

Saints Triumphant – November 17, 2019
Good Shepherd Ev. Lutheran Church
Pastor Charles Heup

Isaiah 65:17-25 (NIV)

"See, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind. (18) But be glad and rejoice forever in what I will create, for I will create Jerusalem to be a delight and its people a joy. (19) I will rejoice over Jerusalem and take delight in my people; the sound of weeping and of crying will be heard in it no more. (20) "Never again will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not live out his years; the one who dies at a hundred will be thought a mere child; the one who fails to reach a hundred will be considered accursed. (21) They will build houses and dwell in them; they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit. (22) No longer will they build houses and others live in them, or plant and others eat. For as the days of a tree, so will be the days of my people; my chosen ones will long enjoy the work of their hands. (23) They will not labor in vain, nor will they bear children doomed to misfortune; for they will be a people blessed by the LORD, they and their descendants with them. (24) Before they call I will answer; while they are still speaking I will hear. (25) The wolf and the lamb will feed together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox, and dust will be the serpent's food. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain," says the LORD.

Dear Friends in Christ Jesus – our coming Lord.

I've got a bit of a riddle I'd like you to try to solve. What do a three year-old and prophecy have in common? Ok I guess I'm going to have to give you a bit more of a clue. When you tell a three year-old that some thing is going to happen in three days – they'll expect that it's going to happen in three minutes. Toddlers don't have a clear sense of perspective when it comes to understanding time and the future. Scriptural prophecy can be like that – it doesn't always communicate a clear sense of perspective and timing.

As an example we can consider Jesus' prophecy about the destruction of Jerusalem and end of this world in Matthew 25. As we look at that chapter today we conclude that some of what it says has already taken place while some of what it says is still waiting fulfillment. Jesus spoke of the stones of the temple and said: **"Truly I tell you, not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down."** (Matthew 24:2 NIV) Later his disciples asked him to tell them when this would happen and to tell them about the signs his coming and the end of the age. And so Jesus spoke of persecutions, wars, nations rising up against each other, natural disasters like earthquakes and famines, and the appearance of false prophets and false Christ's and the love of many growing cold. He also spoke about the spread of the Gospel and the Lord's promise to save those who stood firm in the faith. He then warned those in Judah to be on the look out and to flee to the mountains when they saw that the end of the city was near.

The two events (the destruction of the temple and the end of the world) aren't clearly separated. It's as if the prophet is lacking depth perception. He does not see what comes first and then what comes later. He's simply talking about things to come. We have another example of that in our text. Isaiah looks ahead and announces that a time will come when the Lord will come to aid of his people. He speaks of the way things will be in the eternal kingdom of God and he speaks of the way things will be in the time period before the coming of that great day – the time we're living in, the time of the New Testament church.

We usually talk about first things first. I'm going to go the pharmacy, the gas station and Fleet Farm. Most likely you would think that Fleet Farm would be my last stop. It wouldn't have to be – though. I could just as easily stop there either before or after the gas station. I'm really just mentioning the places I'm going to stop and I'm not really saying anything about the sequence with that statement. And that's how Isaiah is talking in our text. While it might seem logical that he would speak first about the New Testament era – he actually

begins by speaking about the eternal kingdom of the Lord first – in verses 17-19 and then in verses 20-25 he concludes by talking about things you and I might enjoy before we enjoy the blessings of eternal life.

Here's a situation where it will help us to adopt the view of a child (one that isn't so dependant upon perspective). While the time frame may not be clear what is clear is the fact that

God's People Are Blessed

- 1. We enjoy his blessings in our day**
- 2. We will enjoy his blessings in the great day to come**

As I've already mentioned it is the second part of our text which reminds us of the blessings we enjoy in our day. Verse 23 puts it this way: **they will be a people blessed by the LORD.**

(20) "Never again will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not live out his years; the one who dies at a hundred will be thought a mere child; the one who fails to reach a hundred will be considered accursed. We realize that Isaiah can't be describing heaven in these verses because the Scriptures teach us that in heaven there will be no more death or dying. (Revelation 21:4) And yet we struggle to see just exactly how these words apply to us today because we think of someone who lives to 100 as being a ripe old age and not a mere youth. Sadly we know of situations maybe in our own families of an infant who lived but a short time before the Lord took the child to be with him. We don't always understand the Lord's ways – why for some life is long by our standards and for others short by our standards. Isaiah uses our standards to describe what the Psalmist promised in Psalm 91:16, **With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation."**

The point that both Isaiah and the Psalmist are making is that the Lord will watch over our lives and bless us with the gift of life and that all things will work for our good. Isaiah promises that the Lord will deal with people patiently rather than cutting them off at an early age. The NT is filled with reminders of the Lord's patience. For example 2 Peter 3:9, 15 (NIV) **The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. ... (15) Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him.**

The Lord's patience is a blessing to us because our sins often try his patience. What a blessing it is that the Lord's calls us over and over again to repent of our sins and unbelief rather than striking us down dead in an instant for our sins. The Lord's blessings are also evident to us in the prosperity and security that we enjoy. Isaiah talks of that in our text as well.

(21) They will build houses and dwell in them; they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit. (22) No longer will they build houses and others live in them, or plant and others eat. For as the days of a tree, so will be the days of my people; my chosen ones will long enjoy the work of their hands.

In Deuteronomy 28:30 the Lord explained that he would deal with his disobedient people in this way: **You will build a house, but you will not live in it. You will plant a vineyard, but you will not even begin to enjoy its fruit.** (NIV) Frequently in the OT times we hear how the Lord allowed heathen nations to invade the land of his people Israel and to destroy and scatter them because of their sin. Christians – God's NT people – live in a new era when God has suspended such actions. Again that is not to say that every Christian will always enjoy perfect protection and security in their homes. But in general God's way of dealing with us today is to place us under his special care. And so we take comfort in the fact that **in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.** (Romans 8:28NIV)

As we continue to examine the words of our text we discover additional information which helps us to see that Isaiah is not just speaking about eternal life in heaven in this text but that's he's also talking about the blessings God has for us today. Isaiah speaks of the fact that the Lord would bless his people by enabling them to have children and promises that his blessings will also rest upon those children. This is a promise only for this life time.

(23) They will not labor in vain, nor will they bear children doomed to misfortune; for they will be a people blessed by the LORD, they and their descendants with them. By God's grace our children have become part of the Lord's family through baptism and they too are assured of God's blessings.

Isaiah mentions yet another blessing that we enjoy as we await our ultimate glory in heaven. **(24) Before they call I will answer; while they are still speaking I will hear.** This wonderful privilege is ours for Christ's sake. Recall his wonderful promise: **(23) In that day you will no longer ask me anything. Very truly I tell you, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. (24) Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete.** (John 16:23-24 NIV)

God's people live by prayer and the Word of God. We listen to the Lord as he speaks to us in his Word and assures us of his love and faithfulness. **He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all-- how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?** (Romans 8:32NIV) And we respond to that word with our prayers and our praises. When we face trouble, heartache, and danger we turn to the Lord and he hears. That's what the Lord promises through Isaiah: **(24) Before they call I will answer; while they are still speaking I will hear.**

Martin Luther made this comment about this verse:

Our prayer pleases God because he has commanded it and made promises ... For that reason He is pleased with our prayer, he requires it and delights in it, because he promises, commands and shapes it...God cannot get enough of the prayers of the godly. Therefore the prayer of the godly is likened to a most attractive fragrance which one cannot smell enough...When the godly pray, it is already guaranteed in heaven and on earth. That is why we must bring our prayers to a close by expressing our confidence with the word Amen – which means it is done!

Isaiah's description of our life isn't quite finished yet. He paints a picture of the peace which believers enjoy with these words. **(25) The wolf and the lamb will feed together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox, and dust will be the serpent's food. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain," says the LORD.**

Already now we are at peace with God because of Christ. His peace rules our hearts. We live at peace with one another. The acts of the sinful nature include: hatred, discord, jealousy, dissensions, factions and envy. (Galatians 5:20-21) But the Gospel has set us free from the control of sinful nature. The Gospel fills our hearts with love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness and self-control. (Galatians 5:22-23) That's why Paul can encourage us to **(16) Live in harmony with one another. ... (18) If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.** (Romans 12:16, 18 NIV)

Sadly we do not always live in step with the Spirit. And that's why at times we do not enjoy the peace and harmony which the Lord has given to us. Sadly Christians are still plagued by their sinful natures and this sinful nature will stir up troubles and arguments among Christians. But the preaching of the Gospel will bring believers together even as it motivates enemies to embrace and forgive as they have been forgiven. The peace

with God through Christ produces a peace among his followers. And even though at times this peace may be marred by sins of jealousy, prejudice, and pride, it is still present among those who follow the Prince of Peace.

Isaiah has described as a people who are blessed in our day. We are also a people who will be blessed in the great day which is to come. That means that there are more blessings in store for us. That means that the time will come when the blessings of the Lord will no longer be tainted and marred by our sins and imperfections. Let's go back to the opening words of our text to examine the Lord's promises regarding our future life with him in glory.

"See, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind. (18) But be glad and rejoice forever in what I will create, for I will create Jerusalem to be a delight and its people a joy. (19) I will rejoice over Jerusalem and take delight in my people; the sound of weeping and of crying will be heard in it no more.

Everything will be new. Everything will be different. That's the Lord's promise for our life with him which will begin on the day of our Lord's return. The perfection of God's creation which was lost in the fall into sin will once again be restored. We will no longer remember the troubles, the difficulties which confronted us during our earthly life. We will be glad and rejoice forever in God's new creation. God's people will also enjoy complete holiness and perfection. The Lord will be delighted with us. No longer will we sorrow over our sins and failures. No longer will we have to deal with the grief, the hurt and the heartache which is so much a part of life in this sinful world. The sound of joy and laughter will replace the sound of weeping and crying.

That's how the Lord has pictured the blessings we will enjoy in our life with him. And those promises sustain us as we journey through our life in this world as a people blessed by God. As Isaiah has reminded us

- 1. We enjoy his blessings in our day**
- 2. We will enjoy his blessings in the great day to come**

Amen.