteousness ourselves and we would have to pay for our own sins with our own eternal death. But Jesus' blood does cleanse you from all sin and His righteousness covers all your unrighteousness, because He is God-with-us.

But as important as these things are, at times they can seem somewhat academic, as the sign of the virgin pregnant probably seemed to Ahaz when he was confronted by Samaritans, the Syrians, and later the Assyrians. But the fact that Jesus is God-with-us is a great comfort no matter the situation you may face.

Have you ever said to someone, "you don't know what I am going through" or "you don't know what it is like!" That may be true of another person – they may not know exactly what you are going through or have experienced your situation. But God knows. We know that because God knows all things, He knows the trials we experience. But the fact that Jesus is God-with-us makes that even more personal. Hebrews 4:15 tells us that "*we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.*" Think about that! He was *in all points* tempted as we are. Jesus not only knows what you are going through, He has experienced it Himself!

Sometimes, when we talk about problems we have had, we can try to "one up" one another. "If you think you've had it bad, well, let me tell you!" Consider, however, Jesus' life here on earth. It didn't have a very glorious beginning. His parents almost got divorced because Mary was pregnant. The Prince of Peace wasn't born in a palace, but was born in a barn! Kings didn't come to see Him at His birth, just some shepherds from near-by fields. The magi, the wise men from the east, did come later, but then King Herod tried to kill Jesus, forcing the family to flee to Egypt.

When He began His ministry He was tempted for forty days and forty nights in the wilderness by the devil himself. His brothers didn't believe in Him. His family thought He was crazy and tried to take Him into custody (Mark 3:21). The religious leaders rejected Him and often tried to entrap Him and were plotting to kill Him. His disciples frequently didn't understand Him. One of them – one of His friends – betrayed Him and then committed suicide. The rest all fled and left Him alone to be tortured and executed.

This review of Jesus' life is not so that we consider who had it "worse" but to illustrate the truth that Jesus "*was in all points tempted as we are.*" And the Gospels don't record everything that Jesus did (see John 21:25).

We may think that because Jesus is God-with-us, these trials were no big deal: "Jesus, as God, could easily handle them. We, on the other hand, are not God, and these things aren't that easy." However, When Jesus was born, He embraced humanity and experienced these things as a man. Hebrews 2:18 tells us, "*For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.*" Jesus suffered when He was tempted. He suffered through all these things. Not only can He sympathize with what you are going through, but having suffered the same thing, He is able to help you.

We see Jesus' suffering not only on the cross, but in the garden of Gethsemane, when His was so distressed that He sweat blood. We also see Him experiencing the death of a loved one, as He wept at Lazarus's tomb.

When Jesus came to Bethany where Lazarus had lived, Martha said to Him, "*Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died*" (John 11:21). A little later the other sister, Mary, said

the same thing (John 11:32). We sometimes might have similar thoughts. Even though Jesus is God-with-us, it may sometimes seem like He is not with us. If He were, wouldn't He do something? If He has experienced everything I am going through, why not rather keep me from even going through this difficulty (whatever it may be)?

God does not promise that our life here on this earth will be easy. But He does promise that Jesus is God-with-us. When Jesus heard that Lazarus was sick, He said, "*It is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it*" (John 11:4). The times of difficulty and pain that we experience are to bring glory to God as well. They prompt us to turn to Jesus in faith and say as Martha did, "*But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you*" (John 11:22). Your trust in Jesus glorifies God. And He uses times of difficulty to strengthen your faith.

Jesus knows what you are going through, and He knows how much you can handle. Remember the words we looked at last week: "*A bruised reed He will not break, And smoking flax He will not quench*" (Isaiah 42:3). He is faithful. He will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but as God-with-you, He will enable you to endure it to His glory (1 Corinthians 10:13). Trust in Him to strengthen and help you.

So behold the virgin pregnant. She has born a Son, who is Immanuel. As God-with-us, He has accomplished your salvation. And He will never leave you or forsake you, but will be God-with-us to the end of the age. We pray, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus!" Amen.

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