

Theme: **People who Pray have seen the light of God**

Text: Isaiah 64:1 – 9

Season: 1st Sunday in Advent 2017

Date: December 3, 2017

Place Shepherd of the Rockies LCMS, Bailey, CO

Grace and peace to you as you wait in hope for Christ to come, from God our Father, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

When you look around at the world that we live in what do you see? Do you see the mass chaos, the murders, the suicides and the inappropriate behavior that seems to be reaching all levels of our society? Do you see a nation that is getting worse as we shut God out of our schools and out our lives? In the midst of all that is going wrong in our world where do you find your hope? That's what this 1st Sunday in Advent is all about, the hope that is given to us from the one to come. The first candle of the Advent wreath reminds us that there is hope in the coming of Christ, the Savior of the world. All three of our scripture reading for today talk about the hope that we are given in this world through Jesus Christ, but how does that help you as you face the problems and the difficulties of this world each day?

That's where we find the Prophet Isaiah. He is looking for some hope from God in the midst of a world that has abandoned God's Word and is facing an enemy that wants to capture and enslave the whole nation of Israel. The Prophet Isaiah is at the end of his hope for the people of Israel because they have thrown God out of their lives and have taken into their lives all the evil of this world, which God had said would happen to them if they abandoned His Word. God allowed the people of Israel to be takeover by the Babylonian. In fact, the situation is so bad that the Prophet Isaiah is praying to God and says, **"Oh that you, O Lord God, 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!"** (Isa. 64:1 – 2)

In your prayers have you ever asked God to come down and show Himself so that the world would stand up or kneel down in honor of Him as our creator, judge and redeemer? That's what the Prophet Isaiah is asking God to do, to come down just as He did on Mount Sinai, so many years ago, to show the people of Israel and other nations that He truly is their

God and wants them to listen to His Word so that they can be His people and live in His love, peace and joy forever. Wouldn't that be something to get the attention of the people in our time also? Or would we today do just what the Israelites did back then, fall back into our sin filled ways as soon as we stopped seeing the smoke and fire showing the presents of God in all His anger? So, then what gives us hope? God's anger against our sinful ways doesn't give us any hope but only makes us feel life hopeless. May be that's why the Prophet Isaiah goes on in his prayer to God by saying, **"When You did awesome things that we did not look for, You came down, the mountains quaked at Your presence. From of old no one has heard or perceived by the ear, no eye has seen a God besides You, who acts for those who wait for Him. You meet him who joyfully works righteousness, those who remember You in Your ways. Behold You were angry and we sinned; in our sins we have been a long time, and shall we be saved?"** (Isa. 64: 3- 5)

For Isaiah, the hope came from knowing that God had promised to send the Messiah, the One who had been in the presence of God and knew God in all His glory and would do the joyful work of giving us righteousness. This Messiah would take care of the problems that we all have had for a long time, sin, death and our damnation. This Messiah, the promised one, was Jesus Christ born on that first Christmas morning in a stable in Bethlehem, just as God had promised. Jesus lived that perfect life in this world so that He could give us His righteousness in exchange for our sins and then pay for all our sins by His death on the Cross of Calvary, only to rise again to give us the hope that we all need. That's the reason why we have the hope of everlasting life with God in His perfect love, peace and joy. Yes, God has rend the heavens and come down to do something that no one on earth has ever seen, live a perfect life without any sin and then give up His perfect righteousness to us and die for us and rise again on the third day to give us the hope of everlasting life now and for all eternity in our perfect heavenly home with Him.

Isaiah was waiting for Jesus to come and that gave him hope in a world that had abandoned the Creator God who takes care of us daily. Today our hope is found in Jesus coming again to take us to the heavenly home that He has prepared for us so that we can live with Him in His perfect love, peace and joy for all eternity. Yes, Jesus has redeemed us from all our sins in His first coming, so that we can joyfully live in the righteousness given to us and be ready when Jesus comes again to take us to our heavenly home. The Apostle Paul

understood the hope that Isaiah had and knew that his hope had been fulfilled in the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul also understood that his hope now was different from that of Isaiah's and so he tells us, **"For in this hope we are saved. How hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience."** (Rom. 8:24-25)

Our hope is not in Christmas because the birth of Christ happened some 2020 years ago in the little town of Bethlehem. Jesus Christ lived the perfect life that God promise, died for all our sins and rose again to sit at the right hand of God till He comes again. Without that first Christmas we have no hope, that's why the Prophet Isaiah says, **"We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away. There is no one who calls upon Your name, who rouses himself to take hold of You; for You have hidden Your face from us, and have made us melt in the hand of our iniquities."** (Isa. 64:6-7)

Without faith in Jesus there is no light in the darkness of this world and all our deeds are like a polluted garment. In the iniquities of our sins our lives fades away like a leaf without any light, but in the light of God's love found in Jesus Christ we are given a new life and the hope of eternal life in the love, peace and joy of God for all eternity. Without the light of God given to us through the Holy Spirit working in our lives by God's Word and the Sacraments we would have no desire to call on the name of God to give us His love, grace and mercy. Because of the light of God in our lives we hold onto the redemption given to us by Jesus' life, death and resurrection and we can say with the prophet Isaiah in our prayers, **"But now, O Lord, You are our Father; we are the clay and You are our potter; we all the works of Your hand. Be not so terribly angry, O Lord, and remember not iniquity forever. Behold, please look, we are all Your people."** (Isa. 64: 6 – 9)

As a child, you want your father and mother to look favorably upon you at all times, even when you have done something wrong. As Children of God, we want God to look upon us with favor, because in His hands we are made into His children trusting in His goodness and hoping to live with Him forever. The clay in the skilled potters hand starts out with no shape or use, but in the actions of the potter's hands, God's hands, we are made into the useful instrument that God wants to take care of and to have in His life forever. Isaiah knew that he

was a child of God and that he needed help, so he went to God in pray for the help that would continue to give him hope.

Today we live in a world that at times seems to be hopeless. We hear about adults and children who feel like there is no hope in their lives and may be some of you feel like that at times, also. Advent is the start of the church year to remind us to hold on to the hope that God give to us by the coming of His Son, Jesus Christ. The Advent season can give us hope as we remember what God has done for us by sending His Only Son to solve our biggest problem, sin. By Jesus' life, death and resurrection we are given the promise of our salvation instead of damnation, righteousness instead of sinfulness and life instead of eternal death. Oh, we can't always see these thing in our lives right now but they are coming and we need to be ready for them when they come. Advent is not just a time to get ready for the remembrance of Jesus' first comes, it is the time to get ready for when Jesus comes to take us from this valley of death that we are traveling through now to the green pastures and still waters of our eternal home with Him.

Yes, God has rend the heavens and come down to us. He has sent His Only Son to do the joyful work of redeeming us from all our sins so that we can live in His love, peace and joy now and for all eternity. That's the hope that we are given in the world that we live in today. That's the hope that comes by the light of God given to us in this dark world, as we wait patiently for His coming again. With the light of our God given Hope we go into this world to share the good news of what God has done for us and will be doing for us for all eternity. Amen.