

1 S. in Advent 11/29/20  
Isaiah 64:1-9 B

## OH THAT YOU WOULD REND THE HEAVENS AND COME DOWN!

“We sinned; in our sins we have been a long time” (v. 5). That’s what Isaiah says about the people of Judah. The people of Judah had sinned. They sinned big time. Sinned often. Especially, because their leaders went chasing after other gods.

One false god they went after, in particular, was Baal. The worship of Baal involved religious prostitution. But here’s the interesting thing about what the people of Judah were doing in their sin – they were not only worshiping Baal, but then they would go to the temple to worship the Triune God. But honestly, when it came to worshiping the Triune God, they were just going through the motions. Their heart, their faith wasn’t in it at all. God Himself pronounced judgement upon His own people, “These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me” (Is 29:3).

God had warned them never to do such a thing. He said this to them, “If you act corruptly by making a carved image in the form of anything, and by doing what is evil in the sight of the Lord your God, so as to provoke him to anger, I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that you will soon utterly perish from the land that you are going over the Jordan to possess. You will not live long in it, but will be utterly destroyed. And the Lord will scatter you among the peoples, and you will be left few in number among the nations where the Lord will drive you (De 4:25b-27).

The Lord made good on His promise. He sent the Babylonians to take the people of Judah into captivity. The Babylonians didn’t just take the people into captivity, they also laid waste to the land. Jerusalem itself was made desolate. The Temple was destroyed. All this came upon them

because it was as Isaiah said of them, “we sinned and in our sin we have been a long time”.

You know all-too-well that Isaiah’s words apply to you. You sin and you have been in your sin a long time. How long? You were brought forth in iniquity and in sin did your mother conceive you (Ps 51:5). And as it went with Judah, so it goes with you. Your sin and your enemies go hand-in-hand. In your sin, you run away from the Triune God after other gods. You call these gods things like your bank account, your popularity with your neighbor, your leisure activities, your ego. You go off and worship those gods and try to worship the Triune God and, what was said of Israel is true of you, you honor Him with your lips but your heart is far from Him. When you are running after other gods, your enemies -- the world, your flesh, and the devil -- work hand-in-hand with your sin. By your flesh, you are led away into drunkenness, gluttony, lustfulness, and laziness. By the world, you are led into a place where you are vengeful, angry, spiteful. The worst is that the devil is there, leading you away from faith, hope and love; leading you away from the Triune God. This is what happens because you’ve sinned and, in your sin,, you have been a long time.

And in your sin, you are powerless to free yourself from your sin. So, God, in His mercy, comes down. He comes down to you to call you to repentance. He brings you to a place like He did Judah so that you realize you have done wrong, so that you cry out the same words they cried out,

“Oh that you would rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains might quake at your presence – as when fire kindles brushwood and the fire causes water to boil – to make your name known to your adversaries, and that the nations might tremble at your presence” (vv. 1-2).

And when you cry out to God to come, you want Him to come in might and power. You want Him to come in power like a fire so hot that it causes water to boil. You want Him to show Himself in awesome wonder, like He did in Egypt in 10 plagues and led Israel through the Red Sea waters on dry ground and then drowned Pharaoh and his army. You want to see Him act like that. You want Him to do awesome things.

But, that's not how God always works. Like the night the shepherds were out in the field keeping watch over their flocks. That's when the angel came to announce that God was rending the heavens to come down to save you from your enemies – the devil, the world, and your flesh. To save you from your sin, death, and hell itself. He did an awesome thing, but not the way you were looking for. When the angel announced God had come down, He didn't say, "Go out and look for might; go out and look for power". He said, "Go, look for a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger".

There, in that manger, you will see the might and power of God, for lying in that manger, wrapped in swaddling cloths, was very God of very God, God in the flesh, who rent the heavens to come down and save you. Yes, He comes in might and power, but its hidden in lowliness and meekness, as He hides His divine glory in human flesh. In that flesh, He goes out to do battle against your enemies, as He goes out into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil with only the Word of God. He goes out in lowliness and meekness as He heals, forgives, preaches, and teaches. He rides on the back on a donkey to do exactly as Isaiah describes Him, the One "who joyfully works righteousness;" as the One remembers the ways of God (v. 5).

He does that for you, on your behalf, as he keeps all of God's commandments for you, even as the devil and the world throw at Him everything they want to throw at you. Because you did not keep all of God's commandments, He takes into His body all the sins you have ever committed, carrying them all the way to Calvary's cross. There, He suffers, dies, and buried in the tomb. That's when the mountains quaked. The whole earth shook when He died upon that cross. By His death on that cross, you are forgiven all your sins. He's defeated your enemies of the devil, the world, and your own flesh.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> day, He did another awesome thing – He rose from the dead. He rose in triumph to give you forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation; the victory you cried out to Him for. And, He gives that victory to you in a way you would never think of looking – by joining His Word to water, to bread and wine; by the words that go into your ears. By delivering His triumph into your life through these means, He makes you His own child, and delivers you from your sin and all its wages of death.

And it only gets better. The devil, the world, and your flesh still come after you, to tempt you and you still sin. But, you cry to Him in repentance "Come Down." And, He comes down in the means of grace to forgive you.

And you can rejoice and be glad that He's coming down, coming in a way that will be oh-so-awesome. He's coming on the clouds of judgment, coming with angels and archangels, coming at the sound of the judgment to judge the living and the dead. He's coming to resurrect and glorify your body. He's coming to take you to His marriage feast, that has no end. There, you will see awesome things with your own eyes, as you see Jesus in all His might, and power and glory forever and ever, without end.

Until that day, you continue to cry, "Come down!"

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.