

Sunday, October 22, 2023 – 21st Sunday after Pentecost

Isaiah 45:1-7

Many Bible scholars believe that while Isaiah 1-39 were written in the mid-700's B. C. – in the south at the time of the fall of the north – Isaiah 40 ff. were written in the 500's B. C. – near the end of the time of the Babylonian captivity.

Isaiah 40: 1-2 –

Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that she has served her term, that her penalty is paid, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins.

See 2 Chronicles 36: 22-23 and Ezra 1: 1-4

The Lord stirred up the spirit of King Cyrus of Persia so that he sent a herald throughout all his kingdom and also declared in a written edict: "Thus says King Cyrus of Persia: The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever is among you of all his people, may the Lord his God be with him! Let him go up."

1 - Thus says the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have grasped to subdue nations before him and strip kings of their robes, to open doors before him—and the gates shall not be closed.

It must have been absolutely astounding for God's people to hear Cyrus called God's anointed (chosen).

2 - I will go before you and level the mountains.
I will break in pieces the doors of bronze and cut through the bars of iron.

3 - I will give you the treasures of darkness and riches hidden in secret places, so that you may know that it is I, the LORD, the God of Israel, who call you by your name.

4 - For the sake of my servant Jacob, and Israel my chosen,
I call you by your name, I surname you, though you do not know me.

5 - I arm you, though you do not know me.

Cf. Luke 2: 1 – A decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered.

It was because of a decree of a pagan emperor that Mary and Joseph fulfilled Old Testament prophecy by being in Bethlehem when Jesus was born.

Do you believe that God can work even through unbelieving political powers today?

Psalm 96

1 - O sing to the LORD a new song.
How do you feel about learning new songs?

2 - Tell of his salvation from day to day.
How often do you tell of God's salvation?
How often does the average Lutheran tell of God's salvation?

3 - Declare his glory among the nations.
10 - Say among the nations, "The LORD is king!"

4 - Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised.

8 - Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name.

What kind of glory is God due? Do you ascribe to the Lord the glory He is due?

If so, how are you doing it?

11 - Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice.

Let the sea roar, and all that fills it.

12 - Let the field exult, and everything in it.

Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy.

Cf. Jesus and the rocks on Palm Sunday – Luke 19: 40

1 Thessalonians 1: 1-10

1 - Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy

Grace to you and peace

2 - We always give thanks to God for all of you and mention you in our prayers – *Cf. Philipians 1: 3-4*

3 - Constantly remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Cf. 2 Thessalonians 1: 3 - your faith is growing, your love is increasing – no mention of hope

5 - Our message of the gospel came to you not in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction.

6 - You became imitators of us and of the Lord – *Cf. Philipians 2: 5, 3: 17. 4: 9*

7 - You became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia.

Cf. 2 Corinthians 8: 1-3 – generosity during time of severe affliction and extreme poverty

8 - In every place your faith in God has become known.

9 - The people of those regions report about us what kind of welcome we had among you.

Cf. Acts 17: 1-10 – These people who have been turning the world upside down have come here also.

13 – When the Jews of Thessalonica learned that the word of God had been proclaimed by Paul in Beroea as well, they came there too, to stir up and incite the crowd.

Matthew 22:15-22

21 - He said to them, "Give therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperor's, and to God the things that are God's." When they heard this, they were amazed; and they left him and went away.

The coin bore the image of Caesar; we bear the image of God.

We give to God the things that belong to God –

In response to all that God has done for us

As a remedy to the enslaving power of wealth

As a reminder of who is number one in our lives