

SEEKING WORDS OF HOPE/ Sunday, November 30, 2014

Unifying Topic: LET ZION REJOICE

Lesson Text

I. A Day Of Great Hope (Isaiah 52:1-2)

II. The Proclamation Of Good News (Isaiah 52:7-12)

Lesson Text: How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth! (Isaiah 52:7, KJV).

Unifying Principle: All people need to hear words of hope. Where will they find hopeful words? The psalmist and Isaiah tell God's people that Go, who reigns above, is their help, shield, and salvation, and that they can put their hope in God and rejoice.

Lesson Aim: To understand the words of hope through the prophet Isaiah.

Life Aim: To respond to God's blessings through worship and praise of our Lord.

52:1 Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city: for henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean.

52:2 Shake thyself from the dust; arise, and sit down, O Jerusalem: loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion.

52:7 How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!

52:8 Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing: for they shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion.

52:9 Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem: for the Lord hath comforted his people, he hath redeemed Jerusalem.

52:10 The Lord hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.

52:11 Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing; go ye out of the midst of her; be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord.

52:12 For ye shall not go out with haste, nor go by flight: for the Lord will go before you; and the God of Israel will be your reward.

HISTORY:

Chapter 51:12-23 ¹The implication of this passage is that when a person does not remember who God really is and what He has done, he will always fear men, rather than God (**vv.12-16**). God's people feared Babylon and not God. They had reason to fear Babylon because of the harm it wanted to do to them, but they should have realized that God's power is much greater than Babylon's. The imprisoned remnant would soon be freed to return to the Promised Land in another "Exodus" (**v.14**) because the Lord (**vv.15-16**) is their God. The remnant in Babylon had prayed as though God was asleep and needed to be awakened. In this passage God asked Jerusalem to be awake because He is doing something (**vv.17-23**). In exile the Jews had drunk God's wrath fully, all the way to the bottom of the cup (**vv.21-22**). In the terrible destruction of Jerusalem many young men had died (**v.20**). "Desolation, destruction, famine and the sword" spoke of the awful plight of the city (**v.19**). However, the Lord pronounced that the time of judgment was over (**v.22**) for them and the cup of judgment would be given to her tormentors who had walked on the dead bodies in Jerusalem (**v.23**). The people of Judah experienced ruin instead of prosperity, destruction instead of liberty. Because of their sins the people suffered, but God promised to restore Jerusalem as a holy city where sinners cannot enter.

LESSON:

Isaiah 52:1-2 A Day Of Great Hope

52:1 Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city: for henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean. God considered the captivity sufficient penalty for Israel and that a new era of forgiveness and blessing is about to come down upon them which leads to a third wake-up call addressed to Jerusalem (**Is.51:9, 17; 52:1**) and it is a command not only to wake-up, but to dress up. "Zion" was summoned to put on strength and "Jerusalem", the holy city was summoned to put on their beautiful garments. They were to awake from their spiritual drunkenness for they had fallen away from the Lord and were held in captivity! They had been in that place too long. It's time to presume their rightful place. Wake-up now! Why dress up now? – Because they have had on prison clothes too long. The prophet Isaiah sees a holy city having the strength they were supposed to have; their strength will come from their faith in God for He will show

¹ <http://www.family-times.net/commentary/reassurance-of-gods-forgiveness/>
<http://pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>

His strong arm. Isaiah sees what God has provided: clothes; garments of holiness, of honor and dignity. Therefore, God has already made them strong and beautiful, now they are to put on what God has already provided for them. This is the same as our spiritual weapons; we are to put them on; they are already ours.²The enemies in that day did not circumcise their babies. That also meant that they were not holy. They could not enter the temple, which was God's house in Jerusalem. Isaiah sees the time in the Millennium when the uncircumcised (foreign invaders; worldly people) and the unclean (unsaved) will no longer control the city at the time of their final destination.

52:2 Shake thyself from the dust; arise, and sit down, O Jerusalem: loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion. God speaks to "*Jerusalem, the holy city*" to shake the dust of their captivity off, arise to, and sit down on their throne; shake off the past and live for the future. God speaks to the "*daughter of Zion*" as a loving Father to be freed from the bondage of captivity that's been around their necks. They must accept their freedom and rise above the past. As the body of Christ, the "*True Church*" God is calling for, we need to know who we are, and whose we are!³"*She*" shall no longer be a servant girl trodden under foot by the Gentile nations but "*she*" shall once again be the "*holy city*."

NOT APART OF THE LESSON: VERSES 3-6

Jerusalem had sold herself for nought, that is, she had sold herself into sin and had profited nothing. By contrast, God promises that she shall be redeemed without money. When we look at it this way:⁴The enemy, Babylon, had not bought the people. There was no money exchanging hands either way. They were taken in battle. They will not be purchased back, either. They will regain their freedom when Babylon falls. We, Christians, have been bought with a price, and it was the shed blood of Jesus. God has spoken it, and it is so. The Old Testament concept of redemption is based on the person of the redeemer (go'el) who had to be a free man himself, who was related by the flesh (a kinsman), who was willing to pay the price of redemption in order to redeem one from slavery, orphanhood, or widowhood. In the Book of Ruth we find this concept. In the New Testament, we see it fulfilled in the redemption which was accomplished by Jesus Christ who has become our Kinsman-Redeemer by means of His Incarnation and His atonement. The imagery here by the prophet is that God sold His people into captivity for nothing and shall redeem them without money as well (52: 3). We see that⁵God reminds the Israelites that they had voluntarily left their home and traveled to Egypt to find food for their family, and the Assyrians oppressed them without cause. They were treated cruelly while in Egypt (52: 4). Now the Babylonians have done the same thing. Egypt had enslaved them; Assyria had oppressed them; and the Babylonians had taken them captive. They had taken God's people away and everyday they ruled over God's people, they continued to mock and insult and blaspheme God's Name. The enemy taunted the Jews and asked them why their great God did not deliver them (52: 5). However, that was going to end. God's people will know His Name, and on the day that is coming and they will recognize that God is the One who does speak (52: 6).

Isaiah 52:7-12 The Proclamation Of Good News

52:7 How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!— There were runners who ran with news to the king for the people. I can remember the story (2 Samuel 18) of the Cushite who ran to give King David news of the victory God had given him and of his son Absalom, and the watchman would cry out when he saw a runner, for the runner's feet were beautiful because on the other side the people were in anticipation to see their feet come over the mountains; they brought tidings. These Runners; Messengers will go across the mountains around Jerusalem to spread the good news of the return of redeemed Israel. They will bring good news that proclaim and declare peace; good news that announce salvation, redemption, recovery and deliverance that speaks to Zion, that God reigns! That's why it was spoken to Zion to put on strength and to Jerusalem to put on their beautiful garments; they were not to be in bondage any longer, because their God reigns and Babylon is defeated! This meant freedom for the captives. What Good News to hear! Messengers are to preach this Good News everywhere they go. This would bring hope to God's people. Paul broaden the Millennial reference to the preaching of the Gospel in the kingdom to include spreading the Gospel of God's grace (Rom.10:15) from the time of Jesus Christ on. Why? – Because Jesus Christ has set the captives free Lk.4:18-19). Jesus went into the synagogue and declared this Good News: "*The Spirit of the Lord was upon Me, to preach the Gospel to the poor...preach deliverance to the captives...*" And He died on the cross freeing us from sin. Jesus' return will be so welcomed! It will come in the nick of time! His

² <http://www.easyenglish.info/bible-commentary/isaiah41-55-gc-lbw.htm>

³ <http://www.family-times.net/commentary/reassurance-of-israels-future-restoration/>

⁴ <http://www.lovetheLord.com/books/isaiah/61.html>

⁵ <http://www.neverthirsty.org/pp/corner/read2/r00893.html>

<http://pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>

feet are beautiful; His tidings are good! The Good News is for sharing, so share this Good News today that will bring hope to someone! We sing this song: "*My God reigns, my God reigns, my God reigns~~, my God reigns.*" (Yes, and He does)! Jesus should be the center of our attraction instead of the bad.

52:8 Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing: for they shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion. Instead of announcing a message of impending judgment or doom, the watchman on the wall are lifting up voices and singing praises unto the King of Zion who has delivered His people. They will not only hear but with their own eyes they will see the King of Zion bring them; restore them into their land.

52:9 Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem: for the Lord hath comforted his people, he hath redeemed Jerusalem. It's alright to break forth in joyous singing; bloom out of the ruined places of Jerusalem for God has provided comfort for His people. He has redeemed Jerusalem. There is a saying: "*Home is where the heart is and there's no place like home.*" It was nothing like going home. What God provides, He transforms. Just as the Lord encouraged and comforted the captives in Babylon to make the trip back to the Promised Land; Christ will again open up highways in the wilderness and encourage the Jews to return to Jerusalem when the Millennial Kingdom is established on earth. It will take place at the Second Coming! The Lord will protect their journey.

52:10 The Lord hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God. God states that He has already "bared His holy arm." That is, God was ready to demonstrate His power and ability to accomplish this task. The power of salvation spread to the ends of the earth before the eyes of all nations. The **Message Bible** puts it like this: "*God rolled up His sleeves. All the nations can see His holy, muscled arm. Everyone, from one end of the earth to the other sees Him a work, doing His salvation work.*"

52:11 Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing; go ye out of the midst of her; be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord. For God having to say "Depart ye, depart ye" or even Awake, awake twice could mean that some had gotten comfortable or had grown accustomed to Babylon and were reluctant to leave. God commanded them to depart because Babylon was a condemned city. As God's people we are to depart from any implications of any unclean things that will defile our conversation, our walk, lifestyle or appearance. The returning exiles were not to defile themselves by taking property home from their exile. Depart, go out of, come out of the midst, and be clean were commanded to the people.

52:12 For ye shall not go out with haste, nor go by flight: for the Lord will go before you; and the God of Israel will be your rereward. They didn't have to flee like criminals, but there was no reason to linger. God warned them—get out, get out and that means now while they had the opportunity. The Lord God who is their source and strength promised to go before them and bring them back to Jerusalem. Does this remind you of Sodom and Gomorrah with the angels? And when the Israelites came out of Egypt with Moses? But the exception in the former was that they had to move swiftly but in the latter they can move deliberately and safely. God in this case was their "*rereward*" which means their "*rear guard.*" He is in front bearing His holy arm and He is in back bearing His holy arm making total provisions for their protection. What a mighty God!

SUMMARY:

The Lord commands Zion to wake-up to presume their rightful place; put on strength; put on beautiful garments and get ready to be amazed. They were to shake off the dust of the past and be loosed from the bands that have held them down. They had been in that place long enough (**52:1-2**).

Now it was time to announce this Good News across the mountains that God reigns. Break out with glorious singing. Break forth with joy for they were going home. God had showed His power and strength to the ends of the earth. Now it's time to depart. But they were not to bring anything out; no unclean thing. But they were to be clean, prepared for God to go before them and in the back of them; being their covering all the way (**52:7-12**).

APPLICATION:

We seek words of hope from those who run with it; from those carrying the power of God. So let us rejoice with the Good News of Jesus Christ to all we meet!