

I can't help but picture Adelaide when I hear this reading from Isaiah. On Canada Day at the parade, I was chatting on the front steps of the church and I look over to see Nathan, with a backpack on. And that backpack is Adelaide, all bundled up, with a little rain cover to keep her nice and dry. She's got the perfect vantage point, looking this way and that over his shoulder, giggling through every moment. I couldn't even really tell you what we talked about when we were chatting because she had the majority of my attention. She was so content on her father's back, bouncing along, joining in the conversation, taking in the world, safe and secure.

This reading brings up the most delightful images of sweet babies, bouncing on knees or swaddled tight, and I can almost hear the satisfaction of a fussy baby finding satisfaction as they finally latch on, receiving life from their mother's bosom. Or, as my aunt taught me back in the days when I was holding my nieces, walk jiggle jiggle, walk jiggle jiggle, calming the baby down and keeping them engaged and distracted and happy.

This is the service Jerusalem does for those that love her, for those that live within the safety of her walls. Jerusalem, the place where God dwells and meets with His people, the place where a descendant of David sits on the throne reigning, she is to provide life and comfort to her people.

It's a beautiful image that never really seems to ring true in her time. Certainly there are moments when there is a faithful king on the throne, faithful priests in the temple, and the people coming faithfully to be forgiven and leave serving their God. But more often than not, corruption has sunk its teeth into this holy city. Too often the Law is forgotten and justice is perverted; kings neglect their people and simply serve their own desires, the priests extort those coming to seek God, the people follow after their leaders and God is forgotten and idols are picked up. And this place where peace is supposed to reign ends up besieged, not once, but twice, and ultimately this glorious prophecy of care and satisfaction must wait to be fulfilled.

Thankfully, Jesus. In Christ, Jerusalem is transformed. Now God dwells in the person of Christ on earth, and Christ, the Son of David reigns. So wherever Christ is, wherever He is preached and His Word is read, there you find Jerusalem. She is full of children of God, all brought in by faith, and in this holy place, that is the Church, we dwell secure and receive His gifts.

Yet even here, after all Christ has done, after all that He has revealed, there are too many days when the Church fails as well to live up to this consoling and comforting image from Isaiah. Rather than being a place where people are soothed and given peace, they find conflict and end up more distraught. Rather than being a source of life to those crying to be saved, they are left to their own devices, given a new law to follow in order to be pleasing to God and welcome in the midst. A place where we are to gather as one, caring for each others burdens turns into a jungle where everyone must fight for themselves, and the vulnerable are forgotten rather than cherished.

This certainly isn't the church at all times and in every place, but every church fails to live up to this glorious calling in one way or another.

And that's because, as we all know all too well, the Church is full of sinners, and that'll be the case until the day when Christ returns. This prophecy of Jerusalem won't be fully realized until the moment when, as John recounts in his vision: **21** Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. ² And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place^[a] of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people,^[a] and God himself will be with them as their God.^[a] ⁴ He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."

Finally. When our sin is dealt away with, we won't be able to meddle with the care that Christ wants to give to us, His bride. There will come a time, you can be sure of it, when sinful pastors won't

preach a word that brings about doubt and division. There will be a day when all will dwell in unity, content with the gifts of God rather than fighting for their own desires. The moment of satisfaction is on its way, when the torments of the world will be forgotten as you rest at the bosom, near the heart of your God, when your decaying bones are held tight and healed up and receive fresh and unending life.

Neither physical Jerusalem nor the Church where God dwells and reigns, neither can live up to this prophecy because Isaiah was looking towards the end when at last sin was dealt with and the separation between us and God was no more. He was looking to the future when at last our redemption would be visible with our own eyes, tangible with our own hands and feet even lips. He was looking towards what is still yet to be, but that doesn't mean he had to wait; and neither do you or I.

For God was faithful, in spite of Israel's rebellion and Judah's sin, He was faithful to keep the faith alive in at least a remnant. Though the people may have forsaken His laws and forgotten His promises, there were a few parents that stubbornly passed down what the Lord had said to their parents' parents' parents. No matter how corrupt the king was, there was, by the grace of God, a prophet or some family in some corner of the city that rejoiced in the salvation from Egypt and the crossing of the Red Sea and the manna from heaven and the Saviour to come.

And likewise, throughout the history of the Church, through periods of heresy, through years of persecution, through times when justice was corrupted and righteousness was forgotten, there were families that taught their kids the 10 commandments and the creed, that trusted in John 3:16 and the resurrection of the dead, rogue priests and pastors that still preached Christ crucified and forgave sins. Even when the Church as a whole seemed to go astray, there were those that sought God in His Word because they had heard, somewhere, somehow, of His forgiveness and His comfort and they needed to hear it again.

Though it may seem like the people of God often forget who they are and neglect what they are called to do, God is faithful to comfort His beloved, to sustain those who need His grace, and to carry

them home to Him. All this He does for you. I know—it's not obvious or visible like Isaiah paints it for us, but it's been happening all along. God had promised such a satisfying salvation, and because God has promised it, it's was as good as already done. For the Jews as they came to the temple anticipating a Messiah, they could come in certain hope knowing that one day He would be there in their midst. And for you who come to Church trusting in Christ who is that Messiah, because His death has already occurred and His resurrection a done deal, you are reconciled and your unending future is secured. The peace of God is yours.

All that is left to do is simply to come and be comforted by Christ, our home. Though He works through fallible, and honestly corrupt pastors, and He gives you His gifts in the midst of congregations where conflict and false beliefs come and go just like night and day, though we might doubt the simple means of grace where He pours out His love for us, though it seems absurd that He won victory through dying, His peace and His comfort is yours, here in this place, just as He is surely present with grace in the Church all around the world. Jesus is bringing Jerusalem, with all her peace, here and around the globe. Thank you, Lord Jesus. Amen.