

December 3, 2023

This Week: 9:30 a.m. Advent Reading Service
6:30 p.m. Catechism Reading Service (LD 24)
Classes after the morning service

Next Week: 9:30 a.m. Catechism Reading Service (LD 25)
6:30 p.m. Advent Reading Service
Classes after the morning service

Wednesday: Afternoon Coffee Time for senior citizens will be hosted by the 11th grade class at 2:00pm in the mini-gym at school. We plan to sing Psalters and have a light lunch. All church and school community members 60 years old and older are welcome!

Thursday: Rev. P. Van Ruitenbergs' farewell sermon in Chilliwack at 7:00 p.m. PST (9 PM CST) livestream (www.nrcchilliwack.org)

Advance Notice: Congregational Meeting December 11, 7:30 p.m.
-All the Lord willing-

Collections: Today: 1st General Fund Next week: 1st General Fund
2nd Disaster Relief 2nd Hudson Taylor

We Remember in Prayer:

- Rev. van Ruitenburg who became emeritus this past week
- Our widows and lonely ones, the unborn, prodigal sons and daughters, and all those with hidden crosses.

MEDITATIONS

But while he thought on these things.... (Matthew 1:20a).

The history of Joseph, the husband of Mary is a remarkable one in the context of Advent. Joseph is called to bear the cross of Christ before that cross is lifted up upon Golgotha's hill. The shame of it is as it were suddenly revealed. Wearisome nights are appointed to him. What a deep way this must have been for this just man, espoused to Mary. Suddenly everything concerning an imminent marriage is thrown upside down. And so are the promises concerning the Messiah. Is this the way it will go? Is this the promised time that is near?

Joseph must tread a way he has not known heretofore. The Lord's way is not explained and is in the sea. The Lord's footsteps are not known. Faith is now thrown upon the sieve of Satan where it will be tried and will come forth as gold. Upon that sieve the Lord's Own work will survive the testing. All else falls through and is brought to naught. God's honor and God's Name, yes, all God's

counsel and plan crosses a man who truly may fear the Lord. Initially such a trial proves to be a wide field for Satan.

Satan, flesh, and unbelief are the greatest enemies of the Church of God. In themselves they have no might against that great company that comes against them. LORD, how are they increased that trouble me! Many are they that rise up against me. Many there be which say of my soul, there is no help for him in God (Psalm 3:1-2). But salvation is of the Lord.

Dear reader, this is still so today. Where the sun seems to set at midday in the life of Joseph, the Sun of Righteousness is about to rise with healing in its wings. Above the strife, high in the Father's mansions the ministering spirits are ready and sent to minister to a soul in the depths. It is God Himself who keeps His people close to the wonder and the mysteries of the Gospel. Otherwise man would walk away from them, as Joseph was minded to do. Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. The Lord takes care of His Own cause, and of His Own people. Remarkable indeed that even before the birth of Christ, there is a people who learn to bear the reproach and shame of the cross. Joseph is now made willing to run with patience the race that is set before him. So the Lord makes His Son Jesus precious. In the way of dying, in the way of a heartfelt surrender, and in the way of faith. But even in death's dark vale He faileth never. And so the day came that he called His Name JESUS (vs.25).
~Rev. Hofman

And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation. —
Isaiah 25:9

The great deliverance which is mentioned must yet be fulfilled in the life of Israel. Isaiah speaks of submissive waiting: "We have waited for Him, and He will save us." By nature, we do not wait for the Lord. The world, its honor, and vain pleasures are more important. So, we miss the only comfort in life and death. Isaiah says: "We have waited for Him." This is the longing of all believers when they have seen death in the world, in sin, and in everything outside of Christ. Nothing can be compared with Him. But as it was a long time before the promised Messiah was born, so it can be a long time for the Church.

Do we know such waiting in our life? What grief does it give when we learn that our works are insufficient and our arms too short to embrace Christ. This becomes the experience of the Church. God takes all foundations away, and then when we may accept the punishment of our unrighteousness and may justify the Lord even if we are cast away, deliverance is near: "Deliver him from going down into the pit; I have found a ransom. Salvation is God's work from the

beginning to the end. He made the plan from eternity, Christ merited it in the fullness of time, and it is applied by the Spirit. How great is the joy when that precious Mediator is revealed in His willingness in our lives, because in Christ, the Child of Bethlehem, we can find everything for time and eternity! Then Advent becomes Christmas.

~Rev. A. M. den Boer

Lost as men are, they may yet be saved. There is a way of life, a door of hope, a scheme of mercy, a plan of salvation. Jesus came into the world on the very errand of saving the lost (Matt. 18:11). Christ was anointed and set apart to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound. God's device of mercy for rescuing the lost is set forth by various terms. Of these perhaps none is more fit than that of a covenant, commonly called the covenant of grace. When Jeremiah foretold gospel times, he said: "The time is coming," declares the Lord, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them," declares the Lord. "This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time," declares the Lord. "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest," declares the Lord. "For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more" This way of presenting the plan of salvation is adopted by Paul also.

The scheme for saving sinners is wholly from God. He devised it; he executed it; he applies it. So the Scriptures teach: "Salvation belongs unto the Lord." "The salvation of the righteous is of the Lord." "He is the God of our salvation." "He who is our God is the God of salvation." He says, "My own arm brought salvation." "Salvation is of the Lord" Very careful is God to let us know that there was nothing in us to merit his esteem: "I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and will not remember your sins" Again, "Thus says the Lord God; I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for my holy name's sake... Not for your sakes do I this, says the Lord God, be it known unto you" (Ezek. 36:22, 32).

All this love and pity are wholly undeserved. No man has any claim on the score of his own deservings for any good things. On this point the Bible is very clear. (Eph. 2:4-9). It is the grace of God that brings salvation. The whole plan is "to the praise of the glory of his grace" (Eph. 1:6). Salvation is no debt due to any man. Neither is it possible for a creature to have a good standing before God, partly on the ground of personal merit, and partly on the ground of undeserved kindness. The two schemes are entirely inconsistent. So Paul taught: "If by grace, then is it no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace; but if it be of works, then is it no more grace; otherwise work is no more work" (Rom. 11:6).

~Plumer

NETHERLANDS REFORMED CONGREGATION

Sioux Falls, SD



*By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice
of praise to God continually, that is, the
fruit of our lips giving thanks to his
name.*

Hebrews 13:15

Church Times: 9:30 a.m. and 2:30 or 6:30 p.m.