

Sermon: "Dreaming of the Day"

Sunday, November 17, 2019

Scripture: Isaiah 65:17-25, 2 Thessalonians 3:6-13

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Today's first Scripture reading comes from Isaiah chapter 65:17-25. This passage borrows word for word phrases from Isaiah 11, where it starts out "A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. The spirit of the LORD shall rest on him," pointing that it is through Jesus Christ that the new heavens and earth shall be created. Here now, the Word of the Lord through Prophet Isaiah.

Isaiah 65:17-25

17 For I am about to create new heavens

and a new earth;

the former things shall not be remembered

or come to mind.

18 But be glad and rejoice forever

in what I am creating;

for I am about to create Jerusalem as a joy,

and its people as a delight.

19 I will rejoice in Jerusalem,

and delight in my people;

no more shall the sound of weeping be heard in it,

or the cry of distress.

20 No more shall there be in it

an infant that lives but a few days,

or an old person who does not live out a lifetime;

for one who dies at a hundred years will be considered a youth,

and one who falls short of a hundred will be considered accursed.

21 They shall build houses and inhabit them;

they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit.

22 They shall not build and another inhabit;

they shall not plant and another eat;

for like the days of a tree shall the days of my people be,

and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands.
23 They shall not labor in vain,
or bear children for calamity;
for they shall be offspring blessed by the LORD—
and their descendants as well.
24 Before they call I will answer,
while they are yet speaking I will hear.
25 The wolf and the lamb shall feed together,
the lion shall eat straw like the ox;
but the serpent—its food shall be dust!
They shall not hurt or destroy
on all my holy mountain,
says the LORD.

Our second reading is from 2 Thessalonians 3:6-13. As Paul wraps up his letter, he is charging the community of believers to act on their beliefs, not being hindered by others idleness or disruptiveness. Hear now the Word of the Lord.

2 Thessalonians 3:6-13

⁶ Now we command you, beloved, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to keep away from believers who are living in idleness and not according to the tradition that they received from us. ⁷ For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us; we were not idle when we were with you, ⁸ and we did not eat anyone's bread without paying for it; but with toil and labor we worked night and day, so that we might not burden any of you. ⁹ This was not because we do not have that right, but in order to give you an example to imitate. ¹⁰ For even when we were with you, we gave you this command: Anyone unwilling to work should not eat. ¹¹ For we hear that some of you are living in idleness, mere busybodies, not doing any work. ¹² Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly and to earn their own living. ¹³ Brothers and sisters, do not be weary in doing what is right.

Sermon: "Dreaming of the Day"

Scripture: Isaiah 12, Isaiah 65:17-25

Text: "Be glad and rejoice forever in what I am creating; for I am about to create Jerusalem as a joy, and its people as a delight." Isaiah 65:18

Please pray with me: Gracious God we thank you for being who you are in our lives. This morning, we thank you for leading us and guiding our feet to your sanctuary to honor you, to worship you, and to praise you. As we come with joy and as we try to be your delight, would you hear the praises that are coming from our hearts. May the words of my mouth and the meditation of all our hearts be pleasing to you, our Rock and Redeemer. Amen.

The world seems a bit dimmer these days. I do not have to look far to get the feeling of darkness is around us. All we need do is turn on the news these days. Over the airwaves, there are bad news readily available for the people to consume through our media outlets. Such as shootings at high schools: one on the West Coast in California¹ and another on the East Coast in New Jersey² capturing the headlines this week. We observed our Veterans Day in a solemn reality as many of our young men and women are serving the country in the longest war - over 18 years - in Afghanistan.³ When one thinks they can escape this bad news by flipping the channel to sports to watch the games, and if you are faithful Chicagoan like me, you will be met with Cubs and Bears who did not live up to their expectations. So, ok, there might be slight good news for Cardinals fans. Then there are other news around the globe that adds fuel to more bad news, such as what recently took place in Venice, where the effects of the climate change can be physically felt through a historic flooding, yet decisions are being made to do nothing about it.⁴

I recall that it was not always like this. As we welcomed the new millennium, the American dream was alive and well: a belief and feeling where people had something to look forward to and where freedom this country represents, gave its people an opportunity for prosperity and success through hard work. Maybe it was because of my naïve perspective or being more hopeful for the years to come as a member of high school class of '99 that closed the chapter on the previous millennia. Although we do not speak of it very much, the American dream is still alive and well. This was reminded to me as the Kenya team prepared and continues to prepare for a life-changing trip. As the team membered shared their knowledge and experience of Kenya, one shared some Kenyans live on a dollar or two a day. Here in the States, we are discussing and looking forward to a payday when minimum wage will be \$15 per hour. The dream of living in a place such as America where one can have an opportunity to thrive is much alive. However, it will not be a life-changing trip to see the economic

¹ <https://www.cnn.com/2019/11/16/us/california-school-shooting-saturday/index.html>

² <https://www.cnn.com/2019/11/15/us/new-jersey-football-game-report-of-shots/index.html>

³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_the_lengths_of_United_States_participation_in_wars

⁴ <https://www.cnn.com/2019/11/14/europe/veneto-council-climate-change-floods-trnd-intl-scli/index.html>

differences, but to see the joy in their faces as people worship God and witness God's activity working in their lives as a member of Kenya mission team. We will be able to witness people who live out their faith like the widow who offered two small copper coins in Luke 21. We will be able to worship with them as one body of Christ. We will be able to extend God's love by being God's hands and feet to bring them good news. We will be able to witness God being steadfast and faithful to the least of these in the world.

Here at Westminster, we, too, have a calling and an opportunity to be God's marvelous light to the neighbors around us. While the world might be getting dimmer, our sanctuary is surely getting brighter thanks to Schnirring, Germeraads, and Dungs. We are called to carry the good news, the gospel that gives life to those who hear and listen. We are not simply called to live out the American dream, but to live dreaming of the day that God's promise is to be fulfilled. Prophet Isaiah gives us a glimpse of the day when the Son of God will return in full glory. On that day, we will be able to see a world where the effects of sin are reversed, and we will look at the world from God's perspective. We will get to observe a world full of God's blessings rather than a world that is held captive to sin and curses⁵. It will be new heavens and a new earth; where it will be bursting with joy⁶, completely secure⁷, and where a peace reign⁸.

As we look forward to delivering the good news to others, here are couple of pointers which today's Scripture shares with us. First is that we serve an impartial God. We have often heard this passage from Galatians 3:28,

There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.

This notion is depicted in today's last verse from Isaiah.

The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, the lion shall eat straw like the ox; but the serpent – its food shall be dust!

To enter our new Jerusalem, we shall be judged by the righteousness, not by sight or worldly divisions. The mercy of God is that although we might lack the righteousness, God will see our faith as credit to our righteousness. As we believe, we are shown mercy. And we serve a merciful God. Hence, it does not matter if the other person does not dress same, it does not matter if they do not talk the same language, do not look alike, do not think alike, or whatever the differences might be, we need to drop our biases and share our gospel with everyone so that the Spirit of God, who is impartial, can determine who is righteous or not.

⁵ Due to the disobedience of Adam and Eve eating the forbidden fruit, God curses the ground in Genesis 3:17

⁶ Isaiah 65:19

⁷ Isaiah 65:22

⁸ Isaiah 65:24-25

Second point comes from 2 Thessalonian reading from today's Scripture. It tells us that we are commanded and warned in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that we cannot be idle and that we must live out our lives in accordance of our beliefs. We need to imitate Christ. Our faith may be personal but never should be private. Todd Wagner, Senior Pastor of Watermark Community Church, said the following to prove this point. People wear a wedding ring to show their personal relationship with their significant other and publicly display that relationship. It would be wrong to go to places without the ring saying it is a private, personal, intimate thing. Have we made our relationship with God a private thing or have we made it a public thing for people to see?

Starting next week, our festivities begins at the church. As we approach the holiday season, we need to remember **for whom** we are having these days. As we will celebrate holy-days for God's wonderful works in our lives, let us start by giving thanks to the Lord, our God and King, followed by waiting with Hope for the Prince of Peace's return to bring Joy and Love to the world.⁹ Let us spread the good news to our neighbors, from people who are near us to even though who are in far away in places such as Kenya.

Like the closing remarks in the movie Zootopia, "no matter what type of animal you are; from the biggest elephant, to our first fox, I implore you – try. Try to make the world a better place"¹⁰ by sharing our common dream of the day when the Messiah returns and doing all we can do to make that become reality here and now. As God joyfully creates new heaven and new earth for you and for me, let us continue to live out that dream: where all our lives, where all our children and where our children's children will not be harmed as they play with the lions. As we continue to live out our lives in hope knowing that our dream will come into reality, may we take this promise of God and live out faithfully.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.

⁹ Four advent candles celebrate Hope, Peace, Joy and Love, respectively

¹⁰ Zootopia – quote from <https://www.wattpad.com/402293979-zootopia-scene-38-judy%27s-speech> accessed 11/16/19