

“The Dawning of a New Age”

Isaiah Chapter 32

Sunday, January 8th, 2023

A year ago today, I preached the final sermon before I began a 10 week pastoral Sabbatical. I'm grateful for the time given then; it was neat to watch several from Trinity Church step up to the plate and deliver a sermon. It stretched them; and they experienced firsthand what it is like to prepare a message that is faithful to the text and God-honoring. To do it once or twice can be a heavy responsibility - to do it weekly can occasionally be down-right maddening! It was also good for you to get to know a few of my pastor friends in the presbytery, and they you.

8 years ago this week - Sunday, January 4th, 2015 - we worshipped for the first time in this building. 8 years! During the planning phase of the new building construction, I received a phone call from a pastor who wanted me to consider joining his ministry staff. This church is in a location I would really enjoy, but I turned his offer down. I told him I wanted to enjoy the structure we were building, and the people who sacrificed their money, time, and talents to build this church.

There are few events bigger than World War II. More than 50 nations fought during World War II, and more than 100 million military personnel engaged in battles. The 40 to 50 million deaths incurred during World War II make it the bloodiest conflict, as well as the largest war, in world history. The result of World War II was a new era.

What if President Franklin Roosevelt and the country's top military brass had all been accidentally killed during the middle of World War II? Think of all the ways that might have changed history. Truth is - it almost happened!

On November 14th, 1943, Roosevelt and his chief military advisers were secretly crossing the Atlantic aboard the *USS Iowa* on their way to an Allied summit meeting in Tehran. Tremendous care was taken to hide the identity of the VIPs in order to assure their safety.

Suddenly a torpedo was seen heading straight for the *Iowa*. All aboard thought they were under attack from a German submarine. But, in fact, the torpedo came from an American ship!

The escort destroyer *USS William D. Porter* had accidentally fired the torpedo during a drill. As danger alarms went off and crewmen headed to battle stations, the battleship *Iowa* maneuvered sharply and avoided the torpedo, which exploded just a hundred yards off the stern. The force of the explosion rocked the *Iowa* so violently that one officer aboard shouted, "He hit us!" But the ship was not harmed at all.

A new era was dawning regardless side prevailed in World War II. History records a successful summit that helped secure an Allied victory. Peace and democracy prevailed!

After holiday messages the past two Sundays, we return today to our study working through the Old Testament book of Isaiah. The series is titled, “**The Holy One of Israel**,” and the section where we left off December 18th is the fourth major section of Isaiah, “**Judgment and Salvation**,” which covers chapters 28-35.

The focus of the passage before us today, **Isaiah Chapter 32**, is that God would usher in a new age for the elect people of Jerusalem and Judah. Isaiah looks to this dawning of a new age in which both the Ruler Himself (the King) and those associated with Him (princes) will rule with righteousness and justice.

Isaiah 32:1-3:

- 1** - “Behold, a king will reign in righteousness, and princes will rule with justice.
- 2** - A man will be as a hiding place from the wind, and a cover from the tempest, as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.
- 3** - The eyes of those who see will not be dim, and the ears of those who hear will listen.”

These 3 verses, as well as a few others in this passage, describe the government that will be ushered in during the Messiah’s reign. Taken from verse 1, we can see it is “**A Reign of Righteousness**”

Righteousness includes justice and judgment. It is God’s right and just character, actions, and judgments. It is to be just, upright, and virtuous. Righteousness indicates the type of life that ought to characterize Jesus’ disciples. Notice the article before “King,” the second word of verse 1. Isaiah writes, “**A** king will reign in righteousness.” In **Isaiah 33:17**, Isaiah calls him “*the* king.” By the time we get to **Isaiah 33:22**, Isaiah refers to him as “*our* King.” It is not enough to say that Jesus Christ is “a King” or even “*the* King.” We must confess our faith in Him and say with assurance that He is “*our* King.”

Isaiah looks ahead to a time when government would be restored, justice would flourish, and freedom would truly reign because people no longer would fear criminal activity threatening their possessions or their lives. Oh how different from the self-centered, dishonest, wasteful, and weak government that often prevails today.

“Rivers of water in a dry place” there in verse 2 sustain life in a way especially welcome in time of drought when the ground is parched. Relief from the intense glare of the sun and its oppressive heat could be found in “the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.”

Isaiah 32:9-11:

- 9** - “Rise up, you women who are at ease, hear my voice; you complacent daughters, give ear to my speech.
- 10** - In a year and *some* days you will be troubled, you complacent women; for the vintage will fail, the gathering will not come.

11 - Tremble, you *women* who are at ease; be troubled, you complacent ones; strip yourselves, make yourselves bare, and gird *sackcloth* on *your* waists.”

These three verses explore “**The Consequences of Complacency.**”

Isaiah gives a solemn warning against a lifestyle marked by affluence and complacency (easy living). His warning is directed to “women who are at ease” as verses 9 and 11 reveal. These women here could also be the **daughters of Zion** described in chapters 3 and 4 of Isaiah. Presumably the women in view were from the upper classes of Jerusalem who benefited from the unethical, immoral behaviors to be found there.

Three times in these three verses Isaiah uses the word “complacent.” There’s nothing wrong with a life of quiet pleasantness. But these women were living for the false peace of momentary indulgence. Let’s go further with these observations:

Complacency is a blight that saps energy, dulls attitudes, and causes a drain on the brain. The first symptom is satisfaction with things as they are. The second is rejection of things as they might be. “Good enough” becomes today’s watchword and tomorrow’s standard. Complacency makes people fear the unknown, mistrust the untried, and abhor the new. Like water, complacent people follow the easiest course -- downhill. They draw false strength from looking back.

In v. 10 - “In a year and some days,” These women at ease will be troubled in just one year’s time. As I worked through my daily Bible reading and devotions late this week, I came across **Genesis 18:14**, which says something similar regarding Sarah and the child she would carry. “About this time next year, Sarah would have a son.” Similarly, the women at ease will find their lives radically turned upside down. Their harvests will fail.

Commentator Ray Ortlund, Jr., paints the situation this way: The men at the royal court are wringing their hands over Assyria, fretting over a danger that God has already promised to take care of. The women at home can’t see beyond the great bargains of the marketplace. They’re not worried about anything. They represent the kind of happiness that will kill us - earthly contentment, with no longings after God.” (Ortlund, 185)

From **a reign of righteousness** in verses 1-3 to **the consequences of complacency** in verses 9-11, we move into our final point, the **Peace of God’s Reign.**

Isaiah 32:16-20:

16 - “Then justice will dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field.

17 - The work of righteousness will be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever.

18 - My people will dwell in a peaceful habitation, in secure dwellings, and in quiet resting places,

19 - Though hail comes down on the forest, and the city is brought low in humiliation.

20 - Blessed *are* you who sow beside all waters, who send out freely the feet of the ox and the donkey.”

“The Peace of God’s Reign.” This passage is teaching us that peace can only be had only through righteousness. There might not be physical prosperity; there will often be suffering and affliction. But if a person is righteous, he/she will have a growing “quietness and assurance forever.”

Such a peace is totally foreign to the world, which is why Paul calls it in **Philippians Chapter 4**, “a peace that passes all understanding.” Godless people equate peace with a life of ease. They don’t understand the kind of peace that transcends our physical ailments and concerns. They don’t understand the kind of peace that allows a person to face even the most difficult dircumstances with confidence and joy.

Unbelievers in Jesus Christ look at outward things and measure their happiness according to them. But believers, those of us who trust in the Lord, know that peace can come only when one is living within the will of God. That means primarily that we live according to God’s commandments, for when we do this our consciences are clear and we no longer are plagued with doubt.

“Judah could have enjoyed safety, quietness, and assurance had they trusted wholly in the Lord and not turned to Egypt for help. “Righteousness” is the key word in this point as well (vs. 16 & 17). There can be no true peace without a right relationship with God. When sinners trust Christ and receive the gift of righteousness, then they can have peace in their hearts and peace with one another.” (Wiersbe, 84)

We’ve seen there will be -

- **A reign of righteousness** (verses 1-3);
- **The consequences of complacency** (verses 9-11);
- **The peace of God’s reign** (verses 16-20).

In the Antarctic summer of 1908-1909, Sir Ernest Shackleton and three companions attempted to travel to the South Pole from their winter quarters. They set off with four ponies to help carry the load. Weeks later, their ponies dead, rations all but exhausted, they turned back toward their base, their goal not accomplished. Altogether, they trekked 127 days.

On the return journey, as Shackleton records in *The Heart Of The Antarctic*, the time was spent talking about food—elaborate feasts, gourmet delights, sumptuous menus. As they staggered along, suffering from dysentery, not knowing whether they would survive, every waking hour was occupied with thoughts of eating.

Jesus, who also knew the ravages of food deprivation, said, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness” (**Matthew 5:6**). We can understand Shackleton’s obsession with food, which offers a glimpse of the passion Jesus intends for our quest for righteousness.