

Pentcost 4, Year C - July 7th, 2019 - Morning Prayer

Readings: Psalm 66:1-8; Isaiah 66:10-14; Luke 10:1-11, 16-20

In the name of God...

Rejoice! When we read the prophets we tend to think of calamity and apocalypse, wheels within wheels, and strange creatures doing odd things.. When I was a teenager I had several interesting encounters with the people obsessed with prophecy. One older women kept telling me that the signs were right, the end was right around the corner. And in the 80's it was hard to believe the world had much longer to live. My parents grew up in the duck and cover era - I grew up on stories of my Mom, who grew up in Florida, talking about hiding under desk in drills during the Cuban missile crises. This nice lady at church was giving all of the teenagers the same advice - don't worry about the future. Marriage? College? Don't prepare, don't think, just live for Jesus now. And don't worry, the world will end and Jesus will be back before you are old enough to have those things happen.

Now, time tells us that the person was wrong. The world didn't end in the 80's, no more than it did in the 40', or the 1800's, or the year 1000. Or the 100s of other times that Christians believed that Christ was coming back soon. Christ will come again. Its an eschatological truth that we hold in tension, sometimes a lot of tension. The kind of life advice that I recieved as a teenager is why I tend to see the prophetic words of the Bible as something that I want to avoid. One of the the joys of the lectionary cycle means that I cannot.

This morning we find Isaiah speaking with great joy about what was to come. Comforting, prosperity, consolation, rejoicing - all of these will be fulfilled in Jesus. His life, his death and his resurrection. The coming of the kingdom of God. Isaiah tells us that in the fulness of time everything will be made right. And this is the point of the prophetic not to scare us, not to leaving focused on looking for a sign, but to describe accurately what is to come and what should be.

"Be joyful in God, all you lands!" is how the Psalmist describes it in Psalm 66. "How wonderful he is in his doing toward all people." God had already been at work in the world. But in Christ that greatness would see the prophesied expansion. All the world would come to experience the redemption and the blessings that psalmist describes here. "Bless our God, you peoples; make the voice of his praise to be heard. Who holds our souls in life, and will not allow our feet to slip. Wonderful promises thta God makes to us.

And in the Gospel - we see the begining of that rejoicing in Jesus. Jesus appoints 70 more to go out and continue the harvest. They are sent out in peace in their words and actions, like sheep among the wolves. They are sent out in pairs. While the church won't formally begin for some time yet - we start to see the beginning of the blessings that Jesus will provide. And the 70 come back excited, because like the Apostles earlier they had seen miracles, and even the demons obeyed them!

“I watched Satan fall from heaven like a flash of lightening” hearkens back to an earlier passage in Isaiah about Satan being thrown from heaven. I think that Jesus was reminding the 70 and the Apostles and us of Scripture. Satan was already cast out and destined for defeat. Jesus gave them authority over the spirits and gave them protection in their journey’s. But the rejoicing should be in those who find the kingdom of heaven.

Remember that “For us and for our salvation, he came down from heaven:” It is the lost sheep of the world that Christ came to find. The purpose of the power of the Holy Spirit is to share his love. Its to bring the community everywhere. “For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures;” After the ascension and the day of Pentecost the church was empowered the same way that the 70 were. It is our job to share his love with those we meet. May we share that love everywhere, and at all times, with everyone. Amen