

SERMON FOR SEPTEMBER 9, 2018

TEXT: ISAIAH 35: 4-7

THEME: GOD'S WORD TO THE ANXIOUS OF HEART

Say to those who have an anxious heart,

“Be strong; fear not!

Behold, your God

will come with vengeance,
with the recompense of God.

He will come and save you.”

In the name of Jesus:

So what are you anxious about? What is causing you to lose sleep at night? Do you or your family have health concerns? Are you wondering if you will still be employed this time next year? Are your concerns financial? Perhaps they are spiritual. Maybe you are anxious because you have a skeleton in the closet that you don't want anyone knowing about. Something so embarrassing that if others found out, you wonder how you could face them. Maybe you are just anxious to be... Anxious. Oh, there are medical conditions dealing with anxiety and depression, and by all means if you are experiencing symptoms go see a doctor! Get help. I am serious, take your mental health seriously just as you do your physical health. But what I am talking about here is not a medical condition, it is a spiritual condition, which shows itself by living in fear and worry. If this is you, God has Good News for you today, for through the prophet Isaiah

GOD SPEAKS HIS WORD TO ANXIOUS HEARTS

Isaiah writes these words to an anxious people. God chosen people certainly don't feel or look like God's chosen people. And they certainly didn't look like it back in Isaiah's day and age as well. What were they anxious about? God had called the people

of Israel to be His own people, His prized possession. God saw them in the misery of their slavery to Pharaoh in Egypt, and sent Moses, His messenger, to speak to the captives. Through Moses, God delivered His people, taking them from the slavery of Egypt to a land of freedom on the other side of the Red Sea. God provided for their needs throughout their time in the wilderness and brought them to the border of the Promised Land. As they entered the Promised Land, God triumphed over all of Israel's enemies. Through King David Israel was a shining beacon to every nation on earth, giving witness to the power of God.

But God's people forgot about God. Their hearts and lives turned away from God. It became a priority for the people of God to be liked by people rather than loved by God. God had called this nation to be His own, to live lives set apart, or differently than any other nation on earth. God's promise was that if the nation would follow God He would deliver them from all of their enemies. But if not, there would be consequences and the nation would suffer.

Isaiah lived 700 years before the time of Jesus, almost 300 years after David's reign as King. The situation Isaiah saw in the lives of Israel was deplorable. You could describe the spiritual life of the people as if they were living in a spiritual wilderness. Few trusted in God, others paid lip service to God. No one knew God, few worshiped. How would the people know the One True God, how would they know for certain that God knew their name and that God was a God of love and blessing?

The people of Isaiah's time knew full well about what a wilderness was like. So do the residents of Arizona and California. Much of the land in these states is a natural

desert. In order to bring water to the land the land needs irrigation. If you live in Arizona or California, you know how precious water is, cactus grow in yards, and the extreme heat in the area cracks the ground where a pond used to be. Long showers are a no -no and the water bill is a constant concern. The people living in Israel and Judah during the time of Isaiah could relate. They had two seasons, the rainy season and the dry season. Even in a good year with a lot of rain, the people had to rely on cisterns and wells for a reservoir of water. But as for the crops, well, that wouldn't help the yield, because there just were not that many rivers or streams that would last the season, they would dry up and their river and stream beds would crack under the heat of the sun.

There are times in your life and mine when our hearts and lives feel like a desert, they are cracked, dry, almost lifeless. It is as if we are living in a spiritual desert and we wait for the refreshing rain to come, but we wait, and wait and wait. We wonder if God has forgotten us, and wonder if the dry season will ever end. Many today live in such a dry season as their lives are overwhelmed with anxieties and fears. People today live in so much pain and fear of day –to- day activities that they try to escape through substance abuse. Others just seem on edge. Some live as if they are waiting for the other shoe to drop. People are living life afraid.

Some are afraid of those who don't look like us, fearful of those who don't think like us. In our country, some are afraid of conservatives, others are afraid of liberals. We live in fear of our neighbors, those people who live next door and across the street from us, and in fear of those people who we have never met. Afraid of going out at night, afraid of going into the wrong neighborhood at night. Afraid of financial ruin,

afraid of things we can't control. We fear the known, and the unknown. Just like the people of Isaiah's time, we are living in such fear that we can't think straight and can't believe that the world is in the predicament that we are in. Who can save us? Who can help us? God speaks through the prophet Isaiah to give us Good News for our anxious hearts.

If you have ever felt that way, God through the prophet Isaiah has Good News for you! It was to people like us that Isaiah spoke, God had not forgotten. God has a specific Word for you! Listen to these beautiful words: "Say to those who have an anxious heart, "Be strong, fear not! Behold, your God will come with a vengeance, with the recompense of God, He will come and save you!" And God has come to save you, that is why He sent to you a Savior, Jesus, Christ the Lord!

This is why Isaiah wrote these beautiful words some 700 years before the time of Jesus: "Behold, the virgin will conceive and bear a Son, and you shall call His name Immanuel, which means God is with us." God sent His only Son Jesus into our world, to be born of the virgin Mary and to live His life to give those whose hearts are dry, parched, and cracked new life and everlasting life. Isaiah pointed sinners who were anxious to Jesus, for Jesus is our Source of Life. He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, no one can have everlasting life without Jesus.

Jesus came down from His throne in heaven to live in this parched wilderness of sin that we call life on planet earth. He was tempted as you and I are, yet did not sin. When in the wilderness Jesus was tempted by the devil, but didn't worry, fret, or complain. When faced with hunger, the devil tempted Him with turning stones into

loaves of bread, but Jesus said, “Man doesn’t live by bread alone but by the Word of God.” When presented the opportunity to kneel and worship the devil, as a ploy for Jesus to bypass the cross, Jesus told Satan to leave, for Jesus’ sole purpose in His life was to do the will of His Father who sent Him to earth.

God’s good and gracious will was revealed in Jesus. God so loved you and the world that He gave His one and only Son so that whoever believes in Him has everlasting life. Eternal life is yours by a free gift of God’s love in Jesus. Your eternity is secure! Baptized in the name of Jesus, you now belong to Him. Your eternal future is secure. But what about the anxious times we are living in today?

God cares for you. If you have any doubt, look to Jesus. He spared not His one and only Son, He crucified Jesus and made Him who knew no sin to be sin for you! Today He comes to you not in anger but in love. Doesn’t the Bible say to cast all your worries on Him, for He cares for you? He is the tender, loving Shepherd of whom King David writes about in Psalm 23: “The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want...He leads me beside still waters, He restores my soul.”

Jesus has come to lead you to the still waters of His love and to refresh and restore your soul during these anxious times we live in. Jesus says: “If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. For whoever believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of His heart will flow living waters.” Jesus comes to you today in His Word, He reminds you that you belong to Him in the waters of Baptism, and that He refreshes you and forgives you all of your sins as you come to the Table to eat His body and drink His blood for the remission of all of your sin. Jesus is here for YOU, and He promises to be with

you always, that no matter what worries or causes you anxiety, He is your ever present and ever loving Savior, who will give you His peace that surpasses all understanding.

GOD SPEAKS HIS WORD TO ANXIOUS HEARTS

He speaks His Word to you, for no matter who you are and no matter what trouble you face, you have God's guarantee that nothing will ever separate you from His love, and that in Jesus, He works all things out to your good and His glory. Thanks be to God!

Amen