

Men's Bible Study – Wednesday, March 30, 2016 (11am) – Lent V

TEXT: Isaiah 43:16-21 — God Will Make A Way! Home Coming Guaranteed!

1. This promise from God was spoken to the people during their time of **exile in Babylon in the sixth century B.C.** Those who were exiled were **given a message of hope** that God would restore them. **Just as** God brought Israel out of Egypt & made a way through the Red Sea on dry land, **so also** God would rescue his people from exile and bring them back to their homeland. God is doing something so wonderful that all the things of old, valuable as they are, will be excelled. Things that did not work too well in former times, will be made anew so that they work without fail. **A road will be made** through trackless wastes. **Rivers will flow in the desert.** If you are looking through the “Springsteenian” lens of “Glory Days,” you will not perceive the wonder of the new thing God is doing. God is doing this for the benefit of his people and **so that his name and glory** will spread throughout the world.

TEXT: Psalm 126 – Restore Our Fortunes, O LORD

1. The Lord has restored the fortunes of those who had been captives. God's people will be elated by the great thing he has done for them. **Shouts of joy will replace tears of sorrow,** for the Lord has redeemed his people from captivity. All of this will happen suddenly, like a thunderstorm in the desert makes a refreshing stream. **Buried seeds bring forth bounty.**

2. **Hymn: Bringing in the Sheaves.** *VS 1: “Sowing in the morning, sowing seeds of kindness, Sowing in the noontide and the dewy eve; Waiting for the harvest, and the time of reaping, We shall come rejoicing, bringing in the sheaves.” VS 2: “Sowing in the sunshine, sowing in the shadows, Fearing neither clouds nor winter's chilling breeze; By and by the harvest, and the labor ended, We shall come rejoicing, bringing in the sheaves.” VS 3: “Going forth with weeping, sowing for the Master, Tho' the loss sustained our spirit often grieves; When our weeping's over, He will bid us welcome, We shall come rejoicing, bringing in the sheaves.”*

TEXT: Philippians 3:4b-14 — Righteousness through Faith in Christ! I AM Pressing On!

1. The Gospel is not wearing chains! Imprisonment has given Paul **a pulpit (muzzle versus megaphone).** Philippians is **a prison epistle** (AD 57), referred to as Paul's epistle of joy. The word “joy” is found 16 times in 104 verses. How do we understand **joy** as opposed to **happiness?** **Edna Hong** wrote a book on Philippians entitled, “**The Downward Ascent**”. The way up is in fact the path that descends and ends at the foot of the cross (*humus – humility*). We are proud of our accomplishments & heritage. In some cases, **our portfolio** gives us confidence security & misplaced self-worth. But **when it comes to righteousness before God,** if we are honest with ourselves, we find our confidence waning if we trust in self. We are in bondage to sin and cannot free ourselves. Everything we have ever trusted for righteousness before God is **worthless waste**). Knowing Christ as Lord and trusting in his righteousness as our own is superior to all we have ever relied upon before. Christ alone is the ONE who gives perfect confidence before God. So, imperfect as we know we are, we are **enabled to press on,** to keep the faith in him who has overcome sin as we struggle against our sin until we apprehend the crowning prize of heaven. Our accomplishments: **SKUBALA** (DUNG); used only here in N.T.

2. **Have this mind** which is already ours in Christ Jesus. Christ Hymn (2:5-11). We haven't reached the goal yet, but **we continue to press on,** running the race that is set before us. Those

who have *koinonia* with the sufferings of Jesus also *share* in the resurrection of the dead (Romans 6 – We are buried & raised with Christ in daily baptism). What are Paul's **GAINS & LOSSES**? What are our gains and losses?

3. **Our works are always questionable.** Does one do enough, for the right reason, and so forth? Therefore, the conscience cannot be consoled as it will debate with itself as to whether one has become good enough for God. However one may try, they will never be good enough. The balance over against one's sin will always leave a person lacking in the reconciliation of the perfectly righteous God. Still, many try to gain some confidence with God by their own efforts. They devise plans to satisfy an angry God, not believing that God loves them and sent his own Son to satisfy their great deficiency. So we must redouble our efforts to teach the doctrine of **justification by faith in Christ alone**. This is the article that consoles the troubled conscience. Yet, we must go beyond head knowledge and teach Christians to completely trust God. Grace, righteousness, and the forgiveness of sins is given to us freely through Christ. Lutherans confess this divine gift and do not compel the Church to satisfy God in any other way than to believe the gospel. **Everything we would do to earn God's grace is rubbish, refuse, and dung.** God calls us to **"Keep on keepin' on"**! Perseverance and Passion.

TEXT: Luke 20:9-20 – The Parable of the Wicked Tenants

1. What do we have to offer the owner of the vineyard? Our labors come up pretty fruitless. When the time comes for us to settle up with God, the owner of the vineyard, what will our options be? **Treat him & his servants shamefully** or **fall upon his mercy**? That mercy is extended through the last of his messengers. "In many and various ways God spoke to his people of old by the prophets. But now in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son." **Those who reject the Son, will be crushed by judgment.** **Those who receive him, will be built upon him, the cornerstone of eternity (Psalm 118:22).**

2. The parable of the wicked tenants is filled with violent and troubling imagery which points a finger at us in accusation. Underlying this parable is the fact that Jesus would soon be put to death by the very people he entrusted with all that was His. We have been **employed by God as his stewards**. **How are we like the tenants in this story**? In what sense are we responsible for the death of God's Son? People often claim: "possession is nine-tenths of the law." In this parable, the tenants seek to claim the property for themselves, even though they know full well they are not the heirs of the owner. There is a play on the Greek word *klhronomia* (**klay-ro-no-mia**); meaning both "inheritance" & "possession of property." Clearly, the tenants were determined to take the vineyard by any means necessary, even the murder of the heir. To "possess" the property was their strategy. What often happens when we covet?

3. The whole parable is an **expansion of the prophetic "song of the vineyard"** of Isaiah 5:1-7. God plants His Vineyard and departs for a long time to another country. **Divine Forbearance:** God waits until it is time for the vineyard to produce (vs. 10). The owner sends embassies to collect the rent (share of the crop). With each embassy the treatment grows harsher. Three times embassies are sent to collect the rent. **WHAT SHALL I DO?** The owner decides to send his **BELOVED (Luke 3:22) SON**, **PERHAPS (risk & hope)** **the obstinate tenants will respect the owner's son**. When the tenants act on their worst schemes, the Lord of the Vineyard must also act. There will be **HELL to pay**. Verse 16: "God Forbid".