**Surely God is My Salvation**

December 20, 2015

Isaiah 12:1-6

Key verse 12:2 “Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid. The Lord, the Lord himself, is my strength and my defense; he has become my salvation.”

Merry Christmas! Praise God for blessing our Christmas worship service abundantly. Today let’s praise God for sending Jesus as a shoot from the stump of Jesse. You might be thinking that it is strange for Christmas message. When we think of Christmas, we think of the baby Jesus in a manger, shepherds and wise men. But we are talking about stumps and shoots. Most people do not think of much when they look at the shoot. It is such an insignificant branch. Nothing will come out of it, they say. But it is exactly what Christmas is about; God sending Jesus as a shoot from the stump of Jesse. We tend to notice the big things in life, seasons of growth, the bigger the better, big productions, the biggest Christmas decoration light show—it seems that we are people who judge with our eyes and decide by what we hear. Out of the very unpromising almost dead stump, God will grow up a small, seemingly not very important, green shoot that has life in it. This is the nature of the way God works. It’s the way he has worked throughout history. When we think how Jesus came into the world, he came as a baby in a manger at a time when the Roman Empire was so powerful. Caesar Augustus was the most well-known emperor, and not even the town’s people of Bethlehem noticed or cared that Jesus had been born. Yet this small tiny baby would grow up to change the world, to fundamentally change the history of mankind forever. A lesson is that we should not despise small beginnings, like a shoot from the stump of Jesse. Another lesson is that there is always hope even when there is only a stump. We might have stump like disappointments with life having not turned out as we wanted, deep down feeling there must be something more. Isaiah’s message is that there is. That with Jesus there isn’t only the stump but the green shoot. He is waiting to take root in each of our lives if we let him. In chapter 12, we see that we can rejoice when Jesus takes a root in our hearts and grow.

Verse 1 begins with, “In that day…” “In that day….” is the day God’s glorious promise is fulfilled. It is the day when Jesus came to this world as a baby in a manger. It was proclaimed to the shepherds by the angels on that first Christmas night. They announced, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:10,11). Then the sky burst open with angels praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests.” Many people misunderstand “Peace on earth.” “Peace on earth” is not a horizontal peace. The angels didn’t say “peace among men.” Rather it is “Peace toward men” from God. It is a vertical peace. Charles Wesley got it right when he wrote, “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing.” He wrote, “Peace on earth and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled.” Do you notice that vertical peace?

“In that day” also refers to the day when Jesus comes again to establish his Messianic kingdom on earth where there will be righteousness and peace. Isaiah pictures that peace as fantastic imagery. He pictures life as in a paradise (Isaiah 11:6-9). Before sin entered the world, the lions didn’t eat the sheep, nor did the leopards eat the goats. You could have observed the bear and the cow grazing together and their young merrily playing with each other. There was perfect harmony and peace among every creature. If Adam and Eve had not sinned and stayed in the Garden of Eden, their children could have led the animals. A little girl could put her hand into a snake pit without any danger at all. A little boy could happily play with a cobra and both would enjoy the play time. There would be perfect love between God and man and among all creation. Their knowledge of God would be personal, filled with affection and free from fear. But then they disobeyed God and ate from the tree of the knowledge of Good and Evil. They became dead because they were cut off from the source of life. It took another tree – the tree of the cross to reverse the curse and restore the future of God’s people. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree… by his wounds you have been healed (1 Peter 2:24).

Let’s read verse 1a together, “In that day you will say: ‘I will praise you, Lord.’” This is a personal expression of praise to God. When we have tasted the Messiah’s grace, we each personally can say, “I will praise you, Lord.” This will be the expression of our hearts when we come to the Lord. It should be the expression of our hearts always. Of course we live in a real world, with real problems. Sometimes we get angry and complain. So, how can we have this expression of praise in our hearts always?

First, we have to remember what the Lord has done for us. Verse 1b says, “Although you were angry with me, your anger has turned away.” This verse tells us that God was angry with us, each of us. Isaiah 53:6a say, “We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way….” The Lord created us for his glory, to be with him and live for him. He created each person with a definite purpose. He created each of us to live according to his truth. But each one of us has turned to his own way. Each one of us thought our way was best and turned from the Lord. Today so many are seeking their own way, convinced they are right. So many think living a sexually immoral lifestyle, or a greedy lifestyle or a pleasure seeking lifestyle will lead them to happiness and blessing. Some seek God superficially, culturally or habitually. This makes God angry. Most people think they are basically okay, or at least better than the other guy. But God is angry with me and each of you because of our sins.

Yet we praise God because somehow, God’s love and mercy overcame his anger. Verse 1b says, “Although you were angry with me, your anger has turned away and you have comforted me.” Isaiah poetically says that God’s anger turned away. God found a way to pay the penalty of our sins. It was through the cross of his one and only Son, Jesus Christ. Isaiah 53:6 says, “We all like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way, and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.” This is the most beautiful description of what the Lord has done for us. God laid on Jesus the iniquity of us all. God laid all of our sins on Jesus, the Messiah. God was so angry with us. But he loves us more. Romans 5:8 describes God’s love, “But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” The Lord loves us so much, he overcome every barrier to bring us to Him. The Lord even sacrificed his one and only Son on the cross to bring us to him. When we realize this love for us, we can say, “I will praise you, Lord” from our deepest hearts.

When we know God’s saving grace, we can also say as in verse 2, “Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid. The Lord, the Lord himself, is my strength and my defense; he has become my salvation.” We can say with great confidence, “Surely God is my salvation….” When God is our salvation we can trust and not be afraid of anything. We know that the Lord, the Lord himself is our strength and defense. The Lord does not send a representative to defend us. The Lord, the Lord himself, is our strength and our defense. When we feel weak or attacked, the Lord himself is our strength and our defense. If someone wants to point out our sins and attack us, we really have nothing to say. We are guilty and become powerless. But the Lord is our defense. The Lord defends us through Jesus’ blood before our accusers. It is not because of our righteousness, but because the Lord, the Lord himself, is our defense. The word “defense” can also be translated as “song.” God is our song means that the Lord is our joy. Those who know God’s salvation sing in their hearts. They are happy and a blessing. They can say with confidence, “He has become my salvation.”

Look at verse 3. “With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.” Sometimes those illustrations are lost on us. We live in a very blessed time and country. When we want water, we turn on the tap and we turn off the tap. Here in the time of Isaiah, water was very precious. Water took up part of their day of labors and tasks to be done. The women had to go outside the city very often to the well and draw water and bring it back every day. Isaiah now describes that instead of it being a task of drudgery, a daily routine that some didn’t like to do at all, he says: “With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.” This was referring to Jesus as the very Living Water. Who can forget the time when Jesus talked with the Samaritan woman at the well? The disciples went ahead and left Jesus behind. Jesus stayed at the well to rest. Jesus ran into a woman and began a conversation. It was a Samaritan woman whom the Jews had very little to do with, actually they wanted to do nothing at all with a Samaritan. She was an immoral woman, having had five boyfriends, and now living with a boyfriend. She was thirsty for love.

Yet, Jesus talked with her and explained to her that in him is the Living Water.

Sometimes we think of salvation only as that moment when we come to faith in Christ and he saves us once and for all from our sin and guilt. But Paul says in Romans 13:11, “Salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed.” In other words, salvation is still in the future. We don’t have it all yet. Salvation will be completed when Jesus comes again and clothes us with the glorious resurrection body. Salvation is not just past and not just future. Salvation is also God’s appointed path of oases through the wilderness from the salvation of escape from Egypt to the salvation of entrance into the Promised Land. If you make it your first priority to drink from the wells of salvation every day, you will never lose your way in the wilderness. God guides us by the wells of salvation. Wells, not bowls or buckets; Not only are there enough of them all along the way, but they will always have enough water to meet your need—indeed, way beyond your need. If Isaiah had said, “You will draw water from the bowls of salvation, or from the buckets of salvation,” we might wonder if they would be drunk dry. Would there be enough? But wells aren’t like that. A well is self-replenishing. You draw bucket after bucket and there is still more water.

Look at verse 4. “In that day you will say: ‘Give praise to the Lord, proclaim his name; make known among the nations what he has done, and proclaim that his name is exalted.’” “In that day” again refers to the day we receive the Messiah and God’s salvation. In that day, we will say out loud, “Give praise to the Lord, proclaim his name.” To proclaim his name is to honor him. We want Jesus’ name honored above all names. We want Jesus’ name to be glorified. We want to proclaim his name. We honor his name by making known among the nations what he has done and proclaiming that his name is exalted. We do that by teaching the Bible and teaching what Jesus has done by coming to this world as a baby in a manger, and dying on the cross for our sins.

Look at verse 5. “Sing to the Lord, for he has done glorious things; let this be known to all the world.” In that day, we will sing to the Lord. Singing is the expression of our hearts. We don’t have to be skilled at singing. It doesn’t matter if you sing out of tune. What matters is that we sing to the Lord out of joy and thanks.

The world is a very difficult and painful place for many. We hear about the terrible suffering of Syrian refugees after a long and bloody civil war in Syria. There are so many hurting and suffering people even in Canada. The Lord wants us to let his salvation be known through all the world. The Lord wants us to sing his praise, showing our joy and thanksgiving to all the world. Even at this Christmas we will meet many people, many who don’t know God’s salvation. They don’t drink from the wells of salvation. They are miserable. What they need is to see our joy and thanks that we get from the wells of salvation. They need to hear how the Lord has done glorious things in and through us, so they can trust him as well. May God fill us with songs of joy to the Lord and make known what he has done to all the world.

This chapter concludes with verse 6. “Shout aloud and sing for joy, people of Zion, for great is the Holy One of Israel among you.” We shout and sing for joy because the Holy One of Israel is great among us. God is the great God. He is performing great work. He is active, powerful, living, working in and through us. Sometimes we may think God is not doing anything. But God, the Holy One of Israel, is great among us. He is doing his great work. He is carrying out his world salvation plan. He is saving lives. He is marching toward the complete restoration of his kingdom.

2000 years ago Jesus came as a baby in a manger from heaven to bring his salvation. In Jesus we find our salvation, strength, and living water for our souls. Let us trust in him and not be afraid. Jesus will come again in power and glory as King of kings and Lord of lords to bring righteousness and make everything right. For that reason alone we can sing a song of praise. Come, Lord Jesus.