

December 17, 2023

KIBC Sunday Worship Service (The Third Advent)

Messenger: Pastor Teiichiro Kuroda

Title of the Message: “Lift Up Your Voice with a Shout”

— See, the Sovereign Lord! —

Text: Isaiah 40:9-11

40:9 You who bring good news to Zion, go up on a high mountain. You who bring good news to Jerusalem, lift up your voice with a shout, lift it up, do not be afraid; say to the towns of Judah, “Here is your God!□

40:10 See, the Sovereign Lord comes with power, and his arm rules for him. See, his reward is with him, and his recompense accompanies him.

40:11 He tends his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young.

Introduction

1. Today we are celebrating the third Sunday of Advent
 - At the end of each year, we often hear Handel’s famous song, “the Messiah.” This song is an oratorio of the birth, passion and resurrection of Christ. It begins with the words “Comfort, comfort my people,” which is a quote from Isaiah 40. When Handel reached an old age, he was comforted by these words, so made the music to be comforting as well.
2. Isaiah the prophet records the glorious message of God who intervenes in human history, reveling His master plan. Chapter 40 is a part of what is commonly referred to as second Isaiah. (It is generally believed that the book of Isaiah is made up of three parts. The third part is Chapters 56~66.)
 - Chapter 40 begins with an amazing call of God to his people.

40:1 Comfort, comfort my people, says your God.

40:2 Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her hard service has been completed, that her sin has been paid for, that she has received from the Lord’s hand double for all her sins.
 - We need to understand the urgency of God’s repeated call of “Comfort, comfort.” The Israelites of that time were living in captivity and had gradually become unfaithful to God, closing their minds to Him.

- If they didn't come to their senses though God's urgent plea, they wouldn't have another chance. God was offering the Israelites a blessed hope.
- It is in verse 2 that we see the theme of Isaiah; Comfort. The angel, who was sent by God, told the prophet "Comfort my people". The Lord spoke three things through Isaiah:
 - ① **Her hard service has been completed** : This refers to the time of trials and hardship for Jerusalem.
 - ② **Her sin has been paid for**: This refers that "the sacrifice" was offered to pay for iniquities.
 - ③ **The Lord's hand paid "double" for all her sins.**
- The word "double" is not literal. Rather, it means "in full measure". God had completely judged the Israelites for their sins and now they were completely blessed. Let's study the content of God's master plan today.
- The key word of today's text (Verses 9~11) is "see," which encourages us to be aware and pay attention to what is happening around us. So, what did Isaiah tell them "to see"? Three points

Main Points

1. "See" God who is the Lord of presence.

40:9 Say to the towns of Judah, "Here is your God!"

The first object "to see" is God; the God who is present in human history.

- This message was spoken to the Israelites. "Your God" refers to the fact that God had appeared in their history; God had set up an unilateral covenant with Abraham their Father and had given "the promise of eternal grace." This same God also set the Israelites free from slavery in Egypt.
- God also guided them to the promised land (Canaan) which it flowed with milk and honey. He revealed His authority and His master plan to the Israelites through the prophets from generation to generation. God of the Israelites was present and always at work in their history.
- My friends, do you know any other god like the One who intervenes in history? The One who controls time and history is God the Creator.

Therefore, Isaiah cried out, “See”. Now, what we need to take notice here is that God had achieved everything through “His Words”.

2. “See” the God who is the Lord of power.

- Genesis begins with the words “Let there be light”.
 1:3 And God said, “Let there be light, and there was light.
 1:4 God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness.
 1:5 God called the light “day, and the darkness he called “night. And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day.
- Then, God said on the second day as below—
 1:6 And God said, “Let there be a vault between the waters to separate water from water. □
 1:7 So God made the vault and separated the water under the vault from the water above it. And it was so.
 1:8 God called the vault “sky. And there was evening, and there was morning—the second day.
- The One whom Isaiah said “See” is the God of Israel the Creator.
 40:10 See, the Sovereign Lord comes with power, and his arm rules for him. See, his reward is with him, and his recompense accompanies him.
- Isaiah said as below—
 “The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God stands forever.” Isaiah 40:8
 The term “stand” means “unchangeable” and “to continue”.
- Living things in this world are always changing. Everything changes. And friends, the most changeable thing in the world is people, isn’t it? Even if we make a promise, we easily break it. We are humans.
- However, God never changes. And the words of God never change. Therefore, we can trust in Him, and we can trust in His prophecies. These prophecies tell us what God is like and reveal His nature. And the birth of Jesus the Messiah testifies to this truth.
- The birth of Jesus (the reason for Christmas) is a historical fact. The life of Jesus and His crucifixion are undisputed. However, many people don’t believe these facts. The Israelites, God’s people, didn’t

believe either. Why? ⇒ They could only understand this truth by the light of the Spirit.

1 Corinthians 12:3

12:3 ...No one can say, “Jesus is Lord” except by the Holy Spirit.

- Therefore, we are able to understand God by “the work of God”. The Bible is the basis of our faith and trust. Isaiah tells us “to see” “the God who is present” and “the Lord of power”. Let’s look at another point.

3. “See” the God who is the Lord of compassion.

1) Reward and recompense accompany him.

40:10 See, his reward is with him, and his recompense accompanies him.

- “Reward” and “recompense” are synonymous words. Isaiah records that his reward (his recompense) is with him and accompanies him. What does it mean?

⇒ It means that all we have spoken and done is known to God.

- However, “reward (recompense)” also means “restitution”.

22:14 If a man borrows an animal from his neighbor and it is injured or dies while the owner is not present, he must make restitution. **Exodus**

- Normally, we must take our responsibility for our sins.

To take the responsibility means

⇒ “to make recompense.”

However, God, according to His righteousness, has prepared restitution on our behalf. God has completed His “recompense” through Jesus His Son. Isaiah prophesied as below –

53:5 But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was cursed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him.

- What an amazing thing! The birth of Jesus was “recompense” for our iniquities which we must pay. This is the Gospel. And then Isaiah teaches us about Jesus.

2) The Lord of promise

40:11 He tends his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in his

arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young.

- Isaiah records that God is “the shepherd” who leads His redeemed people.
“The redeemed people” means people who are bought back to God. However, they were not bought back by paying money, as in the case of property or slaves. Rather, God paid with the “shed blood” of Jesus, the Lamb of God.

Psalm 23

23:1 The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing.

23:2 He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters,

23:3 he refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths for his name’s sake.

- The Lord who is powerful is also a gentle and kind shepherd. He “gathers” sheep which easily get lost and “carries them in his arms”. The verses above reveal the power and love of the good shepherd.
- With the birth of Jesus, the expected time was fulfilled and the One who was the good shepherd had come. Jesus accomplished his redemption on the cross.

The Gospel According to John

10:11 “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lay down his life for the sheep.”

10:28 “I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand.”

- **My friends. What is our response toward “the Lord God of mercy”? It isn’t difficult to do.**

We need to “see” God the Creator, just as Isaiah instructed us to do. Every thing begins from this point. We need to see God with simple and faithful hearts.

- The Israelites in captivity were gradually losing faith in God. They had closed their mind and became stiff-necked. They were accepting their hopeless situation. However, God sent the Israelites an angel and spoke to them words of comfort, promise

and grace. The Bible records as below—

The Gospel According to Matthew

11:28 Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.

11:29 Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

{Example} “Fork in the road”

- Two American boys were going to a place where underage kids were not allowed to play. When they were walking pass a church they saw a big sign that said “The wage of sin is death”.
- One boy said, “Hey, let’s go back. That sign says, “The wage of sin is death!’ If we do bad things we might be like the word of that signboard.”
- But the other boy said, “What? We are almost there. We can’t blow this chance. Come on, you are chicken-hearted. You don’t have to be scared that those words. Let’s go!” However, the first boy wouldn’t follow him and said, “I won’t go.” The other boy said, “Do what you want. I’m leaving.” Two boys left each other and went their own way.
- The boy who went back home prayed and repented before God in his room, “My God, please forgive me what I have done.” Since then, the boy studied hard and his faith in God grew. He became a good man and later became the President of the United States. His name was S.G. Cleveland.
- What had happened to the other boy? He kept going his chosen way of pleasure and finally was indicted in a murder case. One day, the news of Cleveland’s presidency made headlines around the United States. An extra edition announcing his presidency was brought to a convict in a dark jail who was sentenced to death and waiting execution. As he read about his childhood friend, the prisoner remembered his words, “The wage of sin is death!”
- His one small step of mistake in his young days resulted in an irrevocable consequence.

* My dear friends. Christmas is just round the corner. Let’s trust in

the Word of God with simple and faithful heart. Isaiah cried out, “See, the Lord!” and he prophesied the message of God.

Conclusion

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- As the Israelites were in captivity, they were discouraged, hopeless and losing faith in God. But then God spoke to them through Isaiah the prophet. In Isaiah 40:1, God said, “**Comfort, comfort my people**”. Then, the God of the Israelites sent the Messiah to His people.
 - ⇒ He is the real Lord of Comfort.
- God prophesied about the Messiah through Isaiah. God is great, so Isaiah urges us “See”. What should we “see”? Isaiah says:
 1. “See” the God who is the Lord of presence.
 2. “See” the God who is the Lord of power
 3. “See” the God who is the Lord of compassion
- My friends, what do we see now?
 - Do we see Jesus who came for our “redemption”?
 - Do we see Jesus who came to make “recompense” on our behalf?

* God bless you!