

December 16, 2018

National Presbyterian Church

“Jesus Son of David: Great Vision”

Isaiah 11:1-10, Isaiah 2:1-4

David A. Renwick

Sermons this Advent: focusing on the character, activity of a mysterious, enigmatic leader, promised by God to come to the world in God’s good time in order to be a source of blessing, not just to the people of Israel but to gentiles, people like you and me as well.

The promise was first made indirectly c. 1800 BC, in the days of a man called Abraham,

About 800 years later, the promise was spelled out again to Abraham’s descendants who had now become a nation, the people of Israel, at the time a King called David was on the throne. And while David was a deeply flawed person, for all that, he was still remarkably faithful to God: he was Israel’s greatest king. And God assured David that one of his descendants (not just Abraham’s), known as “the Son of David” or “Messiah” would somehow; at some time in the future rule as a great king, forever.

For the next 1000 years the hope for the fulfilment of this promise was nurtured in Israel by Israel’s religious leaders (the prophets), until Jesus became a public figure. As he preached and taught his first followers began to believe that in him they had found the one who was promised for all those years: the Promised Leader; the Son of David; the Messiah.

Among those prophetic figures who kept the hope alive most clearly was the Prophet Isaiah and those who followed him.

This Advent, then, our focus has especially been on *The Book of Isaiah* and its teaching on what we call “the messianic hope.”

For example, last week, we considered one of the blessings that Isaiah spoke about: that this great leader would bring with him the blessing of healing – healing through suffering.

- We see this most clearly in Isaiah in chapters 52 and 53; and we see it fulfilled in Jesus, the one who heals our souls first of all: our relationship with God; reconciling us to God; paying for our sins through his suffering and death.
- And then, having restored us to our maker, we find him turning our lives into healers too! Using us to bring his healing touch into all our relationships

Thomas A Kempis, a Christian writer in the 1400s said
Some people *are never* at peace with themselves, *nor* do they bring it to anyone else.

The disturbed and discontented person is upset by many a suspicion; *he or she neither rests himself nor permits others to do so.*

BUT a peaceful person can do more good even than a learned one.

So . . . First keep peace with yourself; then you will be able to bring peace to others. [*In other words, find God’s healing in your own life and that very healing will impact others.*]

SO Jesus the Son of David is a Great Healer who wants to impact the world by impacting you and me first; by healing us first.

- Do you know your need of this healing and this empowerment to turn you into a healer?
- Will you let him in to accomplish his work?

BUT this Son of David, this Great Leader promised in Isaiah, doesn't just bring with him GREAT HEALING. He also brings with him GREAT VISION. The kind of vision that should fill our minds, and infiltrate and empower all our actions. And this is what I want us to focus on today.

In fact, the truth whether we know it or not, is that some kind of image or internal vision is empowering our actions even now.

Some years ago, I took a group of 35 people or so to Scotland, and as the trip was nearing the end, I thought we needed a group picture. So the tour guide and I discussed it . . . and nearly came to blows because we had 2 quite different and unspoken visions in our minds about what was involved in taking a group picture.

- I imagined one person with one camera taking one photo that would be sent to everyone after the trip – *taking the phot would take no more than ten minutes.*
- She (from her experience) imagined 35 people each pulling out their cameras (before smart phones), handing them to someone and taking 20-30 shots – *and in her mind it would take forever!*

It took a while, quite a tussle, before the differences in our vision finally came to the surface and we were able to move ahead and take the shot. Not my greatest moment: though for some time after the trip, it was somehow amongst the most memorable!! – Some of my fellow travelers in the congregation couldn't resist reminding me and ribbing me from time to time about "the memorable battle of the 2 stubborn strong-headed Scots."

Sometimes our differing internal visions (like these ones) can be relatively trivial – though still powerful. But sometimes it can be a matter of great seriousness.

This past week I was able to hear 2 elected officials in congress, Representative Trey Gowdy and Senator Tim Scott, speak about their best-selling book: "*Unified: How Our Unliklely Friendship Gives us Hope*"

- Both are from S. Carolina;
- Both are Republicans
- Both are practicing Christians

But even though they grew up less than few hundred miles apart, their upbringing and path could not have been more different

- One (Rep Gowdy) was reared in comfort, had a great education, two parents; and happens to be (by his own admission) rather cynical – a natural first class prosecutor; and white.
- The other (Sen. Scott) was reared by a loving single mom, in poverty, scrambling to make ends meet; black and despite childhood struggles, remarkably a genuine optimist,

In serving together for 8 years in both the House and Senate they've developed a true and deep friendship, and what they said was that they needed each other to govern effectively as elected officials; they needed the vision that they did not have; they needed each other to SEE more clearly the diverse world and nation that they had only partially seen before. Indeed, they said in effect, "what good is it if you don't have friends that differ, on different sides of the aisle?"

And in the same way as Christians, we always need to be asking

- What do we see?
- What's the vision in our heads
- Is it true? False? Somewhere in between?
- And how is it impacting my life?
 - Is it empowering or deadening?
 - For me? For others?

And in particular, we need to ask, "Is OUR vision the SAME Vision that the Great Leader, the Great Healer, the Son of David – Messiah Jesus – wants us to carry in our heads?"

And the Good News is that we can know what that vision was, and is, because one of the things Isaiah does is to share it with us in his book – this "Messianic Vision"; the vision embraced by the Messiah in his head and heart – so that we could embrace it too. A vision of the world as it ought to be. A world in which:

1. Unfairness is eliminated, and justice, mercy and compassion are reigning for all
2. Danger is gone: and there is true peace and reconciliation between opposites, between natural enemies
3. People of every nation, not just God's ancient people, are seeking the truth and listening to God, and basing their lives on God's Word

That's the "messianic vision" in Isaiah: is it yours?

Let me read to you again from Is.11:3-4, which describes this Messiah King's vision for perfect justice.

He shall not judge (merely) by what his eyes see,
or decide (merely) by what his ears hear;
but with righteousness he shall judge the poor,
and decide with equity for the meek of the earth;
he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth,
and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.

OR, again, in

Isaiah 61:1 (quoted by Jesus himself in the synagogue Nazareth in Luke 4)

The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me; he has sent me to bring GOOD NEWS to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners

This is Jesus' explicit guiding vision: this Passion for Justice mingled with Mercy.

And then, in Isaiah 11(6-8) again, there's a great vision about the "end of danger" and "peace and reconciliation between opposites" (we call this vision the "Peaceable Kingdom"):

⁶The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. ⁷The cow and the bear shall graze, their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. ⁸The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den.

OR then, in Isaiah 2, there is a vision of world peace:

⁴He (the Messiah) shall judge between the nations, and shall arbitrate for many peoples; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

And then there's the Vision – earlier in the same chapter of people longing to hear God's word. The passage mentions specific places: Jerusalem and Zion. But this is not just about a geographical location. It is about anywhere Where Jesus is, including Washington DC; anywhere where God's people create a house for God.

Let me read from Isaiah 2:2

²In days to come (the days of the Son of David, Messiah)
the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised above the hills;

All the nations (all the Gentiles; People of all races) shall stream to it.

³Many peoples shall come and say,

“Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.”

For out of Zion shall go forth instruction,
and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

So here in Isaiah -- we have these

- VISIONS of the world as it ought to be
- VISIONS of the kind of world that the Son of David is looking to create
- VISIONS of a day to come, a world to come in which
 1. Unfairness is eliminated, and justice and mercy is reigning for all
 2. Danger is gone, and there is true peace and reconciliation between opposites, between natural enemies
 3. And People of *every* race and nation, not just God's ancient people are seeking ultimate truth and listening to God, and basing their lives on God's Word

These are marvelous visions . . . that some realists may be tempted to say are just pie in the sky, beyond reality, just not possible. And to a certain extent, I'd agree: until we get to heaven the perfection of the vision will elude us.

But two points need to be made

(1) The First is this: Pie in the sky or not . . . **the direction of the vision is clear – AND VITAL!**

This is not a vision of a dystopia

1. Where power is unbridled and justice is absent or can be bought
2. Where everyone is safe because they carry a weapon
3. Where truth is in the eye of the beholder and everyone does their own thing

No – this is a vision of

1. a society in which power serves the causes of justice and mercy
2. a society that is free and safe enough, and relationships and social cohesion are strong enough to lay down our weapons
3. a society in which truth matters; in which there's a voice that needs to be proclaimed and listened to – that will not lead us astray

And this is the vision – the vision of our Messiah – that should be in our hearts and minds providing the direction of our lives and work every day, no matter what our profession. IS IT?

1. Unfairness eliminated, and justice and mercy is reigning for all?
2. Danger Gone: and there is true peace between opposites, between natural enemies?
3. People of every race and nation – not just God’s ancient people hungering for truth and finding it in Christ Jesus?

That’s the first thing . . .

(2) And the second thing is this (something that history in general and the world of business in particular proves time and time again): ***that without a high and lofty vision you get nowhere.*** BUT when the vision remains strong — even though the goal may seem to be out of reach, you get much further than anyone dreamed was possible.

The late business guru, Peter Drucker once said this:

“I’ll never forget when President Roosevelt announced publicly in WWII that we would build thirty thousand fighter planes.

I was on the task force that worked on our economic strength -- on what was financially feasible and we had just reached the conclusion that we could build at most four thousand. We thought, ‘For goodness sake, he’s senile.’

But two years later, we built not thirty thousand but fifty thousand.”

Drucker concludes: “I don’t know whether he knew or whether he just realized that unless you set objectives very high, you don’t achieve anything at all.”

(A World of Ideas, Doubleday, 1989, p.406)

VISION!! --- What’s your driving vision?

There’s an image in your mind somewhere that has enormous power over your life.

- Do you know what it is?
- And is it the same vision as the Vision of Jesus – the Son of David, the Messiah promised to Abraham and David in Isaiah?

May it be so.

David A. Renwick Copyright © 2018 All Rights Reserved.

To listen on line go to: <http://nationalpres.org/sermons>
To watch full services go to: <http://www.ustream.tv/channel/nationalpres>

THE NATIONAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
4101 Nebraska Avenue, N.W. Washington, D.C. 20016
www.NationalPres.org 202.537.0800