

Eve of the Circumcision and Name of Jesus

December 31, 2008

Isaiah 30:8-17

The First Commandment

In the name of the Father and of the † Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

The old saying remains true during this evening, “Those who do not remember their past are doomed to repeat it.” Isaiah could have very easily used those words in his prophecy to the children of Israel when he wrote, **And now, go, write it before them on a tablet and inscribe it in a book, that it may be for the time to come as a witness forever. For they are a rebellious people, lying children, children unwilling to hear the instruction of the Lord;** Isaiah was not moved to write these words for His own people, they had already made up their minds. He wrote these words of warning for future generations, he wrote them for our generation.

The princes had given up waiting for the Lord. No longer did they want to hear the words of the Lord through Isaiah the prophet, **For the yoke of his burden and the staff for his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian. For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult and every garment rolled in blood will be burned as fuel for the fire.** Isaiah’s

prophecy's of deliverance fell on ears which no longer heard. Ears that no longer trusted in God's Word. That He would deliver His people.

So Isaiah wrote, **inscribe it in a book, that it may be for the time to come as a witness forever.** Egypt was to be trusted more than the Lord. They had an army, horses, chariots, Pharaoh. They could fight the Assyrian juggernaut. Why should we trust in the Lord who to their perception was distant. They had broken the first commandment, **I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me.** The trust of the people was in Egypt and its human power. In its military might, rather than the Lord God who has always kept His promises.

For the time is coming when people will not endure sounds teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. St. Paul's words rang true during that time. For the people wanted Isaiah to preach to them what they wanted to hear, **Speak to us smooth things, prophesy illusion, leave the way, turn aside from the path, let us hear no more about the Holy One of Israel.** We don't care what you have to say to us Isaiah. Tell us what we want to hear. Don't tell us about God anymore, their sin had blinded them.

Turning from His way God proclaims: **Because you despise this word and trust in oppression and perverseness and rely on them, therefore this iniquity shall be to you like a breach in a high wall, bulging out, and about to collapse, whose breaking comes suddenly, in an instant.** God's Word, His promises they no longer wanted to hear. They wanted action. The Israelites wanted it on their terms. Their means, the means of the Egyptian army. The wall may begin to develop cracks and bulges and remains standing, but when it topples it will come suddenly, and there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. There will be nothing left. Only the Lord and His promises remain.

The old saying remains true during this evening, "Those who do not remember the past are doomed to repeat it." We hear this piece of advice and hear the Word's of the Lord and we still don't keep them. You still don't follow it. You don't trust in God with your whole heart, mind, and soul. You don't trust Him above all things. Instead the good you would do you do not do and instead you do the evil you hate. You hurt yourself by not trusting in God. You do not act in your own best interest. You act stupidly. Our Lord waits. He waits to gather us together as his chicks. **O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not.**

We trust in ourselves and in others more than the Lord. So why do you keep doing it? Why can't you learn from your mistakes? What makes you think that this time it will turn out differently? Why do you continue to do things that you regret? Rather than trusting in God to provide for you your daily bread why do you take matters into your own hands? Why are you still so afraid that things will not turn out for the best when you trust in the Lord? Is it because it may not be how you wanted it? You think that you can find hope in yourself, in others, and in other things? But it never works.

Repent! Trust in Him. You deceive yourself when you believe that you can do alright without the Lord. You jettison what you know and become the devil's accomplice. The devil doesn't need to talk you into anything. We arrive with a list of other people we can trust and other reasons why we don't think we can trust in God. You have a hand in your own sorrow.

There is only one way that we can make it through the coming year: God's grace. The grace that is won is through Jesus Christ Himself. He is the Way, the truth, and the Life. He has died for you and risen again for you. He is coming back for you and He still wants you. He loves you even when it seems like He is distant and uncaring. **For thus said the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel, In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and in trust shall be your strength.** It is not in the thunder of pounding horse hooves nor in the works of our own minds and abilities. In repentance and quietness. May we listen quietly and know that the Lord

God is at work. God will not abandon us. He waits even till that time when we have to admit our own limitation. Lord God, I cannot do it on my own. Forgive me for turning my back on You.

The Lord waits and provides for us. For those struggling in this world. He gives us His Word and Sacrament not to people who believe they can take care of themselves, but to sinners. Sinners who know that their strength and trust is in the Lord. Christ is here to forgive you this evening. As we repent of our sins this evening, of not trusting in the Lord, and so many more. Your foolish sins in trusting in others doesn't stop Him. He is not ashamed of you. He loves you. He speaks to you in His Word. He gives Himself as food for faith hidden in bread and wine. He Is your Lord. He will wait for you and comfort you. He will see you through the coming night of the next year.

Even when you think you can run as the Israelites did. **But you were unwilling, and you said, No! We will flee upon horses; therefore you shall flee away; and, We will wired upon swift steeds; therefore your pursuers shall be swift.** The point is that when we try to run we will run into someone swifter. Then what?

No matter how foolish you look in the New Year to the world, or to yourself, no matter what evil, selfish things you have done in the past, these don't matter. Do not be ashamed. God's opinion and work are what matters. He has chosen you

from all Creation, to be His and to be with Him forever. God has made a promise to you in your baptism that He would watch over you forever. **For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.**

Blessed New Year. In Jesus Name. Amen.