

Theme: When we seem to be forgotten and forsaken, we can know that Jesus will never leave or forsake us, and is always at work to hold us close to our Father.

I. Intro - Joseph

- A. Story of Joseph - Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat
- B. It seemed as if everything was lost - and then God
- C. He was a picture of Israel's own story - and ours
- D. How do we respond when God's Promise seems endangered?

II. The Advent Promise Given - And Delayed

- A. God promised to come rescue His people from Satan
And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel." Genesis 3:15
 - 1. God graciously promised to rescue us from Satan
 - 2. Amazingly the rescue would come through a Human - the Seed of the woman
- B. This Promise was not fulfilled quickly
 - 1. The promise was reiterated and refined to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob - the Seed would come through them
 - 2. But Israel spent 400 years in cruel bondage in Egypt - a time which left them discouraged, doubting and even disobedient
 - 3. But God never forgot His promise - it was never derailed! So He brought Israel back to the land

In the future, when your son asks you, "What is the meaning of the stipulations, decrees and laws the Lord our God has commanded you?" ²¹ tell him: "We were slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt, but the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand. ²²Before our eyes the Lord sent miraculous signs and wonders — great and terrible — upon Egypt and Pharaoh and his whole household. ²³ But he brought us out from there to bring us in and give us the land that he promised on oath to our forefathers. Deuteronomy 6:20–23

- a. They were to recount this story from one generation to the next
 - b. Rehearsing the story of God's redemptive work forms the faith and fuels the covenant faithfulness of the people of God through good times and bad.
 - c. God's redemptive work in the Exodus was rooted in the Abrahamic promise - which was rooted in the promise of a Seed to come and redeem
- C. Advent Promise refined & delayed - the Seed of David
- 1. Years later, God again refined the Promise - the Seed would come through David
 - 2. God sustained David's descendants and the kingdom for many years
 - 3. The Advent Promise became the hope for the Messiah - David's Son who would rule over the people of God in righteousness
 - 4. However, God once again did not immediately fulfill the promise, but rather allowed time to pass to test and train the people
 - 5. But the descendants of David - and the rest of the nation - increasingly turned from God and His ways

III. The Advent Promise Endangered

A. The Advent Promise endangered - the exile

1. Over next 3 centuries prophets warned David's sons
2. By the time of Isaiah, the kingdom had grown so faithless that the exile was prophesied
 - a. Instead of covenant blessings, covenant curses would fall on the people
 - b. The people would be sent away from the promised land to be exiles abroad
 - c. David's descendants would no longer rule over God's people in the Promised land
3. Would this be the end? Had the Promise failed?
4. Often it appears that God's Promise will not be fulfilled, and that the covenant blessings will never find rest in our lives - but God's Word never fails!

B. The Advent Promise renewed - and expanded!

1. Given in a series of Servant Songs in Isaiah 40-66
2. Delay in fulfillment is recognized - and met with faith
Listen to me, you islands; hear this, you distant nations: Before I was born the Lord called me; from my birth he has made mention of my name. 4 But I said, "I have labored to no purpose; I have spent my strength in vain and for nothing. Yet what is due me is in the LORD's hand, and my reward is with my God." Isaiah 49:1, 4
 - a. The Servant was called before He was born (v1)
 - b. Appeared to be all in vain and to no purpose (v4)
 - c. But the Servant responds in faith, not doubt! (v4b)

3. The Seed/Servant will come and restore Israel to the covenant blessings

And now the Lord says — he who formed me in the womb to be his servant to bring Jacob back to him and gather Israel to himself, for I am honored in the eyes of the Lord and my God has been my strength — Isaiah 49:5

- a. God has promised a Virgin's Child would be coming (see Isaiah 7:14)
 - b. The long promised Seed/Servant will bring Jacob/Israel back to Himself
 - c. Israel seemed to be forgotten and forsaken - but the Servant Seed would act faithfully and restore them to the covenant blessings
 - d. When we seem to be forgotten and forsaken, we can know that Jesus will never leave or forsake us, and is always at work to hold us close to our Father
4. The Seed/Servant will expand the covenant blessings to all the nations
he says: "It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth." Isaiah 49:6
 - a. The Seed/Servant will not only restore Israel - He will expand the covenant blessings to the nations
 - b. This is the fulfillment of the Advent Promise to Abram - all nations will be blessed through you
 - c. In dark times I often turn inward, trying to preserve the blessings for myself, but God calls me to look outward and to spread the blessing to the nations.

d. Our God is a missionary God, and His gaze is always fixed upon drawing the nations to Himself!

5. The Seed/Servant will rule over the nations

This is what the Lord says — the Redeemer and Holy One of Israel — to him who was despised and abhorred by the nation, to the servant of rulers: “Kings will see you and rise up, princes will see and bow down, because of the Lord, who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you.” Isa 49:7

- a. The Seed/Servant will not only rule over Israel - He will be the King of Kings and Lord of Lords!
- b. This is an expansion of God’s Promise that David’s Son would rule over God’s People forever
- c. This shows that God’s design that the Son of Adam would rule over this world to lead it in worship to God is still on track!

C. Endangered - but never extinguished!

- 1. It has often seemed as if the Advent Promise in Genesis 3:15 would fail
 - a. Cain killed Abel; but God raised up Seth
 - b. Flood almost wiped out humanity; but God preserved Noah and family
 - c. Abram could not have children; almost sacrificed Isaac - but the Angel stayed his hand
 - d. Looked like Esau was coming to wipe out Jacob
 - e. Pharaoh killing Israelite children; faith almost gone; God raised up Moses to deliver them
 - f. Athaliah tried to kill all David’s heirs, but God saved Joash

- g. The exile seemed to end everything - but God used it to cure Israel of idolatry and to prepare for Christ
- h. Herod tried to kill Jesus, but God protected Him
- i. Rome tried to crush the Church, but Rome fell and the Church has survived
- j. The Gospel seemed all but lost in the late Middle Ages, but God raised up a Reformation and sent the Gospel forth to the ends of the earth!
- k. It seems dark in the West today, but the Gospel is flourishing and growing faster than ever!

2. God will keep His Word of promise to us!

IV. Applying the Word

- A. Do I feel as if I have been hidden, abandoned - and my labor is in vain?
 - 1. The delay in God’s promises and the apparent endangering of God’s Work can leave us feeling abandoned and forsaken
 - 2. We can feel that all of our labors to love, follow, and serve God and others are in vain
 - 3. This is spoken of in our text!

He made my mouth like a sharpened sword, in the shadow of his hand he hid me; he made me into a polished arrow and concealed me in his quiver. ³ He said to me, “You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will display my splendor.” ⁴ But I said, “I have labored to no purpose; I have spent my strength in vain and for nothing. Yet what is due me is in the LORD’s hand, and my reward is with my God.”
Isaiah 49:2–4

The Advent Promise Endangered

Isaiah 49:1-7

December 17, 2017

Communion

Romans 15:13

Teaching keywords: Advent and Christmas; encouragement; covenant; correction; exile and return

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Romans 15:13

Listen to me, you islands; hear this, you distant nations: Before I was born the Lord called me; from my birth he has made mention of my name.² He made my mouth like a sharpened sword, in the shadow of his hand he hid me; he made me into a polished arrow and concealed me in his quiver.³ He said to me, “You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will display my splendor.”⁴ But I said, “I have labored to no purpose; I have spent my strength in vain and for nothing. Yet what is due me is in the LORD’s hand, and my reward is with my God.”⁵ And now the Lord says — he who formed me in the womb to be his servant to bring Jacob back to him and gather Israel to himself, for I am honored in the eyes of the Lord and my God has been my strength —⁶ he says: “It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth.”⁷ This is what the Lord says — the Redeemer and Holy One of Israel — to him who was despised and abhorred by the nation, to the servant of rulers: “Kings will see you and rise up, princes will see and bow down, because of the Lord, who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you.” Isaiah 49:1–7

- a. Prepared by God - and then hidden away
- b. Promised by God - but seems in vain

4. God’s people have often struggled with this!
 5. David (Psalm 22), Solomon (Ecclesiastes)
 6. Jeremiah felt this way too - it is not unusual
 7. Do not ignore this - open up to God
 8. Wrestle with God in prayer - don’t be religious!
- B. Have your hope renewed by God’s Story & Spirit
1. The feeling of abandonment must not be the end!
 2. God gives hope and encouragement!
But I said, “I have labored to no purpose; I have spent my strength in vain and for nothing. Yet what is due me is in the LORD’s hand, and my reward is with my God.” Isaiah 49:4
 3. God has not abandoned us - He will never leave or forsake us! (Hebrews 13:5)
 4. Advent - a time of renewal in hope - God will come to us! It may appear endangered, but nothing can stop our God from keeping His Word!
 5. Let the ancient Story be used by the Spirit to rekindle hope and joy - God will come to you!
- C. The Table of Hope (Sacrament; let Spirit work!)