

## NOVEMBER 17, 2019-SUMMARY SERMON-JOHN TSCHUDY

### SCRIPTURE LESSON ISAIAH 65:17-25, 2 THESSALONIANS 3:6-13, LUKE 21:5-19

Many scholars believe that the book we call Isaiah was written by multiple authors over an extensive period of time. Our text today comes from the time during the exile of the Jews from Jerusalem, when the Persians had won control of Israel. The message of the prophets is changing with God promising many changes. It is from this text that we Christians draw many teachings about the new creation in Christ. But its original intent was to give hope to the people of Jerusalem and Israel of an end to the suffering that they had been experiencing. There will be an end to the injustice they had been living under and the threats of harsh rule. The image of the peace in the world comes from this text. Yes it is very idealistic but that is the point the author is trying to make. Under God's rule things that seem impossible will happen, so they should keep their faith. For us as Christians this is a direct pointing to the coming of the Messiah and the better world offered to us in Christ.

The text from Thessalonians is a text that often gets misrepresented because we reduce it to mere words and take it out of the context of the situation Paul is addressing in Thessalonica. One of the problems the early church had because of how it operated and the lessons it taught was some people came to believe it offered basically a free ride to the end of time which was supposed to come very soon. Remember Jesus said that he would return and bring in God's rule before any of his followers had died. The church also had an extensive what might be called "socialist system" for its members. Basically this boiled down to everyone giving what they earned to the church and the church worked to see that everyone's needs were met. What Paul is addressing is people who refused to work to contribute to the system but expected to get the money to live on from the church. What Paul is arguing is that if people aren't willing to do the work needed to support the work of the church, they weren't entitled to any help from the church. It isn't that they are thrown out of the church, but rather it is made clear that they don't receive all the benefits of church membership. While this text is one of the ones taken to be the basis of the "Protestant Work Ethic," it is about more than telling people that Christians should work hard. But also they must meet the obligation of supporting the work of the church in accordance to what they expect to get out of being a part of the church.

But when we read the Gospel lesson it might be hard to find the "Good News" in it. God's world for Christians is not "going to be a bed of roses." Because the world is opposed to the way of God in Jesus Christ, Christians can expect real problems and suffering. And indeed if we look back at early church history this is exactly what happened in the early church. While we don't face these problems today, we do face those that Jesus warned about that come preaching in his Name proclaiming false doctrines. Often these down play the places where the true Gospel and the world come into conflict to make being a Christian more attractive to more people. Often the message is like the one Paul is teaching against in Thessalonians, of the church being a free ride, where all needs will be met.

Isaiah comes to us proclaiming hope in a world that sometimes seems hopeless and where it seems we are living without the presence of God. But in reality God's love for us is real and even in the darkest hours of life God is with us and there to help us. But we cannot forget that we must have Faith and continue to struggle in the world to do God's work. God is there with

the help we need but we cannot take God's help for granted. Rather we must remain active in doing God's work, even in the face of persecution, suffering and pain.