

12/10/23 - Isaiah 7:10-16 - "The Crushing Reality of 'God With Us' "

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Date: 10 December 2023

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[0 : 00] Please open your Bibles to Isaiah 7, 10 through 16. The child Emmanuel.

Then the Lord spoke again to Azaz, saying, Ask for a sign for yourself from the Lord your God. Make it deep as Sheol, or high as heaven. But Azaz said, I will not ask, nor will I put the Lord to the test.

Then he said, Listen now, house of David. Is it too trivial a thing for you to try the patience of men, that you will try the patience of my God as well? Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign.

Behold, the virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and she will name him Emmanuel. He will eat curds and honey at the time he knows enough to refuse evil and choose good.

For before the boy knows enough to refuse evil and choose good, the land whose two kings you dread will be abandoned. This is the word of the Lord. Praise to God.

[1 : 10] It's great to be gathered with you this morning, and to sing, and to read, and to hear God's word proclaimed in everything that we do. Such an awesome family to be a part of here at Steel Valley Church.

And every year we sing, we read, we rejoice. In December, all revolving around the incarnation of Jesus Christ, which we've heard the Bible verse quoted, God with us.

Right? But what does that mean? God with us. That the God of the Old Testament Israel is all of a sudden obsolete.

That the old God of the Old Testament needs to collect his pension and retire. Worked long enough.

And maybe the incarnation of Jesus Christ, all of a sudden that Old Testament God can take that vacation with his family.

[2 : 34] Well, this idea of distinctions is really popular today. It's often known as moralistic, therapeutic deism.

I know that's a mouthful. Try to spell it without spellcheck calling you out. God. It's known as moralistic, therapeutic deism. It's central in our culture today.

And sadly, it's central in many mainline churches around our country. Author Christian Smith compares it to 18th century philosophy.

And he writes, in short, God is something like a combination of a divine butler and cosmic therapist. He is always on call.

Takes care of any problems that arise. Professionally helps his people to feel better about themselves. And does not become too personally involved in the process.

[3 : 45] In the words of Rick Asley, never going to give you up. Light you down. Dessert you. Never going to make you cry. Never say goodbye.

And he'll never hurt you. Right? This. This says that the purpose of life is to be happy. To feel good about yourself.

No moral absolutes. God is only needed when his people are in trouble. To resolve a problem. If people are good, they'll go to heaven.

This is central within our culture today. And sadly, many mainline churches. But is that really what the incarnation truly means?

If not, how then can we hope in a God with us that doesn't take away from what God has always been doing and doesn't add to it as well?

[4 : 52] What has the personal nature of God's involvement truly looked like? And today, we look at the prophet Isaiah to help us understand the richness and depth within that statement.

God with us. Which served in Isaiah's time as a sign of hope to a nation during national crisis between Israel and Judah.

Civil war. The passage today is all about having hope in unbelief that God is still with us.

In dark days of unbelief, God is still with us. Which, when we discover this, this applies to both good news and bad news.

And so, the sermon titled today is the crushing reality of God with us. And what I have today is two sections as we'll look at this passage and a few others as well.

[6 : 05] And I'd like to pray as we dissect this and expose the meaning of this passage in our world today. So let's pray.

Lord, we come to you today humbling our hearts, humbling our minds, ready to be corrected, ready to be instructed.

Teach us, Father, your ways how they are greater than anything that we could ever imagine. Help us to see Jesus Christ in the depth and richness of which He truly is this Christmas.

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. So the first section is simply titled God Gave Them a Sign.

There it is. God Gave Them a Sign. Verse 10, just as it was read, says, Again, the Lord spoke to Ahaz, Ask a sign of the Lord your God.

[7 : 27] Let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven. Be whatever, there's no limits, the Lord says here. Ask for a sign of the Lord.

Let it be as deep as Sheol or high as heaven. Verse 12, But Ahaz said, I will not ask and I will not put the Lord to test. Let's pause because we're entering into a conversation.

This conversation, it's like coming into any conversation that you might happen to walk into as I am usually prone to do and just all of a sudden say, Hi guys, what are we talking about?

We're diving into a conversation. This conversation has context and profound context at that. This is mid-conversation between the Lord and Ahaz through the prophet Isaiah.

And so as we look at the nine verses before this one, what do we know about Ahaz? Ahaz. Well, Ahaz is the king of Judah during these days and he was facing invasion and they planned, there were people who planned to overthrow him and put in their own guy in verse 6.

[8 : 44] And even going over to 2 Kings 15, I'm not going to make you turn there, you can read it later, but it indicates that Syria and Israel are joining forces to combat the Assyrians and Judah's in the way.

And they plan to overthrow Ahaz. What else do we know about Ahaz? Well, we see that he's a frightened king of Judah.

Judah is facing extinction. Not only are the Assyrians coming to bring him into captivity, but you got your own team coming after you that's teamed up with Syria.

And how does that leave him? Verse 2 indicates it. When the house of David was told, Syria is in league with Ephraim, the heart of Ahaz and the heart of his people shook as the trees of the forest shake before the wind.

going over to 2 Kings chapter 16 now. It also indicates that this king was so frightened during this time he sent a messenger to the Assyrians, the mighty Assyrians, asking them for help.

[10 : 12] You see, this was a time of great warfare and turmoil as God's people were facing destruction. in captivity against the Assyrian empire.

And the Lord spoke again to Ahaz. We have to argue what was first spoken. Well, prophet Isaiah spoke to this frightened king saying, if you are not firm in your faith in verse 9, you will not be firm at all.

That's a verse to underline. Ahaz had a faith problem. Unbelief issues.

Trust issues. And if we want to be honest, Ahaz was probably doing better than any of us would have been doing in this time. if we want to be honest.

We're an honest church. Welcome. We should see something significant in this unbelief though. Because God was gracious to Ahaz because God had a plan for Judah.

[11 : 32] it had nothing to do necessarily with Ahaz. It had everything to do with God's plan for Judah.

Even though Ahaz was quick to ask the enemy for help, but he never asked God. And God encouraged Ahaz to ask for a sign, but Ahaz, as you can imagine, this frightened king, he's already asked the enemy for help.

You see that this is religious empty piety here in the verse where he refuses, I will not ask and I will not put the Lord to the test.

You see his chest beat forward. Never mind that I asked the enemy for help. Right? Hypocrisy. Ahaz is the epitome of a bad leader.

He's the epitome of selfishness, of pride, only concerned about his own plans. And what we need to see is that the pride of man is always subordinate to the plan of God.

[12 : 45] Always subordinate. So at this time, he's not getting anywhere with Ahaz. The Lord opens up the floor to the entire nation in verse 13.

Isaiah said to them, Hear then, O house of David, is it too little for you to weary men that you weary my God also? Therefore, the Lord himself will give you a sign.

See what's happening here? is that when the faithlessness of man seems to distort the faithfulness of God, it's burdensome to everyone around.

It's even burdensome to God. It's fatiguing to God. The ever patient, ever forbearing and gracious God of all creation.

the sign was promised to reassure this nation forward. According to God's faithfulness to faithless people, what was the sign?

[14 : 03] Look at the second half of verse 14. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son and shall call his name Emmanuel. He shall eat curds and honey when he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good.

For before the boy knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land whose two kings you dread will be deserted.

And so, this is a little bit of a complex sign in this time period. Obviously, there's a woman. This is, I wouldn't understand, I wouldn't take this as an actual virgin in this passage.

The original Hebrew doesn't indicate that word in their time period. But we could understand this, that there was a young woman, rather, who will conceive a son in that time period.

And this son shall be called Emmanuel, which means God with us. In other words, during this time period, a child was to be born to these people as a sign to them of a remnant of a small quantity of God's faithfulness that's existing for them, to carry them and sustain them.

[15 : 27] Remember, this is a wearied God, right? And this sign will serve as a remnant of hope, a small quantity of hope left for them.

In verse 15 and 16, not only would this child be born, but by the time of toddlerhood, the threat of Syria and the threat of Israel who have joined forces to replace Ahaz and put their own guy in would be completely gone in verse 16.

In other words, this toddler would be a sign of redemption of this nation. Verse 16, we can understand that this is something that actually took place in their midst.

There is an immediate behold or look as if the prophet Isaiah is pointing to somebody in their midst. Look at this sign that will come and the fulfillment of a young woman actually here.

And guess what? it did come to pass as chapter 8 of Isaiah we see the son I'm not going to try to butcher that name was born in chapter 8 verse 1 through 3.

[16 : 57] Isaiah's wife bore a son and guess what happens at that time period? Threat was gone. It was certain.

a remnant of hope that God had a plan for the nation of Judah. What do we see here? Well, certainly God is Lord over crisis.

Right? There is no one like our God. There is no one who compares to our God. Right? And that was then.

How can we be assured of such a truth today? Let's look at a sign that God gave us.

unbeknownst to Isaiah or Ahaz, the farsighted, off-in-a-distant future of God's people would find a period of time where all hope seemed lost.

[18 : 05] It's during this Maccabean silence of God between the end of Malachi and the opening of the Gospel of Matthew. Time when God was silent.

Still working, but silent. And the words of the prophets that illuminated God's promise to Judah during this tumultuous time period would then cast a shadow forward 700 years to find definitive fulfillment in the birth of Jesus Christ.

What a reminder this would have been to the disciple Matthew. A Jewish man who described Jesus Christ's birth announcement to Joseph and then followed it to connect what's happening here with what happened there.

He says in his Gospel Matthew 1 verse 22 all this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophets. Behold the virgin shall conceive and bear a son and they shall call his name Emmanuel which means God with us.

you see what this Matthew is seeing within the plan of God that this baby he narrates his own Gospel saying think this about what I'm writing don't you love when they do that I love when Jesus explains his parables it takes all the guesswork out and Matthew is helping you interpret what he's saying he's saying this is what it means all of this took place to fulfill what the Lord has spoken by the prophets and while there's a little bit of uncertainty of that that birth in Isaiah was an actual virgin or just a young woman we know for certain that Mary was a virgin which is probably why the translators used virgin to describe and make that connection a little more easier for us to see

[20 : 26] Matthew was an author who placed Jesus at the center of Jewish scripture as the intensified he elevated Jesus of saying yeah there was David but there's the king of whom David foreshadowed and Matthew did this constantly through his gospel he even started the book in chapter one in the very first verse he started with Abraham begetting Isaac he goes all the way back to Abraham to present Jesus Christ what a beautiful theological move as Matthew clarified that Jesus Christ is God's presence among his people symbolically but actually God incarnate

God putting on flesh and as we read Matthew and look back upon Isaiah we ought to see that we are certainly not the center of deliverance but God is God is at the center of deliverance and you might also consider in verse 16 you might ask well I see that the Lord it says God with us with the nation of Judah but what about the nation of Israel was God with the nation of Israel I would argue yes he was with the nation of Israel God alone delivers as we see in the nation of

Judah and destroys as we see in the nation of Israel he's both deliverer rescuer judge and holy God is perfect holiness and mercy better than any definition that we can ever find in a Webster dictionary he judges the wickedness and rebellion of man and redeems those who turn to him by faith the only way to make it out alive of God with us is upon the basis of faith in Jesus Christ alone both paths of judgment and faithfulness lead to the road of the cross of Calvary where God is still with us how was God with them at Calvary how was God with Jesus at

Calvary God crushed Jesus humanity at Calvary it was the cross where judgment and wrath collide with love and faithfulness of God reflecting reflecting upon the other obliterated nations of Syria and Israel who joined forces in Isaiah we should see an indication here that there is nothing that we can ever point to or trust in that gives us a reason to live other than pointing to and trusting in Christ alone how by our faith in him here humanity finds its ultimate redemption that began with Emmanuel God with us and here God's people find their definite solution in the Messiah of which we you and me

Gentiles are grafted into that promise and sometimes the difficult things that we need to hear are some of the things that we ignore for so long right the difficult things that we need to hear because we have ignored the truth for too long well knowing that God with us has a weighty tense to it of not only deliverance but also judgment we should have a wake up call this morning to wake up anyone who has not had faith in Jesus Christ alone that has pointed to some book or some theory of how to be a better person and get closer to God and somehow please God apart from Jesus Christ maybe even those who were baptized came to faith and trusted in

[25 : 32] Jesus Christ maybe this is a wake of call to you because you certainly have not been living it surrendering to the plan of God amid your own crisis running to the enemy for help and not running to God metaphorically speaking the crisis around our lives is minimal compared to the crisis that exists in our hearts right how many more Christmases need to pass us by how many more Christmases must you come and hear the gospel and continue to rebel well today's a fresh start for you today's the day of salvation for you to have faith to receive forgiveness on the basis and account of faith trust me when I say you do not want

God with you apart from Jesus Christ you do not want God with you apart from Jesus Christ unbelief will one day be judged crushed and the crushing that was meant for every single one of us because we are not innate good people we are rebellious people from birth we constantly before faith in Christ have rebelled against his ways transgressed against God refused to turn to God or any sort of hope but by God's intervention in our hearts made us awake come awake and alive to this gospel of his redemption in our lives how many more Christmases must you hear this gospel and continue to rebel friends unbelief will one day be judged and it will crush people under the weight of a holy

God you see may this Christmas broaden our scope of redemption and see a God so rich in holiness that he crushes and so rich in mercy that he saves that's what God did through Jesus Christ a baby in a manger what a heavy reminder for us this morning what a crushing reality of God with us it certainly crushes our pride leaving nothing but faith on our knees saying God I am helpless without you and that is how it was meant to be no matter how powerful and terrifying our enemies are we have been given every reason not to fear and to simply trust

Emmanuel God with us God alone is our strength and our defense and we also can't be surprised at the instruments that God uses in our lives and in our world today to bring about his will will we often look at the news and say wow that God you're using that to bring about your will and absolutely he is all crisis in life is subordinate to the plan of God he's working out that plan and guiding history so it shouldn't surprise us when we see God using wickedness of man to carry out his good plans and that's not saying anything that evil is ever justified but rather that every evil is theologically subordinate to God's plans and so

Christians looking at Isaiah and this child that was born in Isaiah's time the sign in chapter 7 verse 14 God named him before he was even born it was written in a legal contract in chapter 8 verse 1 through 3 and might I remind you today Christian that God wrote a plan for your entire life before you were even conceived before the foundation of the world what other assurance do you need to hope it to trust it church don't mistake this definite hope for some moralistic therapeutic belief don't trade the gospel call to die to yourself and just continue to sin daily and just say sinner saved by grace ah wretched old me no the cross of Jesus

[31 : 09] Christ and the blood that stained that cross did not exist just for you to continue in your sin God has beckoned you to come just like every person here today is beckoned to come come as you are but through the gospel of Jesus Christ we leave completely changed today is the day for that change for some of us don't lose in that ever present battle that we have with sin which we do lose quite often and probably more often times than we would like to admit at different times but it should point us back and draw us closer to the cross of Jesus Christ it should remind us when we look upon the cross of Calvary that God certainly is not done with us his grace alone is sufficient may the remainder of this year we got what maybe like three or four more weeks this year left not only that but maybe the years to come to reinforce that truth that change that gospel that testimony to a watching needing world that turns to moralistic therapeutic

God to solve all their problems to make them feel good may this change our personal lives your families your communities all those around your workplace the state of Ohio our nation our world we must make his faithfulness known and not fall for faith faithlessness see in dark days of unbelief God is still with us amen may this be good news for all of us this Christmas let's pray we do do