

Title: “Anxiousness”

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Isaiah 35:4-7a

9/8/2024

Service Readings: Is. 35:4-7a; James 2:1-10, 14-18; Mark 7:31-37

Gathered this morning in God’s church, we are served by Jesus and find peace. And yet, we are anxious with the happenings of the world. How are we to reconcile these two things?

Message:

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

Here we are, gathered in this church in the presence of Jesus. He has come to serve us, and in a few moments we will meet him at his table where we will commune with him. Through his body and blood he will offer us the forgiveness of all our sins. And then, as the worship service closes, you will hear Pastor Mark bless you with a peace that only the Lord can provide.

Refreshed. Renewed. Forgiven. At peace. I pray this is how you feel each week as you go out into the world. All of your sins left at the cross, what is left to weigh heavy on your heart and mind? There should be nothing left for you to be anxious about. Right?

What if I mentioned topics like these: the political climate and upcoming election, the economy, the stock market and retirement accounts, the housing market, the world that our young children are being raised in? Would your stress level remain unchanged? Would you continue to be anxious about nothing? Probably not. But why? You have not even left the sanctuary! You are still standing in his presence. How is it possible that you are experiencing this anxiety? In a word: sin. In so many situations, anxiety is a consequence of it. You have simply to recall the fall of Adam and Eve for proof. Immediately after consuming from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, they hid from God – anxious that their sin would be discovered. Until that moment they were anxious about nothing; until that point they fully trusted in God and his favor towards them. But afterwards, they began to worry about what God would say and do. They became anxious.

Anxiety can be a consequence, but it can also be a *source* of sin. We need look no further than Adam and Eve, once again, for our example. The moment *before* this first sin, they questioned if God was really *for* them, if he really *loved* them as much as he said he did. They became anxious, for the implications of their fears, if proven true, would be devastating to their life here on earth. And so, in that moment they stopped looking only to him, listening only to him, and began looking inwards at themselves, listening inwards to themselves. In that moment they closed their eyes and shut their ears to their creator. And in that very moment anxiousness imposed itself on mankind and it has never, ever left.

In our Old Testament reading, Isaiah is addressing the anxiousness of his nation. They will be captured by a nation, exiled from their homeland, and their dwelling place of God will be destroyed. He is not only warning them, but comforting them. He is reminding them that God will not forsake his people, will not abandon them, but will rescue them. “Be strong; fear not,” he tells them, “Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God. He will come and save you.” This message is for them in their time, but it is also a message of future hope. It is a prophecy that a savior will come to save not just

this nation, but all the nations of the world. And when he comes, the “eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped.” But Isaiah’s prophecy goes even further than just the incarnation of Jesus. It is a vision that proclaims a message of hope to all believers that on the last day all creation will be made new and all anxiety will cease.

Now, this knowledge is all well and good in a bible study setting, but does it bring any comfort to you in a world with a political and economic climate like ours? Does it offer you true peace as you think of the world our young children will inherit from us? Probably not. But that may be because of the lens through which we view anxiety. What I mean is this: if we view these types of anxieties as a *source* of sin in our own lives, we can learn from Isaiah and embed his message not just in our minds, but also in our hearts.

Here is what I mean. Let’s pick on the greatest source of your anxiety. We can choose any, but how about the upcoming election, since it is just a few short months away. Who will be elected and how will it be accepted by the country, and the world? How will it be accepted by *you*? What if it doesn’t go your way? Will you worry about the next four years, wondering what is going to happen to this nation of ours? Will your social media feeds be filled with doomsday prophecies? Will you complain about the chosen leader and will you cheer every time an obstacle is placed in his or her way? Will you even thank God that this person was stopped from carrying out some sort of agenda? What if the election *does* go your way? Your anxiety will still exist; just with different concerns.

How does Isaiah respond? Hear his words again:

Say to those who have an anxious heart,
“Be strong; fear not!
Behold, your God
will come with vengeance,
with the recompense of God.
He will come and save you.”
⁵Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,
and the ears of the deaf unstopped;
⁶then shall the lame man leap like a deer,
and the tongue of the mute sing for joy.
For waters break forth in the wilderness,
and streams in the desert;
⁷the burning sand shall become a pool,
and the thirsty ground springs of water;

This anxiety is a source of sin, no different than that of our first parents. In their time God was fully in control. In their time, God loved them greater than anything else he created. In their time he provided for all their needs. In their time they placed their trust completely in his hands and questioned not a single decision. They knew that whatever happened in the world was under the control and purview of God. And so they trusted him.... until they didn’t. Until they became blind and deaf to him. And then everything fell apart.

Now, in our time, God is still fully in control. In our time, God loves us greater than anything else he created. In our time he provides for all our needs. But unlike Adam and Eve, we have never enjoyed a complete trust of our creator. We have always been blind and deaf to him. We try to trust him, of course we do, and we experience those moments of time in our lives where we really seem to place our

trust in him, sure, but we never are able to fully do so for very long. We always desire to keep our hand in his decisions, we always desire to be a co-chef in his kitchen. This is our sin of anxiousness. And the only way to remedy it is.... well, there really *is* no way to fully remedy it, and that's part of Isaiah's message. We can fight it, we can struggle with it, but our eyes will never be fully opened and our ears never fully unstopped until the last day. And on *that* day, we will see the glory of God with eyes fully opened; we will hear the voice of God with ears fully unstopped. And we will no longer withhold our trust in him. And our anxiety will finally abandon us, permanently.

But as we wait for this promised day, we learn from Isaiah. "Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God. He will come and save you." God does come. In body and blood. He comes to us just as he promised – here at the altar. This is where we meet him, where we come in physical contact with him. It is where we confess that we are anxious, that we have once again tried to wrest control out of the father's hands. And it is where we ask for forgiveness, where we ask for the faith necessary to excuse ourselves from the decision-making activities of him. And where we once again pray that while we wait for his return, he open our eyes just a little, and unblock our ears, just a bit, so that we can see and we can hear his goodness and know that we are indeed in hands that truly love us, that truly care for us, and truly wants what is best for us. And where we can be free, if even for a brief moment, of the sinful anxiety that we know we will reclaim once again.

Come. Come to the table and find peace.

Please pray with me.

⁸ And a highway shall be there,
and it shall be called the Way of Holiness;
the unclean shall not pass over it.
It shall belong to those who walk on the way;
even if they are fools, they shall not go astray.

⁹ No lion shall be there,
nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it;
they shall not be found there,
but the redeemed shall walk there.

¹⁰ And the ransomed of the LORD shall return
and come to Zion with singing;
everlasting joy shall be upon their heads;
they shall obtain gladness and joy,
and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

Amen.