

Isaiah 12:1-6 In that day you will say: I will give thanks to you, LORD, for though you were angry with me, your anger has turned away, and you comfort me. ²Surely God is my salvation. I will trust him and will not be afraid, because Yah, the LORD, is my strength and song, and he has become my salvation. ³Therefore with joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation. ⁴In that day you will say: Give thanks to the LORD! Proclaim his name. Declare among the peoples what he has done. Proclaim that his name is exalted! ⁵Sing to the LORD, for he has done amazing things! Let this be known in all the earth! ⁶Shout aloud and sing for joy, daughter of Zion, for the Holy One of Israel is great among you!

There was a King of Judah by the name of Ahaz. He was one of the most worthless, godless kings that ever ruled over God's people. He was scared to death because their main enemies had allied themselves and were marching together to take over Jerusalem. He was terrified and all the people were terrified too. They couldn't stand up against the military might that was coming against them.

God sent the Prophet Isaiah to Ahaz to show that they wouldn't have to stand up against their enemies. God himself would deal with them. Ahaz certainly didn't deserve that. God was going to do it because of his promises. He promised to send a Savior through them and he was going to make sure that that promise was going to be fulfilled.

God told Ahaz to ask for a sign. In one of the worst cases of false humility ever recorded, he refused. In a way we can be thankful that he didn't because God then gave one of the clearest promises of the Savior, **"Look! The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son and name him Immanuel."** This promise and so many others like it are why we are encouraged to Praise the LORD with Isaiah because his anger is gone, because fear is gone, and because people need to know.

Isaiah begins this text by saying, **"In that day you will say."** Well, what day is he talking about? Thankfully the previous chapter gives us that answer. It begins with the beautiful prophecy of Jesus, **"A shoot will spring up from the stump of Jesse, and a Branch from his roots will bear fruit."** Then later he talks about how the Savior will gather his people, **"The peoples will seek the Root of Jesse, who will be standing like a banner for the peoples, and his resting place will be glorious."**

So basically whenever people come to know and believe that Jesus is the Savior, they will join in this song of praise with the Prophet Isaiah. The rest of the first verse shows what God's people will say in response to everything God has done for us through Jesus, **"I will give thanks to you, LORD, for though you were angry with me, your anger has turned away, and you comfort me."**

We would prefer not to think that God ever has been or ever could be angry with us. If a human being is angry with me, I just have to avoid that person. Plus if he would actually try to do something, a quick call to 911 will end that. But God is everywhere. We can't hide from him. God is all powerful so whatever way he wanted to punish us would be completely within his ability. He also knows everything we've ever done. That's not a particularly pretty picture.

Well, God isn't like someone who has no control over his temper. When he gets angry it is always well deserved. He is holy. He cannot and will not tolerate even the slightest violation of his law. Moses put it very bluntly, **"For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God."** Normally jealousy is a sin, but in God's case it isn't. The point is that he doesn't want to share us with anyone, especially not Satan.

Sometimes people like to play the comparison game. They might think, "Well certainly God is angry with people like serial killers or mass murderers, but not me, right?" The Apostle Paul leaves us nowhere to squirm when he wrote to the Ephesians, **"Like all the others, we were by nature objects of God's wrath."** To put it another way, they only thing that we were good for is being target practice for the almighty power of God.

But Isaiah says, **"your anger has turned away."** How did that happen? It's not like God had a senior moment and suddenly forgot what he was so upset about. It's not like a holy God can just ignore our sins or sweep them under the rug. God's anger turned away from us and was instead aimed at someone else. Jesus, our perfect Savior, took God's anger on himself when he went to the cross.

We will see this once again in just a few weeks on Good Friday. If you ever want to see just how serious God is about sin, look at Jesus on the cross. Hear him cry out in agony, **"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"** Instead of forsaking us, he forsook his one and only Son—the only one who didn't deserve it. But there we also see just how serious God is about his love. Jesus was willing to step into the breach for us so that we could be forgiven and become God's children.

The Apostle John describes Jesus this way, **"He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the whole world."** The word "atone" has a picture of doing something to appease someone

else so that their anger is taken away. We never have to worry about God's anger flaring up against us again because it flared up against Jesus. We are at peace with him now and forever.

Praise the LORD with Isaiah because his anger is gone and also because fear is gone.

In verse 2 we see a translation that, as far as I know, is unique to the EHV. God is referred to as "**Yah, the LORD.**" The word that is translated "**LORD**" in small capitals would probably have been pronounced as "Yahweh." I say probably because the Jews stopped saying it for fear of using it improperly. Sometimes in Hebrew poetry—and this chapter is poetry—that name will be abbreviated as "Yah." It's also in the word "hallelujah" which means "praise the LORD."

Having both the full version of God's name and the abbreviated version is rare, only occurring here and in Isaiah 26, so the translators wanted to point that out. Both spellings are God's covenant name. It reveals him as the God who makes promises and keeps promises. It seems to be a form of the verb "to be." Think of what God said to Moses from the burning bush, "**I AM WHO I AM... You will say this to the Israelites: I AM has sent me to you.**"

Isaiah says, "**Surely God is my salvation.**" I used to assume that pretty much everyone understood what the word "salvation" means. I don't assume that anymore. To have salvation means that we've been led to know and believe in Jesus as our Savior. Because of that when this life is over, we will be in heaven with him. Isaiah is emphasizing that the only way that can be true is through our Triune God.

He also says, "**Yah, the LORD, is my strength and song.**" God is our strength in every way. He is all powerful so there is nothing that cannot do for his people. More importantly, we couldn't get into heaven on our own. It is only through God that we can. Because all of that is true, all we can do is make our lives a song of thanks to him. We will talk more about that in just a bit.

Isaiah continues, "**I will trust him and will not be afraid.**" There are all kinds of things that can make us afraid. Sin does that to people. It's not just the sin out there, it's the sin within our own hearts. What sort of terrible thing will our sinful natures dream up today? The 24 hour news stations are basically designed to make you afraid so you have to rely on them for a solution too.

Except we don't. Sometimes people describe faith as being a leap in the dark. We're jumping but we have no idea where or if we are going to be able to land. That's completely wrong. Our faith is based on the words and promises of God. We trust in the God who has already proven himself to be trustworthy in everything. If he saved us from sin, death, and Hell, we can certainly trust in him for everything else.

But what exactly does Isaiah mean by saying, "**Therefore with joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.**" Since we live on the Great Lakes it's hard for us to picture being without water. A well would be an absolute life-saver in the Middle East. Even today on many of our mission fields in other countries one of the things we do first is dig a well to show that we truly care about them.

The well here is not a well of water but a well of salvation. That is a picture of God's Word and Sacraments. Just like a well will keep providing life-giving water, so also this well will keep providing everything to strengthen our souls. Whenever we read God's Word or receive Holy Communion we are being forgiven and strengthened to live for him. God didn't just make us his own. He keeps us as his own.

Praise the LORD with Isaiah because fear is gone and finally because people need to know.

Since all of this text up to this point is true, there is only one way that we can respond, "**In that day you will say: Give thanks to the LORD! Proclaim his name. Declare among the peoples what he has done. Proclaim that his name is exalted! Sing to the LORD, for he has done amazing things! Let this be known in all the earth!**" One of the reasons we gather for worship is to give God the praise he deserves for everything that he has done. God doesn't expect us to pay him back but it is always good to say thank you.

It might seem strange to say, "**Proclaim that his name is exalted!**" After all, if God's name is really exalted, then everybody should know about him, right? Everyone should know about him but it is painfully obvious that either people don't or they have forgotten. That's the reason why we are still here and not in heaven. God wants us to be his witnesses to the people we meet every day.

Two times in those verses Isaiah refers to "**his name.**" God's name is not just the titles we use for him like Father, Lord, or Savior. It is everything we know about him from the Scriptures. So proclaiming his name is more than just yelling the name "God" or "Lord" at the top of our lungs all the time. It is telling people what that God has done for us and for them too.

In the beginning of this text Isaiah says that God's "**anger has turned away.**" But if someone does not yet know or believe in Jesus as their Savior, his anger remains on them. It's bad enough if people just don't

know about him. In that case ignorance certainly is not bliss. It is deadly. It's even worse that there are people who know what Jesus has done but knowingly and willfully keep rejecting him.

Over the course of my ministry I've talked with all kinds of people about why they don't believe anymore. The answers are as numerous as the stars in the sky. Maybe they had a disagreement with someone at church so they just stayed away. Maybe they married someone who was an unbeliever and gradually they just drifted away from him. Maybe there's no reason at all, they just don't.

As long as they are still alive, we want to reach out to them. We want to take Isaiah's encouragement and **"Declare among the peoples what he has done...Let this be known in all the earth!"** We know that we should be doing this but one of the questions we often have is how to break the ice. How do we even begin a conversation? This time of year provides us with some unique opportunities.

Easter is coming up. It's sometimes been jokingly called one of the two great pilgrimage feasts of the Christian church, along with Christmas. People are used to coming to church on those two days, so it's not as odd that we would invite them. Hey, we're even having an Easter breakfast in between the services, so not only will we feed your souls but we will feed your body as well. Who doesn't love a free meal?

We can also work together with our brothers and sisters throughout the Wisconsin Synod. Our offerings go to training future pastors and teachers and then send them out to places around our country and around our world with the life-giving message of Jesus. Pray for the teachers and professors at our schools. Pray for our missionaries. Pray that God opens the heart of a friend to listen to you tell them about Jesus too.

Praise the LORD with Isaiah because his anger is gone, because fear is gone, and because people need to know. Through the Prophet Isaiah the Holy Spirit gives us so many beautiful pictures of Jesus and what he would do for us. In the New Testament we see how every last one of those promises was fulfilled. So no matter what day it is, no matter what is going on, we always have good reason to praise the LORD.