

SERMON FOR OCTOBER 22, 2023

TEXT: ISAIAH 45: 1-7

THEME: NO OTHER GOD

Thus says the Lord, to His anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have grasped, to subdue nations before him and to loose the belts of kings, to open doors before him that gates may not be closed: I will go before you and level the exalted places, I will break in pieces the doors of bronze and cut through the bars of iron, I will give you the treasures of darkness and the hoards in secret places, that you may know that it is I, the LORD, the God of Israel, who call you by your name. For the sake of my servant Jacob, and Israel my chosen, I call you by your name, I name you, though you do not know me. **I am the LORD, and there is no other, besides me there is no God;** I equip you, though you do not know me, that people may know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is none besides me; I am the LORD, and there is no other. I form light and create darkness; I make well-being and create calamity; I am the LORD, who does all these things.

In the name of Jesus:

If one were to look at the present state of things in the world we live in, one might wonder, “what in the world is going on?” It seems as if the world is being not only pulled apart at the seams by anger and hatred. It is downright difficult if not depressing to watch or listen to the news today. We hear of wars ongoing and rumors of wars yet to begin. We see images on television and on social media of unimaginable suffering and torment. Some see these images and wonder where what will happen next? What does the future hold, and will there even be a future? Others may ask if God knows what is going

on? They think that God is upstairs sleeping, that He is aloof, or that He just doesn't seem to care.

It is easy to look at what is going on in the world today and have feelings of being lost and in despair. But in all of this, God gives us Good News in the book of Isaiah, for in the Old Testament lesson for today we hear that the Lord Himself is at work in the world and that He alone is God, that there is NO OTHER GOD.

The people of God during Isaiah's time were afraid of their present and their future, much like many are today. To look at the world in Isaiah's day was to see warring nations rattling their swords. There was Assyria, whose warriors were bloodthirsty and ruthless. There was Babylon, who had cities fortified by strong gates of bronze and iron which were thought to be of such strength that no one would be able to break through the fortifications. And who could forget Egypt, the world power that at one time held the nation captive and even in Isaiah's day was still a formidable world power.

The Lord had threatened punishment because of the idolatry of His people. The Lord continued to call His own to believe in Him and to follow Him, but they would rather be like all the other nations, Living in fear of their enemies, they trusted in the gods of their enemies rather than trusting in God. They rejected the Lord and turned to the gods of their enemies. And so the

Lord would punish them because of their rejection, turning them over into the hands of their enemies. First Assyria, then Babylon, God's people were bound and taken into captivity as a punishment for their idol worship and ultimate rejection of the One True God. Even though God's people worship other idols, they would come to realize that all of these idols were false, powerless idols, there was none to compare to THE ONE TRUE GOD.

So the Lord sets out to deliver His people. And here's what is mindblowing, something that only God could do. As Isaiah writes this in approximately 700 BC, the Lord names the Persian King who would release God's people from their captivity, are you ready for this.....200 years later! The Lord predicted what He was going to do and named the person whom He was going to use to accomplish the release from captivity, as Isaiah writes: Thus says the Lord, to His anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have grasped, to subdue nations before him and to loose the belts of kings, to open doors before him that gates may not be closed: I will go before you and level the exalted places, I will break in pieces the doors of bronze and cut through the bars of iron, I will give you the treasures of darkness and the hoards in secret places, that you may know that it is I, the LORD, the God of Israel, who call you by your name. For the sake of my servant Jacob, and Israel my chosen, I call you by your name, I name you, though you do not know me. **I am the LORD,**

and there is no other, besides me there is no God; I equip you, though you do not know me, that people may know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is none besides me; I am the LORD, and there is no other. I form light and create darkness; I make well-being and create calamity; I am the LORD, who does all these things.” And just as Isaiah had predicted, God’s people were released from their captivity and returned home to the Promised Land. Cyrus, who was a Persian king but no believer in the Lord, was used by the Lord to bring about the Lord’s will to deliver His people from their captivity.

Many times we are surprised at what God is doing, and don’t realize what He is doing until long after the fact. Even in Isaiah’s day, God acted to deliver Israel, but it was not in a way that any of them expected. God selected Cyrus, the King of Persia, to defeat the Babylonian enemy and by the decree of Cyrus Israel returned home. It wasn’t a Jew who rescued them, it was a Gentile, a foreign king, an unbeliever, a potential enemy, who was used by the Lord to accomplish His purpose.

And so what is God’s will, you may ask, as you look at the present state of the world? Where there are wars and rumors of wars on the horizon, when it seems as if the world is unraveling at the seams? The Lord reminds us that He is the Lord, there is no other God besides Him. As the Psalmist

writes in Psalm 75:” When the earth totters, and all its inhabitants, it is I who keep steady its pillars.” What the Lord has to say to the people of Isaiah’s day He says to us today. He, the Lord, is in control He knows what is going on and He is at work even today. The Lord has sent His anointed into this world to save the world, and His anointed isn’t a politician, a president, a king or a nation. The Lord sends One who is greater than Cyrus to deliver His people, He is not what people today are looking for or even what they expect. This One whom the Lord sends will break down every barrier that has its hold upon us. This One whom God has sent is His only begotten Son, Jesus.

The Bible says: “But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, He was with God in the beginning, and all things were made through Him. He is Jesus, the Word who became flesh and dwelt among us. He came into the world that He created yet the world did not know Him. They rejected Him. But He did not reject the world. For God sent His only Son into the world not to condemn the world but to save the world through Him. Through Jesus, we not only see the love of God but through Jesus we behold and receive His grace, His undeserved love and mercy.

Jesus was sentenced to die a death that every human being deserves, a death where God rejects the sinner. But He who knew no sin became sin for

you and me and for every sinner. And Jesus not only died, but He rose again and lives today, to forgive us our sin, to deliver us from Hell, and to be our ever Present Help in times of trouble. It is just as the Bible says: “ Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead. **10** He delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will deliver us again.”

The same Lord who named Cyrus 200 years before He was born knows your name as well. He has called you by name in the waters of your Baptism. He even has the very hairs numbered that are on your head. He loves you with an everlasting love. Christ lived for you, He died for you, He lives for you today. Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever.

So in these troubling times, turn to Jesus. Cast your cares upon Him, for He cares for you. And know that in all of this, Jesus is at work today, calling people to repentance and faith, for God wants all to be saved and come to know that there is NO OTHER GOD than Jesus who is the Resurrection and the Life.

Amen