

Advent I FLC B
Isaiah 64:1-9
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A VISIT FROM ISAIAH III

My name is Isaiah. Some call me Isaiah the third, and for good reason. My great teachers were Isaiah the First and Isaiah the Second, and their works are recorded in your Bible. So I am Isaiah the Third. As the Irish say: "You know me out of my Father!" My work appears in your Bible also, Chapters 40-66

My people live in their "home away from home" here in Babylon. We have been away from our spiritual home, Jerusalem, which was devastated when we were deported a generation ago. How we long for and remember our land, our Temple where God dwells, and our people that were scattered far and wide. Our every hope and prayer is to return to the land that God gave to Abraham and our fathers, Israel.

I

Our only hope is our God, and our prayer is to God. As a prophet, I hear God's words and proclaim them to the people, that is my calling. I have little significance of my own, my works carry little detail of my life, what is important is that God speaks through me to my people. That is why I call myself Isaiah III.

We are here in Babylon because I and my people have sinned. We failed to heed the words of God in Israel and our country has fallen to foreign invaders. We are chastised and we are repentant in our deportation. We now live among a foreign people, their gods are of stone and wood and gold. They do not know our God nor fear him. They laugh at us, scorn us and make fun of our worship.

If anything, we have drawn more and more on our faith that God will save us and return us to our land. That is our every prayer.

"O that You would rend the heavens and come down (to us, and show yourself to our adversaries,) so that the nations may tremble as your presence!"

Just as you came down and did terrible things to my people that we did not expect, when you brought judgment upon us and brought us into exile! (That would show those Babylonians!)

Though chastised by God, we remain faithful to God and God's power to restore and renew his people. Our prayer is that God will intervene in history and restore our nation and our people and our worship.

II

And so we regard God as the potter, and we are the clay. We remember that God created Adam from the dust of the ground, we remember that we are dust and to dust we shall return.

It is God who has created us, formed us from the dust of the ground, and created us as a great nation. So our appeal to God is that of a new creation! That God may create us anew, a new body and a new spirit and a new breath of life within us.

We remember that God led the Children of Israel out of slavery, through the desert, to a land that God gave us, to be a people. He delivered us from slavery, shaped and formed us in the desert, so that we could enter the land of promise as a bold people, a nation!

We know that Jerusalem lies in ruins, our country a desolation. There is no going back to what once was, there is only a hope of return to the land that God gave us and the opportunity to build anew.

Since we speak of a new beginning, we use new language, it is called Apocalyptic. That means they appear to be words of desperation. They speak of special urgency, they use bizarre imagery, that of God coming down on earth, something that is almost unimaginable, and changing our circumstances. Imagine! God coming down on earth to be with us and deliver us! What an astounding thought! That would show those Babylonians!

III

So my ministry is based on these words, Chapter 40 "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God." The next 26 chapters of my prophecy expand on that theme, so hard to cover in the few minutes we have here. But these words are in your Bible and are worth revisiting.

My time is not so different from your time: You live among a people with many different gods: gods of wealth, success, fame, power and warfare. Gods that demand your attention and faithfulness. Yet these are gods whose worship ends in destruction, poverty, inequality, selfishness. These gods separate us from one another, and from our True God who seems to you distant and uncaring.

May your prayer be that God might break through the heavens and come to you, release you from the exile that alienates you from one another and divides you as a nation. May God create in you a clean heart and a right spirit. May God come to you with healing words, with words of forgiveness and reconciliation. May God come to you in an unimaginable way: as a Person, a new creation, a new Adam, to live among you and speak with you.

May God come to you so that you may come to God, and live a new life in Him!