



Monday, 11/5/2018

Isaiah 25:6-9

Previews attract attention. When the new movie is advertised, we see intriguing quick scenes designed to preview the whole show. Quickly we can get a sense of what to expect. Isaiah attracts our attention with a preview of eternal life with God: There is an abundance that satisfies our deep hungers. Everyone gets more than enough of the very best. God removes the shroud of shame and fear from human hearts. Death is swallowed up forever. This powerful scene of joy has an eternally happy ending. And our response? It is worth waiting for. Today, we get merely a glimpse of what is ahead. Today, we live with the promise of God's gift of salvation. Today, we wait and wait for the long-expected day when we see the whole show. "This is the Lord for whom we have waited; let us be glad and rejoice in God's salvation." Coming soon to a life near you. O God of life and hope, teach us to wait with patience and joyful expectation. When I am burdened with shame or fear, remind me of the previews of what is coming to all your loved ones. Amen.

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Tuesday, 11/6/2018

Mark 10:46-52

Merriam-Webster suggests the phrase originated in 1990 but let's give Blind Bartimaeus credit for his many-centuries-earlier, exceedingly hope-full "shout-out"--his "brief expression of greeting or praise (given especially on a broadcast or audio recording)." As our Jerry Springer-like scene opens, B.B. greets Jesus while the studio audience yells, "Shut up! This is 'Jesus the C' in the house! B.B., how dare you??" (Of course, their "C" stands for "Celebrity.") In first-century Palestine, blindness guaranteed only a life of extreme poverty, a life reduced to begging, lived completely dependent on the mercy and generosity of others. And unless one's blindness was self-correcting, there was no hope, no cure in sight. Little wonder healing the blind was one sign of the promised Messiah. In fact, when Jesus announced his ministry start-up (see Luke 4:18-19), the "top five" impacts of his coming included said healing. Now who's in the Springer spotlight?! And what will tomorrow's episode deliver? *May our eyes see with and through as much hope as one blind man along Jesus' way, Lord God. Amen.*

Keith Muschinske, '89, Chaplain, USAF, Retired, Eagle River, Alaska

Wednesday, 11/7/2018

Mark 10:46-52

[If you haven't already done so, you may find it helpful to read yesterday's devotion before this one.] So B.B. gives a shout-out to "Jesus the C" while that "holy" audience does their best to out-shout him. After all, why should their Passover celebration be spoiled by this bum and his impossible dream? Irony alert! Remember, this is a religious crowd--on their way to a religious festival--and they are "blind" to the power of the same God they will honor at that festival! They are in the right place listening to the right person saying the right things, but they are blind to the point of it all! Hear Helen Keller tell it like it is: "Better to be blind and see with your heart than to have two good eyes and see nothing." Bartimaeus saw with his hope-full heart, and Jesus healed him. Today, Jesus asks you the same question: "What do you want from me?" *O Divine Master Healer, when your question comes to each of us, "What do you want from me?" may your very own Holy Spirit infuse our answer to receive the blessing of sight. Amen.*

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Thursday, 11/8/2018

Psalm 126

It was 30 years ago, disguised as "yesterday." The occasion was a funeral in Rice Lake, Wisconsin, for a mother who died far too young. Her 20-something daughter sang at her funeral. Powerful emotions were swirling, even before she approached the casket. Then, in, with and under her last note, Lynn patted the casket, adding in almost a shout, "I did it! Yippee!" I heard her faith chord of relief coupled with joy--joy of certainty, of knowing she would see her mother again. There is a huge difference between happy and joyful laughter. Happiness is simply a moment--a joke, a thought, a smile. Joy is much deeper, longer-lasting, foundational. Joy springs from knowing and understanding God's truth, from having peace that passes all human understanding. It arises from a firm hope in the future. "If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied" (1 Corinthians 15:19). No future hope equals no present joy. Can I get a "Yippee!?" *Fill our mouths with joy-ful laughs, most Holy Spirit, so we can truly laugh--anytime, anywhere, no matter what seems to be the earthly reality smacking us in the face. Neither life nor death, nor anything else in all creation can separate us from your love in Christ, Gracious God. Take that, O death, and all your "evil ways"! Yippee!*

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Friday, 11/9/2018

Hebrews 7:23-28

Yeah, when will that tension between "right Twix" and "left Twix" be resolved? Those words are loaded with much more than chocolate. No, I'm not talking about the Twin Twix candy bar. I mean those words "right" and "left." "Can't we all just get along?" Maybe using different words will help--let's try it. No longer shall there be right or left; instead there shall be "on the one hand" and "on the other." Perhaps that works. But still, there's no "maybe" in the end of all tension that seems to flow for us in these words from Hebrews. For this writer, law and gospel are no longer at war. It is no longer many high priests subject to human weakness versus the one high priest "separated from sinners." There is no grand victory match still to be decided with our fortunes still in the balance. Here and now--today--our hope is made perfect in the one eternal Christ who sacrificed once, for all times, for all. *Thanks for everything, Sweet Jesus! You are my rock and my salvation--permanently, eternally, forever and ever. Amen!*

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Saturday, 11/10/2018 & Sunday, 11/11/2018 "All My Hope on God Is Founded," ELW 757

*1 All my hope on God is founded
who will all my trust renew,
who through change and chance will guide me,
only good and only true.
God unknown, God alone,
call my heart to be thine own.*

*2 Mortal pride and earthly glory,
sword and crown betray our trust;
what with care and toil we fashion,
tow'r and temple, fall to dust.
But thy pow'r, hour by hour,
is my temple and my tow'r.*

*3 Great thy goodness, e'er enduring;
deep thy wisdom, passing thought;
splendor, light, and life attend thee,
beauty springing out of naught.
Evermore from thy store
newborn worlds rise and adore.*

*4 Still from earth to God eternal
sacrifice of praise be done,
high above all praises praising
for the gift of God's own Son.
Christ doth call one and all:
ye who follow shall not fall.*

I almost made it through this week without rambling! One of my favorite words is "bifurcated," so for today you may consider that pause officially bifurcated. Joachim Neander (1650-1680) wrote the words to this hymn and many others, including "Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of Creation." He spent much of his short adult life wandering the then wilds of Germany for hymnodic inspiration, and in the early 19th century a large cave was named Neanderh^{öh}le after him. Years later, after limestone was quarried near that cave, the resulting wide valley became Neander Valley (in German, Neanderthal). Yep, in 1856, "Neanderthal Man" gave Joachim the distinction of being the only hymnist with a fossil hominid named after him! So... can we talk?? You got any "change and chance" happening in your life this day? Any betrayal in the form of "mortal pride and earthly glory" going on around you? Are you having any trouble seeing, hearing, feeling ... being a person who dwells in "hope"? *In the midst of all the change and chance of our lives, O God, may your Holy Spirit guide our shout-out to our always-listening Lord: [Insert said shout-out here!] And all God's people shouted, Amen!*

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