

Chapter 30 Isaiah 7-12

Isaiah's Message

"Hear now, you house of David! Is it enough to try the patience of human beings? Will you try the patience of my God also? Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel." Isaiah 7:13-14

Isaiah was called to declare the truth of God with such clarity and boldness that it hardened people's hearts against God. "Make the heart of this people calloused; make their eyes dull and close their eyes" (6:10). Isaiah gave the message of God so powerfully and persuasively that the people were pushed beyond the point of no return. If they didn't respond to Isaiah's proclamation of the Word of God they wouldn't respond to anyone else's. He was God's last call but they didn't even hear it! In the seventh and eighth chapters we see Isaiah in action. Isaiah's ministry during the reign of Ahaz helps us to see the difference between fear and faith, judgment and hope, testing and trusting.

Ahaz's Fear

Isaiah embodied the prophecy; with his life he portrayed it, and with his words he proclaimed it. His God-directed timing was perfect. He showed up at the aqueduct with his son Shear-Jashub to meet Ahaz, just after the king of Judah had received news that his neighbors, Aram and Ephraim had conspired against the house of David. "...The hearts of Ahaz and his people were shaken, as the trees of the forest are shaken by the wind" (7:2). Isaiah's timely spiritual direction was as reassuring as it was demanding. "Be careful, keep calm and don't be afraid. Do not lose heart because of these two smoldering stubs of firewood." It was a true word of comfort, but only if Ahaz would trust in the Sovereign Lord. If he didn't, it would have been very easy for him to dismiss Isaiah's admonition as irrelevant, idealistic, and impractical; not fit for the real world of power politics. Isaiah, however, made it difficult for Ahaz to ignore his message outright by offering a well-informed analysis of the political situation. Although "the fierce anger" of Judah's enemies was real, Damascus and Samaria were spent forces—"two smoldering stubs of firewood." They plotted Judah's ruin and planned their invasion, but Isaiah declared what the Sovereign Lord said, "It will not take place, it will not happen" (7:7).

The message was timed for maximum impact and delivered with insight and passion, but one wonders if Isaiah, with his son, Shear-Jashub, by his side, was not fully aware from the start that God's message was going to be rejected by Ahaz. The meaning of Shear-Jashub's name, "a remnant will return," would not have escaped Ahaz's notice. And it would have angered him, because it implied disaster, occupation, and exile. As far as the king was concerned, who cared if a small group of survivors eventually made it back. It was not the kind of high impact message that Ahaz was looking for. He might have felt that Isaiah was delivering a double message: on the one hand, a symbolic message that communicated disaster and on the other, a spoken message that was hopelessly impractical. How could he sit back and do nothing, but that was

exactly what Isaiah was telling him, “Be careful and do nothing” (Motyer, p.81).

Ahaz was checking out the aqueduct, to reassure himself that Jerusalem’s water supply would survive a siege. He took his leadership seriously. He was a practical man, a political man, a man of action. He was contemplating an alliance with Assyria to buy some protection against his enemies. Judah’s future depended on strategic thinking, not faith. He wasn’t impressed with Isaiah’s challenge, “If you do not stand firm in your faith, you will not stand at all” (7:9). For Ahaz, faith had nothing to do with it, but for Isaiah faith was all that mattered. As far as Ahaz was concerned this was a political problem, not a spiritual problem. Faith was a religious issue. But for Isaiah, faith in Yahweh defined their identity, focused their devotion, determined their conduct and shaped their destiny. The prophet’s challenge for us is to know that Jesus is Lord in every area of life, including our business practices, family life, and leisure activities. Jesus is Lord of our relationships, our self-image and our sense of significance, our use of money and our commitment to God’s calling in our lives. We live by faith so that all of life may be devoted to the Lord Jesus Christ, who loved us and gave himself for us (Eph 5:2). As someone has said, Jesus is either Lord of all or he is not Lord at all.

Isaiah’s second message to Ahaz gave the king free reign, “Ask the Lord your God for a sign, whether in the deepest depths or in the highest heights” (7:11). This time there was no visual aid, no political analysis, no spiritual direction, only a blank check that Ahaz could fill out any way he wanted to. The Lord was willing to go to great lengths to prove his reliability, but Ahaz would have nothing to do with it. He hid his unbelief behind a pious sounding excuse, “I will not ask; I will not put the Lord to the test” (7:12). On the contrary, by refusing to accept God’s invitation, Ahaz did put God to the test. He refused to let anything interfere with his own plan.

Ahaz was a prime example of a person who refused to hear and understand the Word of God. He epitomized the hard-hearted product of Isaiah’s Spirit-filled proclamation of the Word of God (6:9-10). He embodied the reaction and rejection that God had prepared Isaiah for. Under Ahaz, the house of David was led by a king who wanted nothing to do with Yahweh, a conviction he seemed bent on proving. He “cast idols for worshiping the Baals” and “offered sacrifices and burned incense at the high places” (2 Chron 28:2,4). He “even sacrificed his son in the fire, following the detestable ways of the nations the Lord had driven out before the Israelites” (2 Kings 16:3). Eventually, he stripped the temple of God of its furnishings, and sent the silver and gold to the king of Assyria. He said to the king of Assyria what he could not bring himself to say to Yahweh, “I am your servant and vassal. Come up and save me out of the hand of the king of Aram and of the king of Israel, who are attacking me” (2 Kings 16:7-8).

Chronicles reports that Ahaz “shut the doors of the Lord’s temple” (2 Chron 28:24), but the account in Kings indicates that he remodeled the temple to please the Assyrians. Apparently Ahaz was especially proud of the new altar that he had built according to a design he saw in Damascus (2 Kings 16:10-18). Through his acts of desecration, Ahaz effectively closed the temple down, but Uriah the priest still presided over this open-minded blending of diverse religious traditions. For his part, Ahaz was undoubtedly proud of his religious accomplishments. He “set up altars at every street corner in Jerusalem” (2 Chron 28:24). Ahaz and Isaiah represent

two strikingly different positions. They may have started out worshiping in the same temple but they were polar opposites from the beginning. There was no middle ground between them. A suitable compromise could not be reached by measuring the distance between them to choose the half-way mark. The distance between them is infinite. It is the difference between good and evil, light and darkness, truth and deception. One must choose between Ahaz and Isaiah, for there is no choice in-between. God is either our sanctuary from fear or the rock that makes us fall (Isa 8:14).

Judgment or Salvation

Many may be surprised to learn that the setting for one of the most famous prophecies in the Bible was Ahaz's rejection of Yahweh. The birth of a baby boy named Immanuel would trigger a countdown for the invasion of Assyria. The prophecy was, in this first instance, a sign of judgment. We can feel the anger behind Isaiah's words, "Hear now, you house of David! Is it not enough to try the patience of men? Will you try the patience of my God also? Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel. He will eat curds and honey when he knows enough to reject the wrong and choose the right. But before the boy knows enough to reject the wrong and choose the right, the land of the two kings you dread will be laid waste. The Lord will bring on you and your people and on the house of your father a time unlike any since Ephraim (Israel) broke away from Judah—he will bring the king of Assyria" (7:13-17).

Against Ahaz and his deplorable leadership over the house of David, Isaiah points to the coming of the Davidic-Messiah. This is in line with the prophecies given to David of the one who would establish his throne forever (2 Sam 7:11-16). It is in keeping with the high expectations of the Anointed One, the Son of God, celebrated in Psalm 2 and anticipated in Psalm 45. The title *Immanuel* is unique to Isaiah, but it highlights earlier prophecy of the coming Messiah (Motyer, p.85). From where we stand in Salvation History it is easier to understand the long range fulfillment of this prophecy in Jesus than the immediate fulfillment before Ahaz. It is the lesser meaning that is obscure whereas the greater meaning is secure.

The Gospel of Matthew links the Incarnation explicitly to this prophecy. "All this took place to fulfill what the Lord has said through the prophet: 'The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel, which means, 'God with us'" (Mt 1:22-23). [Moyter observes that "wherever the context allows a judgment, 'alma is not a general term meaning 'young woman' but a specific one meaning 'virgin' (see Gen 24:43; Ex 2:8; Song 6:8), p.84-85]. Isaiah delivered his prophecy with such a sense of immediacy that it is difficult to discern the difference between short range and long range fulfillment. For Ahaz, the coming of Immanuel was limited to judgment, but for Isaiah the prophecy of Immanuel meant salvation. He had Immanuel in mind when he declared,

"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with

justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this” (9:6-7).

The resolution of this tension between immediate and future fulfillment may be found in Isaiah’s own family. The Lord told Isaiah to publicize a name. He was to write in large letters, *Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz*, and have it notarized by Uriah and Zechariah (2 Ki 16:10-16; 18:2). If Isaiah had been told to write *Immanuel* the immediate and remote fulfillment of the prophecy would have been clarified. But it may be reasonable to suppose that the meaning of Immanuel, God with us, required a different translation for Ahaz. *Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz* was an in-your-face description of what the presence of God was about to mean for Ahaz and the people of Judah.

It was not a name to be proud of. It was better suited for graffiti than official letterhead, but it communicated exactly what God wanted Ahaz to hear. Speed-spoil-haste-plunder. In a name it captured the message of judgment that Isaiah had been delivering right along. Assyria was going to swoop down like a swarm of flies or bees. They would utterly humiliate the people and reduce them to scavenging for food in a ravaged land. The once fertile vineyards would be nothing more than briars and thorns. Before Speed-spoil-haste-plunder could say “My father” or “My mother” Assyria would destroy Samaria (the northern tribes) and sweep down on Judah like a flood. All the king’s political alliances and diplomatic strategies would not stand because of Immanuel. The inclusion of the name Immanuel at the end signals the immediate fulfillment as it was portrayed in in Isaiah’s own son, of God’s Immanuel prophecy (8:8-10).

Trust versus Fear

Isaiah was encouraged to stand firm: “The Lord spoke to me with his strong hand upon me, warning me not to follow the way of his people.” The Lord made it clear to him. “Do not call conspiracy everything that these people call conspiracy; do not fear what they fear, and do not dread it. The Lord Almighty is the one you are to regard as holy, he is the one you are to fear, he is the one you are to dread, and he will be a sanctuary; but for both houses of Israel he will be a stone that cause men to stumble and rock that makes them fall” (8:11-14).

Isaiah and Ahaz represented two different fears: the fear of God and the fear of man. For his part, Isaiah depended on the Word of the Lord. And even though the current circumstances did not appear to support faith and trust in the Lord, Isaiah was confident. “Bind up the testimony and seal up the law among my disciples. I will wait for the Lord, who is hiding his face from the house of Jacob. I will put my trust in him” (8:16-17). Isaiah not only proclaimed the message of God courageously, graphically and continuously, but he and his family embodied the message of God. “Here am I,” was his testimony some twenty years after his initial call and commissioning (8:18; see 6:8). But then he added, “Here am I, and the children the Lord has given me. We are signs and symbols in Israel from the Lord Almighty, who dwells on Mount Zion.” Isaiah’s prophetic ministry cannot be reduced to a series of sermons. It encompassed his whole being. His family became a visual aid of God’s revelation. Even though it was popular to look everywhere, except to God’s Word for truth and wisdom, Isaiah persisted, “To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, they have no light of dawn” (8:20).

There is no middle ground between Isaiah and Ahaz. Either God is our sanctuary or God is “a stone that causes [us] to stumble and a rock that makes [us] fall” (Isa 8:14).

Jesus’ disciples faced this same either/or decision. Following the feeding of the more than 5,000, many of Jesus’ followers rejected him, leading Jesus to ask the Twelve, “You do not want to leave too, do you?” Peter spoke up, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God” (6:68). The title that Peter used for God reminds us of Isaiah’s ministry. Peter’s confession and Isaiah’s affirmation declare the same truth and remind us of the lasting hope and the freedom from fear that can be found in God alone. “The Lord Almighty is the one you are to regard as holy, he is the one you are to fear, he is the one you are to dread” (8:13).

“In that Day”

The prophets were the great long range forecasters of the soul. In our era of immediate gratification and present moment happiness their ministry is under appreciated. The prophets insisted on seeing the present moment in the light of eternity. Their lasting contribution to spiritual formation was an unrelenting, unequivocal contention that the Sovereign Lord God could be depended upon for both judgment and salvation. Isaiah declared the will of God with bottom-line boldness. The message of Isaiah is not dated. On the contrary, Isaiah is the kind of forward-thinking prophet who the church needs to pay special attention to if we’re at all interested in staying in the story. This is especially true when it comes to Isaiah’s vision of Christ.

Immanuel, God with us, may mean either God is for us or God is against us. Our daily actions and affections carry enduring consequences. We are challenged by the prophets to live *today* in constant awareness of *that day*. One of Isaiah’s reality defining expressions was “in that day.” He used it some forty-three times to set up the contrasting picture of judgment and salvation. The prophet Isaiah believed in two destinies, one to be feared and one to be embraced; one filled with despair and one filled with hope. He warned of judgment so that we would flee from the wrath to come and he proclaimed salvation so that we would put our hope in God alone. Isaiah’s prophecy thrives on this tension between judgment and salvation. We cannot see the one without the other. The prophet wanted us to feel the tension between judgment and salvation.

Isaiah used the phrase, “In that day,” to introduce a devastating reversal of fortune for the fashionable women of Zion (3:18-4:1). They descend suddenly from prosperity into poverty. “In that day the Lord will snatch away their finery...Instead of fragrance there will be a stench; instead of a sash, a rope; instead of well-dressed hair, baldness; instead of fine clothing, sackcloth; instead of beauty, branding.” We are meant to feel the hopelessness of this bleak picture. But then, Isaiah, without explanation, does an immediate about face. “In that day the Branch of the Lord will be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the land will be the pride and glory of the survivors in Israel. Those who are left in Zion, who remain in Jerusalem, will be called holy, all who are recorded among the living in Jerusalem. The Lord will wash away the

filth of the women of Zion...(4:1-4). On the one hand, “in that day” meant disaster, but on the other, “in that day” meant deliverance. Isaiah repeated “in that day” four times when he described the Assyrian invasion of Judah and six times when he described the salvation of the remnant (10:20,27; 11:10,11; 12:1,4). In Isaiah’s vision there were two kinds of people and two radically different destinies; those who were headed for judgment and those who were headed for salvation. The difference between them depended entirely on their relationship to the Lord. Those like Ahaz, the king of Judah, who depended upon himself, faced a hopeless destiny. But those like Isaiah, who relied on the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, faced a destiny of salvation (10:20). The house of David was divided between descendants like Ahaz and descendants who depended upon the Root of Jesse for salvation.

The Root of Jesse

Of all the prophets, Isaiah’s vision of the Messiah prepares us best for the meaning of the Incarnation and the reality of the Crucifixion. The Gospel according to Isaiah focuses our attention on the One who saves us *from* judgment and *for* salvation. Inspired by the Spirit of God, the prophet offers a multifaceted picture of our Savior, whose role ranges from Suffering Servant to the King of kings and Lord of lords. To what extent Isaiah brought these various pictures together in his own mind is hard to say. Isaiah’s vision of the Savior is dynamic. We are not lectured on the person and work of the Messiah. God’s revelation cannot be reduced to neat definitions and a simple formula. Isaiah’s revelation of the Savior deserves meditation not calculation. It is not a puzzle to be solved, but a portrait to be known. We will never grasp the picture of Christ in Isaiah through technical textual study alone. Apart from prayer and a soulful readiness to worship we are left with a scholar’s composite mug shot. But in the Spirit we will come to know the very Savior and Redeemer Isaiah knew and worshiped.

Isaiah’s choice of imagery to depict the coming of the true Son of David deserves special attention. The metaphor of the “holy seed” (6:13) makes us think not only of the small remnant who would one day return to Jerusalem after the exile, but of the single individual through whom redemption will be made possible. This is evident in Isaiah’s description of the shoot and root of Jesse. Up from the leveled forest springs a tiny shoot. A picture of judgment gives way to a picture of hope. “See, the Lord, the Lord Almighty, will lop off the boughs with great power,” but “a shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit” (10:33; 11:1). The metaphor adds an important dimension to Isaiah’s well-known messianic message, “For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” There is nothing in this prophecy of sovereign power that implies weakness. Isaiah pictured the ultimate royal succession.

“Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David’s throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this” (9:6-7).

From the names of God to the sovereign rule, this messianic prophecy stood for power. But then

Isaiah was led by the Spirit to add the image of the tender shoot from the stump of Jesse. The prophet envisioned a process of fulfillment and redemption that began in weakness and vulnerability, but led to salvation and victory. The tender shoot is a picture of fragile growth. Isaiah combined a picture of weakness and small beginnings with the Man of the Spirit, and thus, formed a true picture of the Incarnation. Furthermore, the Root of Jesse (11:1,10) emphasized the humanity and historicity of the Davidic family tree. The one to come was to be both the Branch that bears fruit (11:1) and the Root of Jesse. “The Messiah is the root cause of his own family tree pending the day when, within that family, he will shoot forth” (Moyter, p.121).

Jesus fulfilled these metaphors in every way. He was the holy seed, the tender shoot, the branch that bears fruit, and the root of Jesse. The hope of redemption was found in him, not a philosophy or a set of principles. Salvation depended upon the Man of the Spirit, not the human spirit, nor the spirit of the times. Jesus is the Man of the Spirit, going forth “in the power of the Spirit” (Lk 4:14), because the Holy Spirit had descended and remained upon him (Jn 1:33). According to Isaiah’s prophecy, the Messiah’s ministry was to begin in humility and gentleness. “He will not shout or cry out, or raise his voice in the streets. A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out” (42:2-3). This was certainly true of Jesus’ ministry. He began his public ministry by summarizing his purpose from Isaiah 61, “The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor and the day of vengeance of our God...” (61:1-2). It is worth noting that the text quoted in the gospel of Luke ends with “the year of the Lord’s favor” and does not add, “the day of vengeance of our God.” In the presence of the Savior, there was no need to speak of judgment. Luke described the scene, “Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him, and he said to them, `Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing” (Lk 4:20-21). When Jesus made this announcement he was alluding to Isaiah’s key phrase, “in that day.” He confirmed that the long awaited Day of Salvation had finally come in himself, the Man of the Spirit.

Jesus identified with Isaiah’s imagery of organic growth. He used similar metaphors to describe God’s Kingdom work. The “holy seed” used the parable of the mustard seed to illustrate the insignificant beginning of God’s great work (Mk 4:30-32). “This is what the kingdom of God is like,” Jesus said. “A man scatters seed on the ground. Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how” (Mk 4:26). The inherent, inevitable growth of the Kingdom was not accomplished by human engineering but by the mystery of God. Isaiah’s imagery of the holy seed and tender shoot even lies behind Jesus’ metaphor for his death on the Cross. “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds” (Jn 12:23-25). The “tender shoot” helps us to envision how the Gospel spreads in apparent weakness and vulnerability. Nevertheless growth is inevitable. What may appear insignificant to us may be the germination of new life.

Isaiah offered a sevenfold description of the Man of the Spirit (11:2-5), followed by a sevenfold

description of the peace and security of the world to come (11:6-9). “In that day,” Isaiah announced, “the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to him, and his place of rest will be glorious” (11:10). We live today in the midst of this prophecy. The true Salvation History story continues. This material is not dated, but descriptive of things to come. There is a destiny that we can never achieve on our own, but we can receive salvation by the grace of Christ. The One upon whom this future depends has come and will come again. Hope rests not on a feeling or sentiment, but on a real historical person, whose life and actions embody the full wisdom of Yahweh.

The Spirit of the Lord is the defining identity of Isaiah’s Messiah. It is the number one attribute heading his list, followed by wisdom and understanding, counsel and power, knowledge of the Lord and the fear of the Lord. This sevenfold description of the gifts of the Spirit, reminds us of the seven-branched lampstand of the Tabernacle (Ex 25:31) and the seven golden lampstands in the apostle John’s vision of Christ (Rev 1:12). The Spirit reveals the character of Yahweh. Everything is brought into true perspective. This is the wisdom that all of us need in order to live as God intended us to live. “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline” (Prov 1:7). This wisdom is insightful, not informational; experiential, not theoretical. It is not data, it is discernment. It is as practical as it is perceptive. This is the wisdom and understanding Paul sought for the believers, when he said this is my prayer, “that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God” (Phil 1:9-11). Wisdom’s source is found not in principles or theories but in the Person upon whom the Spirit of the Lord rests. The truth that sets us free depends upon the revelation of God (Jn 8:31). That is why to know Christ is to know the one “in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col 2:3).

Isaiah stressed the wisdom of God as the preeminent sign of the Spirit of the Lord, and so should we. Although many associate the Spirit with gifts of healing and unusual phenomenon, Isaiah emphasized understanding, insight and the fear of the Lord. In Isaiah the Spirit is best known for edification and enlightenment, not emotion and enthusiasm. The presence of the Spirit was in marked contrast to the seductive alternatives described by Isaiah, “the mediums and spiritists, who whisper and mutter” (8:19) and the egotism of the powerful, who boast, “By the strength of my hand I have done this”(10:13). Isaiah’s description of the gifts of the Spirit parallels the apostle Paul’s emphasis on the teaching ministry of the church. “It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up...” (Eph 4:11-12). Isaiah followed up the sevenfold elaboration of the gifts of the Spirit with the fruit of the Spirit. He linked the two part description of the Man of the Spirit with the “fear of the Lord” (11:2,3). The Spirit filled *character* of the Messiah was followed by the Spirit filled *work* of the Messiah:

“And he will delight in the fear of the Lord.
He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes,
or decide by what he hears with his ears;

but with righteousness he will judge the needy,
with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth.
He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth;
with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked.
Righteousness will be his belt
and faithfulness the sash around his waist.

Isaiah's description moves us from a sign of weakness and vulnerability, the tender shoot, to a picture of invincible righteousness. There is no discrepancy between character and action in the Man of the Spirit. His wisdom and his work are completely consistent. What he wills, he accomplishes. He is able to distinguish appearance from reality. He cannot be fooled, deceived, or in any way prevented from carrying out his just judgments. Justice for the weak will not be determined by the strength of their advocacy, but by the wisdom of his decisions. As with creation, justice and righteousness will be achieved by the invisible word. His word alone is sufficient to accomplish all that he wills. "The King needs no other display of power and no other weapon of enforcement than the bare word that he speaks" (Rev 19:15, 21, Motyer, p.123). His clothing is symbolic of what he stands for, righteousness and faithfulness. He is completely qualified and fully equipped for action.

A New Day Coming

Having described the character and action of the Man of the Spirit, Isaiah offered a sevenfold picture of the new creation. The wisdom of the Spirit of the Lord will restore the harmonies and rhythms of grace inherent in God's original creation. The deeply instilled old fears, so much a part of a world based on the survival of the fittest, will be gone, replaced by true reconciliation and peace. This was Isaiah's Spirit inspired vision of a new day coming, when "the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea" (11:9). The curse of enmity will be eliminated and predators (wolf, leopard, lion) and prey (lamb, goat, calf, yearling) will be reconciled (Motyer, p.124). This is the day the prophets longed for and this is the day we too, long for. But for now we live in the in-between time, between the vulnerability of the tender shoot and the vindication of Jesus Christ, the King of kings and Lord of lords. As the author of Hebrews wrote, "In putting everything under him, God left nothing that is not subject to him. Yet at present we do not see everything subject to him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone" (Heb 2:8-9).

The first section of Isaiah (1-12) concludes in a powerful song of praise and thanksgiving that invites our participation. Can we sing this song *today* with gratitude in our hearts to the Lord?

"In that day you will say:
 'I will praise you, O Lord.
 Although you were angry with me,
your anger has turned away and you have comforted me.
 Surely God is my salvation;
 I will trust and not be afraid.

The Lord, the Lord, is my strength
and my song;
he has become my salvation.'

With joy you will draw water
from the wells of salvation.

“In that day you will say:
'Give thanks to the Lord, call on his name;
make known among the nations
what he has done,
and proclaim that his name is exalted.
Sing to the Lord, for he has done glorious things;
let this be known to all the world.
Shout aloud and sing for joy, people of Zion,
for great is the Holy One of Israel
among you.’”