

November 22, 2015
Isaiah 51:4-6

Proper 29B
Salvation Will Endure

Grace, mercy, and peace be yours from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

There is coming a day when the heavens will vanish like smoke and the earth will wear out like a garment. The world will be gone...

Can you imagine our world being gone? The house that you live in gone, the fields you work in gone, the church you worship in gone. There is coming a day when "The heavens and the earth will pass away." There is coming a day when the grass will wither and the flowers will fade. There is coming a day when the sun and moon will no longer shine and the stars will fall from the sky. There is coming a day when the world as we know it will be gone!

We might see it a bit more here in Northern Minnesota as winter quickly approaches. The flowers have faded, the leaves are gone, the grass is beginning to wither, and soon the ground will be covered in snow. The light is quickly becoming shorter. As of today we have 9 hours of daylight, and the days will shorten for another month. Darkness is a reality for those in Northern Minnesota and further north. The days as we have come to know them are gone for now.

That day is coming though when it will all be gone, it's coming soon, but it's not yet.

The world for Israel was falling apart around them. They were captives yet again, captives in Babylon. They were in exile. Jerusalem was destroyed. They were far from their homeland. They were far from their traditions. More importantly and more devastatingly, they were far from their God, for they had gone after idols.

We too are far away from our God, we too have gone after idols. We too have not listened to the voice of our God. Sometimes, we too, feel like Israel. Our world is falling apart before our very eyes. The curse of sin has control of us too. We fall prey to the temptation of idolatry. We go after other gods. We put things above the true God. Whether that be football, fields, family, or friends, sports, sex, spouse or school, education or entertainment, music, money or media, tradition, technology or television. These are not the Asherah's and Ba'al's that Israel followed, but they do offer some pretty spectacular things. They might offer us popularity, wealth and success. They offer us what we think is love and acceptance. Really what all these might offer include: darkness, death, disease, disability, divorce and destruction and we can see these ravaging our world and lives today. I look out at the world and I could stand and bang on the pulpit and tell you that you are all going to hell because of what you have done. You and I though we know that.

We are well aware of the trouble in our world and more importantly the trouble in our own lives. We see it and we live it.

Israel was blind though at points, and often times so are we. Long before Israel was devastated and in Babylon. Long before they were thoroughly lost and driven in darkness, there was light, there was hope, there was comfort. You see Isaiah was writing to a people before they were in exile. His prophecies were right, they would be cast into exile, but yet there was already words of Hope, words of Comfort.

For Isaiah even writes these words: *“For the Lord comforts Zion; he comforts all her waste places and makes her wilderness like Eden, her desert like the garden of the Lord, thanksgiving and the voice of song.”* There’s a precious promise, a precious promise that the Lord is going to restore His creation.

Yes, the end is coming soon...but that means redemption, restoration, and resurrection are coming soon as well.

This is coming soon because of Servant that was coming to redeem, restore, and resurrect his people. Cyrus let Israel go back home, but he was only a foretaste of the greater Servant, this Servant being the one who suffers.

IF this Suffering Servant did not come to redeem, restore, and resurrect his people, life as we know it now would only be worse. The Suffering Servant is the one that came to bring healing to a nation. The Suffering Servant is the one that came to bring light to the nation. Jesus Christ is the suffering Servant that brought light to the nation of Israel and to the surrounding nations. Jesus Christ is the Suffering Servant who brings light into your dark lives.

Jesus Christ is the Suffering Servant who suffered for you. He suffered on a hill called Calvary so that you can live on a Mountain called Zion. He was bruised, beaten, and bloodied, so that you can be healthy and whole. He was left for dead so that you might be left alive.

As the Suffering Servant was led like a lamb to the slaughter, so you too are led through His death. As St. Paul writes: *“Do you not know that all us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death.”* You see, even as God calls Israel, my people. You, too, are restored and are God’s people through your Baptism. The Suffering Servant didn’t stay dead, He was led out of death into life. St. Paul says that we too are led out of death to life: *“We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with Him in a death like His we shall certainly be united with Him in a resurrection like His.”* It is here in our Baptism that God gives us the light.

You and I are granted faith in baptism, because of this we are judged according to the light, not according to the darkness. The Servant redeems, restores, and resurrects his people through this great gift of Baptism. A baptism where you receive Salvation. Salvation that endures forever.

Our text closes with these words, “My salvation will be forever, and my righteousness will never be dismayed.” Indeed God’s Salvation is forever.

For the world as we know will cease, it will end. Our world had a beginning when God said, “Let there be...and it was so.” Our world will have an end, at least our sinful fallen world will have an end. There is coming a day when the world will be redeemed, restored, and resurrected. It’s a day that Isaiah writes about later in His book.

17 “For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth,
and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind.
18 But be glad and rejoice forever in that which I create;
for behold, I create Jerusalem to be a joy, and her people to be a
gladness.
19 I will rejoice in Jerusalem and be glad in my people;
no more shall be heard in it the sound of weeping and the cry of distress.
20 No more shall there be in it an infant who lives but a few days,
or an old man who does not fill out his days, for the young man shall die a
hundred years old, and the sinner a hundred years old shall be accursed.
21 They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and
eat their fruit.
22 They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another
eat; for like the days of a tree shall the days of my people be, and my
chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands.
23 They shall not labor in vain or bear children for calamity,
for they shall be the offspring of the blessed of the Lord, and their
descendants with them.
24 Before they call I will answer; while they are yet speaking I will hear.
25 The wolf and the lamb shall graze together; the lion shall eat straw like the
ox, and dust shall be the serpent’s food. They shall not hurt or destroy in
all my holy mountain,” says the Lord. ¹

On the day that is coming soon, the end of this present time, the Lord God is going to escort the living and dead in the Lord into the New Heavens and the New Earth. It’s a day when annihilation will not happen, it’s a day when restoration will happen. Much like today as we are restored through the Body and Blood of our Lord in the Holy Supper.

Yes, the heavens as we know it will vanish like smoke, the earth will wear out like a garment and its inhabitants will die like gnats...the promise that remains is the fact that His Salvation will be forever and His righteousness will never end. The promise that remains is the fact that His Salvation is our Salvation and it will be forever and our righteousness will never end. As Creation was once created perfect, so it shall be again and we shall live in it, redeemed, restored, and resurrected!

¹ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2001). (Is 65:17–25). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

In Jesus Name. Amen.

Now may the peace of God which passes all human understanding guard your hearts and your minds and keep them focused in Christ Jesus our Lord and Savior. Amen.

Will be preached to the Saints of God at Trinity and St. Paul in Fisher and Euclid, MN on November 22 by Michael Nielsen