

Surely It Is God Who Saves Me!

A sermon based on Isaiah 12:1-6.

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia! Amen.

Are you a little nervous? Fearful even? Maybe hopeful?

Would you like to know what I'm talking about?

Friends, we are once again mired in election season...the most wonderful time of the year...maybe not so much. But, once again, it's that time when you start to become a little more attuned to what's going on in politics at the local, state, national levels. You hear a lot of rhetoric about all these different ideas these different candidates have on how to fix our problems and better our lives...some of which you may not agree with at all. You maybe get a little bit nervous about the course we're collectively doomed for if such and such a person is voted into office. Or maybe, you're a little more hopeful as your guy – or gal – is running a great campaign, has some great ideas, has drummed up a lot of support, and the road ahead is looking a bit brighter.

But if there's one thing every person feels as Election Day nears, it's uncertainty, right? Even if it seems like a sure bet, will my person win? Will there be an upset? Will this candidate keep their promises once in office? Will the opponent really ruin everything if they win their race? It can lead to quite a bit of uncertainty and nervous anticipation, can't it?

Well, you know what my thoughts are. - I've share them before..no matter who's the leader...Jesus is still King!

"Well, Pastor, you're supposed to say that." And you're right; I am...because it's the truth. Right? No matter who is in office, no matter how screwed up and unpopular their ideas might be, no matter how much it looks like they're driving our community, our state, our country off the cliff, guess who's still in control...who has always been in control...who will always be in control? But maybe you're still not so sure.

Let's, for right now, step outside of the political arena...as hard as that may be. Think about this life. You may be uncertain about our future when it comes to politics. Are you that way when it comes to your eternal future? Are you that way about your salvation? Are you sure you've been saved from sin?

Should you be? I mean, listen to some of what Isaiah writes in our 1st Lesson. Yeah, I know it's largely positive, but look at some of the stark realities...rolled into one short phrase here...***"Although you were angry with me..."***

The word for anger here, in the Hebrew language, it literally mean's "nose." Any guesses why? I think of the cartoons, when someone would get angry, even furious, what would happen? Their face gets red, their nostrils begin to flare, there's this heavy breathing through the nose as a fire burns inside. And then, steam starts pouring out of their nostrils as they're about to blow their top off.

Maybe you've had that experience with your spouse, a parent, a friend. But why would God be that mad at us?

Would we even need to move beyond today or even this past week, to see the reasons? If you opened up to page 156 in the front of your hymnals, there's this section entitled "Personal Preparation for Holy Communion." I've mentioned before how this is a great place to turn for making sure you're properly prepared to receive the Lord's Supper, but for today, listen to some of these introspective questions, **"I should examine myself according to the Ten Commandments and ask how well I have carried out my responsibilities as a husband or wife or single person, as a parent or child, an employer or employee, a teacher or student. Have I loved God with all my heart, gladly heard his Word, and patiently endured affliction? Have I been disobedient, proud, or unforgiving? Have I been selfish, lazy, envious, or quarrelsome? Have I lied or deceived, taken something not mine, or given anyone a bad name? Have I abused my body or permitted indecent thoughts to linger in my mind? Have I failed to do what is right and good?"**

And if you answered any of those questions with a "yes," you know why God should be rightly angry. God, who says, **"Be holy (be perfect) as I the Lord your God am holy,"** looks around and sees how **"all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,"** including you and me.

What should his response be? What should a parent's response be when they show nothing but love to their child and get nothing but backtalk and disobedience in return?

Not just a threat of a timeout. Again, the Hebrew word for "anger" here includes this idea where the potential response to this kind of anger is an outburst of destruction or punishment. We deserve God's harshest punishment. We deserve death. We deserve hell.

But, **"in that day you will say: 'I will praise you, O LORD.'" Wait, what?!? Why? Because, "although you were angry with me, your anger has turned away and you have comforted me."**

Although...in spite of God's anger with us and our sin and our sinful disobedience against him, he's instead turned his anger away and comforted us. Where we should be afraid, literally, "startled with sheer terror," God has comforted us. He's created this condition of relief from sorrow and distress and from an eternal punishment we're not going to get.

And you know why. It's not that he gave us a slap on the wrist and sent us on our way with a stern warning, telling us to do better. It's not that he looked the other way and completely ignored our sin.

He's comforted us because he's the LORD, the LORD...a name we see repeated 5 times in our six verses...5 times. And the repetition is meant to emphasize the LORD and everything his name entails, mainly, that he is our God of free and faithful grace...our God who showed his free and faithful grace by being our salvation.

And that's what we're here today for...God's grace, shown through Jesus, and especially shown through Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. That's the good news we keep coming back to hear and be reminded of...that today, because Jesus lived a perfect life for you...because Jesus died on the cross as the sacrifice for sin for you...because Jesus is risen from the dead for you, you have been saved. In love for you, God turned away his anger from you and me and took it out – this outburst of punishment and destruction – on Jesus, loading him up with every sin of all time, making him the worst sinner of all time, and then punishing him with your hell.

Again, that's the good news we keep coming back to hear...it's the well of God's salvation. And it never runs dry. God's forgiveness is overflowing. And so we keep coming back.

Again, are you sure you've been saved from sin? ***"Surely God is my salvation." "Christ has indeed been raised from the dead,"*** and now God gives us the ***"victory through our Lord,"*** our God of free and faithful grace.

Surely God is our salvation.

And we trust. We don't go through this life lacking the confidence that our every sin is forgiven and the door of heaven has been opened to us by Jesus. Our eternal future is secured, and we're not afraid.

Surely God is our salvation. We trust that...and trusting, we now sing.

Read through the second half of our sermon text from Isaiah; it's not hard to see, is it? Because of the salvation Jesus has secured for us, there's only one proper...we sing. We rejoice. Hear that again. Our response to Jesus' salvation...we rejoice!

Do you? Are you still as excited about Jesus' resurrection as you were that day about 6 months ago when you dressed in your Sunday best, chowed down on a delicious breakfast, and sang with enough gusto to give the heavenly choirs chills up their spines? Or have you come crashing back to the realities of life?

You see, often, our Easter excitement is like birthday festivities as you grow older. As a child, you're thrilled; you get ecstatic to have a party and celebrate with your friends and family. After a while, though, that excitement fades to the point where your birthday just becomes another day of the week; you don't want anyone to fuss over it. Is your Easter joy quickly fading as the pressures at work, the frustrations at home, or the stress of constantly fighting temptation eat away at you daily?

If so, read through this section of Isaiah again. Read through our gospel again and follow the disciples' lead. They were overjoyed to see their risen Lord. They could barely contain their excitement as they shared the good news with Thomas. And going to the well of salvation and drinking from it, there's nothing we want to do but rejoice in our salvation.

When we lose our Easter joy, then it's time to take a walk to the cross. You see your Savior hanging there, arms wide open to bear all of your sins and your punishment of hell on himself. You take a walk to the tomb; it lies empty. Your Jesus lives again. Your salvation is complete. You are forever forgiven. You have a place by Jesus' side in heaven.

Give thanks to Lord for your salvation. Keep giving thanks. Call on his name. In other words, keep coming to worship him. Make known among the nations what he has done. Don't keep the excitement to yourself but share the good news of salvation with others. Proclaim his name! And sing. Sing like God is listening. Sing because God is listening. Sing for the joy that is yours because salvation is yours because of Jesus, his life, his death, and his resurrection.

So, today is a day to praise the Lord, for now his anger is passed. Today is a day to trust in him, our greatest joy. Today is a day to serve him in thanksgiving; that's my greatest ambition. Today is a day to shout it to the world; it's my most ardent desire. And so is tomorrow...and the next day...and all our days.

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! And always keep your focus there. Revel in that peace – your Easter joy. God is our salvation. Our Redeemer lives. We will not be afraid. We trust. We sing. We rejoice!