

Reviving the Heart of the Contrite

Sermon 2018-07-22 - Year B - 7-17 - The Rev. Christopher M. Klukas
Isaiah 57:14b-21; Psalm 22:22-30; Ephesians 2:11-22; Mark 6:30-44

- Indianapolis Half Marathon
 - Ran it in college. The only race I have ever run in. Trained too fast and injured myself!
 - It was amazing to be in the midst of that many people all running in the same direction as the race began.

The Road Home

- Isaiah 57:14 - "Build up, prepare the way, remove every obstruction from my people's way"
 - Isaiah is saying that there will come a day when God will bring his people back from their exile in Babylon, when he will reconcile them to himself.
 - It will be a clear and distinct raised road with no obstacles. This will make the way unmistakable and free from anything that could cause the travelers to stumble.
- Looking back, we can see the partial fulfillment of this prophecy in the way Ezra and Nehemiah found favor with the King of Persia who gave them the time and the resources to lead Israel back into their homeland and to rebuild the city of Jerusalem.
 - Nehemiah 2:7-8

The Wicked and the Restored

- This passage has a lot to say about who will be restored, but to really understand who, we must first understand who will NOT be restored. In the very last verse of this passage (v. 21) the Lord says, "There is no peace for the wicked."
- So what differentiates the wicked from those who will be restored? At first we might say that it is the sin of the wicked. We must remember that even those who will be restored were being restored from exile, and the exile was because of their sin.
 - Isaiah 57:17 - "Because of the iniquity of his unjust gain I was angry..."
- So if it is not sin that differentiates the two, what is it?
- Look and the contrast between King Saul and King David. King Saul who disobeyed the command of the Lord (1 Sam 13:13-14) and King David who committed adultery and murder.
 - Psalm 51, David's song of penance after his sin had been discovered.
 - Psalm 51:17 - "a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise."
 - The reason David's monarchy wasn't brought to an end was because of his contrition.

Contrition

- Contrition is a form of interior repentance, it is 'sorrow of heart and detestation of sin committed, with the purpose of not sinning in future' (Council of Trent, sess. 14, cap. 4).¹
 - Comes from the Latin word "contritio," which means "a wearing away of something hard." Like our hard hearts becoming soft and fleshy once more.
 - Example of my own contrition after coming to a mature faith in Jesus.
 - I had treated my family horribly. I was grumpy, disrespectful to my parents, and always fighting with my brother.
 - I became sorrowful over my behavior, and I became a different person.
- This is the same thing that we see in our passage from Isaiah. The wicked are those who are prideful, who turn to gods of their own making for salvation (v. 13). Those who will be restored are the contrite. Those who realize their sin, sincerely repent, and return to the Lord.

¹ F. L. Cross and Elizabeth A. Livingstone, eds., *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 415.

- So how do we humble ourselves. How do we turn to God with a contrite heart?
 - The Lord will do it.
 - “I have seen his ways, but I will heal him; I will lead him and restore comfort to him and his mourners, creating the fruit of the lips. Peace, peace, to the far and to the near,” says the Lord, “and I will heal him.” (Isaiah 57:18–19, ESV)

Restoration in Ephesians

- I said earlier that this return from exile was a partial fulfillment of this prophecy. In our lesson from Ephesians today we see a further fulfillment:
- Ephesians 2:14-18 “And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near.”
 - Paul is talking about the former hostility between Jews and Gentiles and how Christ has brought peace by bringing both near to him (v. 14).
 - We also see reconciliation between God and man in Christ (vv. 16, 18).
- Note the connection between these two passages, “peace to those who are far off and to those who are near.” Paul is making reference to v. 19 of this prophecy from Isaiah.
 - The same promise is held out to us today. God's desire is to restore us. There is not a single one of us here who is without sin. But I am here to tell you that regardless of how great you think your sins are, the Lord's mercy is greater.
- “For thus says the One who is high and lifted up, who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: “I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with him who is of a contrite and lowly spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly, and to revive the heart of the contrite.” (Isaiah 57:15, ESV)
- Thanks be to God!