

PROPER 18 B**“The Word of God Has Come to Save Us”****Isaiah 35:4-7a**

What is it like to be a Christian? How is life different with Jesus Christ in our lives? These are tough questions to answer especially for those who have been Christians all their lives and don't know what it is like not to have Jesus with them. Without Jesus we live in fear with good reasons to be afraid. With Jesus we live in faith with good reasons to be strong and confident. In His Son Jesus, our almighty God has come to save us from what we fear by removing from us the sin that handicaps our spirits.

What are you afraid of? This might sound strange as you sit here comfortably in worship. You are a child without a care in the world, a youth with full life ahead of you, a young adult living with great vigor, a middle-aged person well set in life or a seasoned citizen enjoying good health and wealth. What is there to fear? We all have something that makes us afraid. Those fears explain our actions that seem unreasonable and irrational. Those who are stubborn are afraid of change or discovering that their firmly held opinion is wrong. Those who are mean are afraid of other people getting too close to them and learning their weaknesses. Those who misbehave are afraid that others will not notice them if they act properly.

It is at the point of our fear that we find our idolatry. That is, the very thing we are most afraid of reveals what is our false god. When a job is our false god, then we will fear unemployment or retirement. When physical health is our false god, then we will fear illness and aging. When money is our false god, then we will fear financial failure and poverty. When even marriage is our false god, then we will fear not finding a spouse or losing the spouse we have to death/divorce. While such things have their place in our lives and are great blessings, they are not to replace the one true God in our lives. We all have fear in our lives. Those fears that lead us to idolatry are the result of our sinful human nature. There is only one proper fear, one that points us to the true object of our worship. That is the fear of living our lives without God and His blessings to us.

It is to His people who have this proper fear that God addresses the words of our text. They were spoken first to His people of Israel through the prophet Isaiah 700 years before the birth of Jesus. They are spoken now to us through the written

words of the Holy Bible, words that remove our fear and calm our spirits. This is God's promise of coming to us and being present among us. God will come with vengeance and retribution. These words sound scary and might make us more afraid. But when God comes He will not execute this vengeance upon us. Instead, such judgment of God is upon His enemies and the enemies of His people, sin, death and the devil.

God brings His vengeance upon this unholy three when He saves us from their grasp. God executes His retribution upon these enemies when He pulls us out of their clutches. Our God has come to us, born in our human flesh as the one Isaiah earlier calls "Immanuel," God with us. Our God has come to us, living among us in the person of the one named "Jesus," God saves. Our God has come to us, dying on the cross as the one called Christ, the Anointed One, the Messiah. Our God has come to us, rising from the dead as the one we confess to be the living Son of God.

Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ, the Son of God in human flesh, is our God who has come to save us. By Jesus' perfect life and innocent death our God has executed upon Himself His vengeance against our sins. By Jesus' resurrection from the dead our God has rescued us from the guilt of our sins. He saved us from the spiritual and eternal death that our sins bring upon us. Jesus delivers us from the devil who wants to make us afraid of God.

In Jesus Christ our God has come to us He has promised us. Our God still comes to us, present for us in the water and word of our holy baptism to make us His own chosen people. Our God still comes to us, speaking to us in His written word of the Holy Bible, promising us eternal life with Him. Our God still comes to us, for the body and blood of Jesus are present for us in the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper for the forgiveness of our sins and the strengthening of our faith.

When God comes to defeat our spiritual enemies and save us from the fears they cause us, our lives change. In this passage that change for the better is described in physical terms of healing for our bodies. Before God came to save us we were blinded by our sin so that we could not see His love for us. Before God came to save us we were deaf to His promise of life with

Him now and forever. Before God came to save us we were paralyzed in spirit, unable to work for Him in our lives. Before God came to save us we could not speak of His goodness to us either in our worship or by our witness. Before God came to save us our lives were a spiritual desert, a barren wasteland of our own dry, parched selfishness.

But the presence of Jesus Christ in the world and the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives through God's Word and Sacraments have reversed our spiritual handicaps. Our eyes now are opened to the love and goodness of God at work in our lives. Our ears now hear His words of forgiveness, life and salvation spoken to us in His word. Our limbs now are energized to work in service for the glory of God and the benefit of those around us. Our tongues now are given words to speak in praise of God and to share His good news with others.

Springs of living water now flow into our lives from our living Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He has opened up the faucets of salvation and poured the water of eternal life into us. Jesus promises in John 7, "if anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink, whoever believes in Me, streams of living water will flow from within him." The water of life is our holy baptism. It washes out our old sinful nature and cleans us with a new nature as God's chosen children. The water of life flows into our lives through God's inspired word of the Holy Bible. The water of life refreshes us as the Lord's Supper strengthens us for our lives in the name of Jesus.

Our God has come to us. In His Son Jesus Christ our God has defeated the enemies of our lives and rescued us from our fears. Our God still comes to us. In His Word and Sacraments our God is present among us whom He has chosen to be His saved and forgiven people. Our God renews our lives, granting us new strength to live for Him now and to live with Him forever. Amen.