

25th SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST C 07

The great O.T. prophet, Isaiah, speaks a message of hope.

Jerusalem had been destroyed, the people were in Babylon (Iraq) as slaves and exiles.

The people were in the depths of the deepest despair.

Isaiah comes amongst them with a wonderful message of hope. He not only spoke of the return of the exiles, but he also had a vision of a new creation, when God would restore the whole creation to its original state, which the author of genesis describes in this way: “and God saw everything that he had made and it was very good.”

An impossible dream?

No doubt the exiles probably saw it in that way.

Let's go forward 5 centuries to the time of Jesus. He is sitting on the Mount of Olives, looking across the valley to the temple mount. It is a magnificent site – even today. Jesus speaks of the destruction of not only the Temple but of Jerusalem - a prophecy that would be fulfilled in 70 AD when the Romans destroyed the city.

Jesus speaks of the persecution that Christians would suffer, and many who heard those words of Jesus suffered death on account of their faith.

In this particular passage Jesus tells his hearers what will happen to them - Luke 21:18-19 (NRSV)

18 But not a hair of your head will perish. 19 By your endurance you will gain your souls.

[1] <#_ftn1>

At the heart of Jesus teaching is what he has to say about the Kingdom of God: Mark 1:14-15 (NRSV)

14 Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, 15 and saying, “**The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.**”

With this proclamation Jesus is taking up the prophecy of Isaiah:
Isaiah 65:17 (NRSV)

17 For I am about to create new heavens
and a new earth;
the former things shall not be remembered
or come to mind.

This vision of course is also found in the Revelation to St John the
Divine:

Revelation 21:1-4 (NRSV)

21 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven
and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. 2
And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of
heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3
And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,

“See, the home of God is among mortals.

He will dwell with them as their God;

they will be his peoples,

and God himself will be with them;

4 he will wipe every tear from their eyes.

Death will be no more;

mourning and crying and pain will be no more,

for the first things have passed away.”

[2] <#_ftn2>

There is this constant vision and theme of hope running in and
through the whole story of God’s people and through the whole
proclamation of the Gospel.

As we draw near to Advent, we start to think particularly about this
vision.

Is it just pie in the sky stuff?
Or
Is there something more to it?

The resurrection of Jesus tells us that this is very real,
It is the hope to which we look forward.

Because Jesus has been raised as the first fruit of those who died,
we know that the vision, that the promise is true.

So we live now, with a great sense of hope and purpose as we
journey on –

- living the Christian life
- sharing the good news.
- being Christ's ambassadors in the world.

And in the sacrament of Baptism which we celebrate today we
embrace this vision and make it our own. We all join in making or
renewing our commitment to be Christ's people in the world -
knowing that we are members of his kingdom, which is and which is
yet to be in all its fullness.

[1] <#_ftnref1> The Holy Bible : New Revised Standard Version. 1996, c1989. Thomas Nelson: Nashville

[2] <#_ftnref2> The Holy Bible : New Revised Standard Version. 1996, c1989. Thomas Nelson: Nashville