

51 - Related Matters in God's Work

by Ben Torrey

The sermon emphasizes the importance of rejoicing in the Lord's victory and looking forward to his return in glory, even in the face of difficulty and disappointment.

Duration: 8:18

Scripture: Isaiah 35

Topics: "God's Work"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker begins by discussing the importance of preparing for the opening of North Korea and the need for conversion and salvation of its people. The speaker then highlights the significance of the third Sunday of Advent, which leads up to the celebration of Christmas. The sermon emphasizes the Father's will for all to come to Jesus and have eternal life. The speaker concludes by encouraging the audience to rejoice in the victory of Jesus and eagerly anticipate his return.

Transcript

Good evening, this is Ben Torrey back with you once again. I trust you have been well this past week. For quite some time now, I have been focusing on North Korea and the need to prepare for when that land opens.

I hope that you have been challenged and encouraged by my words. Tonight, however, I will speak about matters that are related. In God's economy, all things are related, but of a more general nature, if you will.

Yesterday was a day that is known in much of the church world as the third Sunday of Advent. The four Sundays leading up to celebration of the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ, in other words, Christmas, are collectively known as the Sundays of Advent. The church calendar begins with the first Sunday of Advent, the church's New Year's Day.

This is celebrated by the Roman Catholic, Anglican, Lutheran, and increasingly many other Protestant churches. It actually goes back to the time of the days before the Western church divided during the Reformation period. The Eastern Orthodox churches and my own church, descended from the Ancient Church of the East, have much the same calendar, but with minor variations.

A number of branches of these Eastern churches, including mine, now use the Western calendar. All of this is a bit ironic here in East Asia, where the church, both Catholic and Protestant, is universally

Western, in that it is the result of mission work from Europe and America. The Church of the East, on the other hand, was active in China, way back in the Tang and Yuan dynasties.

There are even traces of evidence that there were Christians in Korea back during the Silla dynasty. Anyway, enough sidetracking. Advent is the season that focuses on our Lord's triumphant return.

As we prepare to celebrate his first coming in humility and anonymity as an infant to Bethlehem of Judea, we look forward to his second coming in glory and majesty. I love this time of year, as it always reminds me of what it is all about. The scripture readings bring me back to contemplate the glory of the Lord and his ultimate victory over all sin and corruption of this world.

The language is the language of exaltation and triumph. There is also an element of sober reflection on our sinful nature, in that we also contemplate the judgment to come. If we do not repent, then we face a fearsome judgment.

Yet even here, for us who belong to him, there is no need to fear. There is only rejoicing in our Lord's glorious victory. Let me read you one of the readings prescribed for the third Sunday of Advent.

This is from the prophet Isaiah, chapter 35, the entire chapter. The wilderness and the desert will be glad, and the Arava will rejoice and blossom like the crocus it will blossom profusely, and rejoice with rejoicing and shout of joy. The glory of Lebanon will be given to it, the majesty of Carmel and Sharon.

They will see the glory of the Lord, the majesty of our God. Encourage the exhausted and strengthen the feeble. Say to those with anxious heart, take courage, fear not.

Behold, your God will come with vengeance. The recompense of God will come, but he will save you. Then the eyes of the blind will be opened, and the ears of the deaf will be unstopped.

Then the lame will leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute will shout for joy. For waters will break forth in the wilderness and streams in the Arava. The scorched land will become a pool, and the thirsty ground springs of water.

In the haunt of jackals, its resting place, grass become reeds and rushes. A highway will be there, a roadway. It will be called the highway of holiness.

The unclean will not travel on it, but it will be for him who walks that way, and fools will not wander on it. No lion will be there, nor will any vicious beast go up on it. These will not be found there, but the redeemed will walk there, and the redeemed of the Lord will return and come with shouts of joy to Zion, with everlasting joy upon their heads.

They will find gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing will flee away. What a beautiful word of promise, victory, encouragement, and glory. Truly, as we look around ourselves and see the squalor in which so many live, moral and spiritual squalor, if not actually physical, it is good to contemplate that there will be a day when the Lord will come to judge the earth, and that all those who call upon his name will join the victorious hosts thronging to Zion.

We do suffer sorrow and sighing now. We see it all around us, most especially as we look to the north and think of our northern brothers and sisters suffering so grievously. But there will come a day when all those who have returned to the Lord and thrown themselves upon his mercy will rejoice in his victorious return.

The dry places, the deserts, and broken places of the earth will be renewed. The hardness and dry places in our hearts will be softened and filled with joy. Oh, if only everyone could see the deserts of Israel blossom in the springtime when the rains come.

Then the prophet's imagery would hit the mind's eye like the brilliant sun rising over the eastern hills. Whether it be on the Sinai coast, where the sun rising over the mountains of Edom hits you like a fist with its radiance and its heat, or rising behind Yucpec San across the valley from the Three Seas Ranch, where it first puts a beautiful edge of golden red to the clouds over the East Sea, then bursts out in glorious brilliance. All through Scripture we are commanded to rejoice in the Lord.

This is not an option for when we feel happy. It is a solemn and glorious command. For God is always to be praised, and we are always to rejoice in his justice and our salvation.

It is important for us to remember this when we are overwhelmed by difficulty and disappointment. In fact, every time we rejoice in the Lord, we are giving a hearty slap in the face to our enemy, Satan, he who would rob us of our joy and of our life. Yes, we look forward to the Lord returning in his might to judge the earth.

On that day, the prince of this earth, Satan, will be judged, and all those who prefer to follow him in their arrogance and lust will know without doubt what they have chosen. Even as the evil and oppressors of the earth will be judged in that day, we long now for their conversion and salvation. And this is also the Father's desire.

Hear our Lord's words in John 6, 37 to 40. All that the Father giveth me shall come to me, and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.

And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of him that sent me, that everyone which seeth the Son and believeth on him may have everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day. So rejoice in the Lord.

Rejoice that the Son came into the world that you and I would not be lost and would have eternal life. Rejoice in his victory as you look forward with great anticipation to his return again in glory. Good night.

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