

Title: A Peak of Glory
Text: Isaiah 2.1-5
Theme: The future glory of the Kingdom
Series: Isaiah #4
Prop Stmt: God's certain plan drives our faith-driven obedience
Aim: I aim to encourage my people to live with confidence in the certain plan of God for this world.

Who and/or what is most important to you? What do you value the most and seek to protect the most? What would you do, if, in one day, they were all taken away? What would you have to live for? Anything? What could possibly motivate you to go on? We all struggle with this. We are tempted to use God in order to acquire or protect what we really treasure instead of treasuring God above all. But God will not be used. For years the children of Israel attempted to use God in order to get their best life now. It wasn't about God; life was about them. Therefore, if another god promised them riches or pleasure or a means to control the future, then they were willing to sell themselves for it. But God will not tolerate being treated like any other god and that is good, because God will not pretend that any other god can help you, when they can't. Sadly, the Jews have not learned this and there were about to lose everything in order that they would realize that all they had left, was the one, true, God. Isaiah writes this book with his eye on what was about to happen to his people. During his life, he seemed like a crazy man, but he knew, that in about 100 years, his people would face one of the most defining events in their history and unless they had something to hold on to, it would threaten their very existence as a people.

Imagine, if you can, being driven out of your country with thousands of refugees to Babylon. You left Judah where your family has lived and farmed for 800 years. Your home is destroyed. Your children are taken from you. Your son was killed before your eyes. Behind you the smoke from the Temple mount ascends to the sky. Your God, the God of Jacob, the One who supposedly made everything, now appears to be nothing more than a local, cultural deity who could not defend his own land against the gods of the Babylonians. With head bowed and hands shackled you look like and feel like a fool. The long, long walk gives you much time to think. You believed those stories about the plagues, celebrated Passover even told your children about the crossing of the Red Sea and the Jordan River. You sang songs about the walls of Jericho falling down and brave David who faced Goliath, but with God's help won the day and the battle. Now, what are you supposed to think? Is your God real? Is God real? Are these other gods legitimate or do we all have our stories, our legends, and our local views that have been created, edited and passed down through the generations? How can you believe when it looks like someone was covering up the truth? Isaiah knew this was coming. So, whatever God showed him, he wrote down. He wrote it down so that in the coming crisis, his people could look back and see that God had not abandoned them, they had abandoned God. God told them that this was going to happen and now it had. But God also said something else. He said that this was not the final chapter in the story of his people.

What would possibly motivate these Jews (or any people for that matter) to either become or (for the few) remain faithful to God when just about everything that they had to live for, humanly speaking was taken away from them? Why not curse God and die? Here it is. Just as God had promised judgment – and brought it about, he was promising restoration. But, this promise is not simply a promise for these people to return to the land and resume life as it had been. This was a promise of colossal proportions. Listen to these words.

Read Text:

Unless you have actually been to Israel, it is difficult to get a sense of what it is like to live there. Today, Israel is surrounded by Lebanon to the north, Syria to the Northeast, the West Bank (Palestinian Authority) to the East, Jordan to the Southeast, Gaza to the South west, and Egypt, further South and west.

At the moment (subject to change daily), Lebanon, a formerly, somewhat peaceful neighbor is now basically run by terrorists. Syria is ruled by a thug and terrorist. The West Bank is governed by the Palestinian Authority and Jordan by King Hussein (?). Gaza is run by Hamas, and Egypt is run by – were not sure yet. Understanding how it got to this point would require several college classes that we do not have the time for on a Sunday morning. But, this much is clear. In spite of speeches at the UN, conferences, diplomatic interventions, millions and millions of dollars of assistance, treaties and every possible peace initiative that one can think of, yet if you are a Jew, living today in Israel, you are still threatened and it seems to get worse by the week. In fact, at one point, Israel is only 9 miles wide. You are surrounded by nations sworn to your extinction and vulnerable to invasion. That is now. If you live there now, you are choosing to be involved in war. It is coming. It is inevitable.

When Isaiah ministered as a prophet to the southern kingdom of Judah, Judah was surrounded by Israel to the north, Syria to the northeast, Moab and Ammon to the east, Edom to the southeast, Egypt to the southwest and Philistia to the west and Assyria was a military juggernaut that was threatening to conquer it all. At one point in Isaiah's writing, Assyria just about conquered everything, including all of Syria, the northern kingdom of Israel and most of Judah. Only Jerusalem had not yet fallen. Needless to say, the times were marked by war and destruction. The plans, diplomatic exchanges, bribes and treaties all proved to be failures. If you lived there you were involved in war. It was inevitable and it came.

Beginning in chapter 7, Isaiah addresses a specific situation that confronts Judah. But, before that we have, what I believe is an overview of the book in 1.1-4.6, followed by a summary and the call of God upon Isaiah. Just as the book is marked by warning (1-39) and hope (40-66), chapter 1 is full of warning, while these opening verses of chapter 2 describe a day that the Jews could only dream about. But, when you read these verses, you realize that they speak of a day that we all long for and dream about. In fact, in this text is a phrase that ranks as one of the most

well-known passages in Isaiah, in fact, in the Bible. This promise at the end of verse 4 is so appealing and so compelling, that it is not only repeated in Micah and Joel two other ancient prophets of Israel, but these words are inscribed in the United Nations office building in New York.

I. **It shall come to pass.** (1-4)

This text divides up into two parts. Verses 1-4 give us a preview of what God is going to do in the future. And verse 5 tells us how to live in view of that. The appeal of verse 5 is based upon the absolute confidence in what God has said is going to happen. I love these opening words of verse 2, "It shall come to pass." And what I love about it, is that God is not hedging his bets, or giving out any qualifying statements, asterisks or footnotes. There is no, "as far as I can tell", "to the best of my ability", "it is my full intent", "I sure hope that at some point" sort of stuff. No, God loves to go on the record with certainty. When God says something like this, it is not a matter of if, but a matter of when. In some prophecies, God gives specific times, and in others, he is intentionally vague. God told Abraham that within the year Sara would have a son. But here, God simply says, "in the latter days." I am convinced that God tells us enough in order to ground our faith, but not so much that we get arrogant. But this phrase is interesting and is used elsewhere in the Scriptures to speak of the time when God's activity on the earth is unusually clear. Much of human history is marked by God working through the normal laws that he has established. But there are times when God's activity on the earth is unusually intense. That is what the "latter days" refers to. Here is what is going to happen.

A. **The house of God will be exalted above the earth.** (2)

Since the mountain of the house of the Lord was Jerusalem, this is obviously referring to Jerusalem, and specifically to the dwelling place of God, which was in the temple. What is this talking about? What does this mean? God is saying that there is coming a time when He is recognized as the one and only true God who is high and lifted up and over all.

Is this literal? Is God saying that he is going to actually rearrange the topography of the land so that Jerusalem is the highest mountain, at least in the area, if not in the world? Is that the point? Or is this a poetic expression, a literary device to speak of the actual exaltation of God? Clearly, this is poetic. Much of Isaiah is written in poetic form. And, since the ancient world believed that the gods lived on the mountains (Zeus – Mt. Olympus; Baal – Mt. Cassius), the thought was that, the higher the mountain, the higher your god. The "problem" for Judah was that God lived on "Mt. Zion" which was not all that high, nor impressive of a mountain. If you came from the east, you could not see Jerusalem because even the Mt. of Olives was higher. So, in comparison to its surroundings, Jerusalem was not an impressive mountain at all. It would be to us, since all we've got is Mt. Clemens around here and the air is not exactly thin there. But, when you stop and think about it, you see a continuance of a pattern of how God functions. Think of this. Of all of the impressive

peaks in the world, what is Jerusalem? It ain't much! Why would the God of the universe pick that? Well, why would the God of the universe pick you? Or me? We ain't much either. But, he picks the weak to show his strength. He picks the needy to show his provision. He picks the unimpressive in order to put his glory on display. It's not about the height of the mountain as much as it is about the bigness of God. And yet, (here is my personal opinion), while I fully believe that there is coming a day when the earth will recognize the glory and authority of God, I believe that this verse will not only be figuratively fulfilled but will be literally fulfilled as well.

Now, I am not going to die over that, but when we read later on in Isaiah that, "every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill shall be made low" most commentators will say that these are metaphors for personal repentance and social reforms. That is, life on the earth will be smoothed out in preparation for the King. I have no doubt that life is going to be smoothed out when the King comes to reign, but I also believe that he is going to rearrange some topography along the way because I believe that this earth which has been groaning under the curse of sinful rulers, will explode with delight in response to its Creator coming here to reign. Therefore, I think that the mountain of God will be the highest. But, clearly, the big idea is that God's glory will be seen, understood and enjoyed by the world.

B. The nations shall come to God. (2b-3a)

"... and all nations shall flow to it." I love it! The draw of God is so powerful and his appeal is so strong, that the nations of the world flow to God, like water flows downhill, these people are flowing, uphill! They are flowing up to God. God is promising that there is coming a day when different nations are telling other nations that they have to get to the mountain of God to hear the truth!

Like many prophecies, I believe that God gives us teasers and previews of what this is going to be like. Do you remember what happened at the Tower of Babel? The people of the world, at the time were of one language and culture. They were unified and in that unity decided that they did not need God and would be their own god. So, they set out to build a tower that would reach heaven. God responded to their rebellion by cursing them with languages. To this day, the world is fractured by language and culture. We do not get along real well and have difficulty communicating. But, then we read this. We read that there is coming a day when the nations will act like one people. This speaks of the day when the curse is lifted and this world will finally live in harmony with itself. We got a preview of that on the day of Pentecost, when people from many of these surrounding nations were able to hear the gospel in their own language. The joy was astounding. God was serving notice that he was starting to role back the curse. What do we do when we send missionaries to other countries? We, who are not Jews, go to other countries and say, "You've got to meet the God of Jacob! You have to know what he has done through Christ in order to redeem people from every tribe, nation and language to be part of his people and eternal kingdom. What we are doing now in missions is a preview of this day when the whole world responds to God. And notice their desire.

They come in order to be taught by God! They want to come and invite others to come. This speaks of a heart change. Wow! That's a switch for Isaiah isn't it? God tells Isaiah that there is coming a day when not only will the Jews want to hear God's word, but the whole world will want to hear God's word. This is not coming for power, or to appease God, or for show. This is the creation coming to the Creator and saying, "how do you want us to live? Teach us how you designed us to function so that we can fulfill your plan." That day will be glorious! God's plan involves the entire world! Clearly implied in this promise is an appeal for humility. We can't walk right unless God teaches us, but he won't teach us unless we come.

I see a preview of this in many of you. You come to hear the word because you want you. You are hungry for truth. Your heart and soul is fed and you are engaged with it. That is evidence of God's Spirit at work in you. That is not a natural response. That is supernatural.

C. The word of God will be heard. (3b)

People will be given instruction on how to believe, and how to live because they will want to know. Revelation from God is a blessing and is only revealed to those who want to hear it. Obviously, this text is speaking of the day when

D. Christ will rule on the earth. (4a)

When the King comes, when the One who has the right and the power sits on the throne, then his word is the law and his law is just and it is followed. In that day, all kings will bow to the King. In that day, he will decide disputes, not on the basis of political scheming, but on the basis of truth. Truth will reign. Justice will be served. Disputes will be settled equitably. Conflict comes when disputes are not resolved. But when conflicts arise and are dealt with, then the need for war is no more.

E. War, will be no more.

Let that rest softly upon you. Many of you stash guns in your homes for protection. Can you imagine living in a setting where just the idea of having a gun is so utterly pointless that they are rendered so useless, that they have no value, except to be melted down and used to make tools for farming. Do you know what this means? Buy stock in John Deere. ☺

Our country spends an estimated 663 to 750 billion dollars every year on defense and military spending. Beyond the obvious cost of dollars, is the even more serious cost of lives; killed, maimed and scarred by war. War, it is said, is only romanticized by those who have never fought in one. Some of you were affected by W.W.II, but only as children. Some of you fought in the Korean War, the Vietnam War, and more recently the Gulf War, Iraq and Afghanistan. These wars, were and are fought almost exclusively somewhere else. And yet, they were bad enough though not even fought on our own soil. Imagine what these tired refugees thought whose lives have been

worn out by war, who are being herded to Babylon to live out their days in exile. God is telling them, today, is not how it will always be.

The United Nations will never achieve this because they will never accept the first part of the verse. If you want the result (peace) you have to accept the cause (the reign of God). That is true for nations. That is true for marriages. That is true for your own soul.

II. **Live now, in view of then.** (5)

What a statement about the sovereignty of God, the plans of God, and the heart of God. Do you see how he seeks to motivate his people? He tells us of his plans for us. He tells us of what he is committed to making out of our lives and then says, "Live up to it." But, what does that mean? How do we live now in view of then? Well, what is going to happen then? Go back through the sub-points of number 1.

The dwelling place of God will be exalted above the earth. How can I exalt God's dwelling on the earth now? Well, what is God's dwelling place now? The church! He lives in and among his people. And I am not speaking of religion in general; I am not speaking of every building that uses the letters C-h-u-r-c-h. Calling yourself a church does not make you a church anymore than calling myself Einstein makes me smart. People are only truly a church when they are what God says a church is. Only people who have recognized and admitted their own sin and have agreed with God about it, and agree that they are guilty and deserving of his wrath and who in and of themselves have no hope for rescue, but who look to Christ and understand and believe that He came to this earth in order to live in their place and die in their place and have put all of their trust in Christ alone, are those who are truly part of his church. A true local church is comprised of people like that. Jesus died for the church. He died for his bride. He is coming for his bride. He is going to live with his bride. The bride is his dwelling place. Make much of her. She may not look like much now. She may be broken, weak, fragile and rather unimpressive in appearance, but Jesus said that the gates of hell cannot prevail against her.

Press on, God has guaranteed the end.