

SERMON: "THE CITY OF GOD: *Jesus & the City.*"

Rev. Geoff Ross: Sunday, September 27, 2020, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church

[LW:looked at the 2cities – the lofty/earthly city/city of man and the final/strong city/city of God – and how we live as exiles in the lofty/earthly city exhausted/waiting for God to bring about our salvation. The GN:Isaiah told the exiled P-o0God that the city of God/strong city is present – here/now/always – and available/possible to us EVEN in/within the earthly/lofty city-Call to believe/even in confusing/disturbing/frightening times.]

This is what God(through Jeremiah) called the exiled People of God to do by being faithful – despite their fears/doubts/anxieties – and by moving/living/working/serving in/love the city of Babylon, where they would be 'ambassadors' for the City of God – representing God's love/grace within Babylon. This was God's plan/purpose for the people of God then/it was the same plan/purpose God had for the Apostles/early Church/and, it's God's plan/purpose today/for us.

["Ambassador": "Official/representative of one country sent to another/foreign country." / Latin: "servant"- "Person who acts on behalf of another country/king." Isaiah: Messiah/ "servant" – sent. Philippians/Paul: Jesus-Servant/slave: Jesus-not of this world/came into this world/represented God/God's plan/purpose to us/where we were/needed Him.]

This isn't that complicated:saved/believing/restored, we're both 'cities'/saved/yet still here/of this world/heaven now – which makes us qualified to be Christ's ambassadors/from this world-but no-longer of this world. As such, we have the power/pattern/ability to bring about the city of God, God's final vision of/for creation/us – not by looking to serve/save ourselves, apart from the city(it's people/needs/problems) but by faithfully being Christ in/to the city by seeking to love/serve/save others, as a part of the city(meeting the people/needs/problems).

[City:Definition-(Latin 'civis'-'citizen') "a large/permanent human settlement/densely populated/defined boundaries/walls/common-specified attributes. Hebrew: "city" used in OT:mean "an enclosed place." City: "safe" place/"cities of refuge."(Numbers 35:27) – where scattered/lost/vulnerable people went for common protection:walls=security/safety/refuge;common-care=welfare. "Civis"/civilization=cities were the place where one went to be safe/saved....]

Appearing in the Bible 926 times, "city" described both God's "desired haven" for His children/People and were part of God's mandated/imperative for His creation to build/populate. Maybe surprising for us/today – naïvely viewing 1st Century Israel simply through a pastoral/agrarian lens – the Bible was written for citizens of/in cities complete with temples/synagogues-markets/shops/industries-theatres/libraries/public baths... where people migrated to for business/religious/safety purposes – where the lost/lonely/wounded/sick/orphaned/widowed/alien could find safety in numbers/anonymous yet able to find comfort in community. But, as we read/see, even there/city, the needs of those on the margins of society were often neglected as they

longed for the promised “peace/peace”/shalom that only God could deliver. This is where our two readings come in.

[Both readings/set in cities/filled with urban images/Mt:market-Luke:house. The Matthew reading tells us that Jesus came to be with us, and the Luke reading tells us He did this by going to where we were – the cities/Capernaum. Throughout His life/ministry He lived in the midst of our suffering/pain/disease/sinfulness-responded with the accepting/all-inclusive/healing nature/love of God’s grace. Came/met us-our need-where we were/are.]

In both readings, Jesus reveals Himself not only as one who can heal, but one who can forgive. In the Luke reading, while we see the presenting issue of the man’s paralysis, Jesus sees that, beyond the paralytic’s physical restriction/(mat), he is spiritually enslaved. The physical healing in this story/dramatic metaphor for the healing forgiveness that Jesus provides. This is the good news that Jesus speaks about in the Matthew reading – that because of God’s love/grace, the forgiveness necessary for our true/full healing/restoration/redemption that was promised/predicted has happened/begun in/through Him/His ministry. By repeating the Isaiah prophecy that He claimed for His ministry, Jesus lists off those God cares for – those deemed to be outside/beyond God’s love/care/provision. By echoing these loaded words, Jesus identifies Himself with those who needed Him the most and prepares us for His commission to us.

[Jerimiah/God calls us to; “seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.”(Jerimiah 29:7)/ God:calling them to seek/want/pray for the full shalom of God to be with the city of Babylon – economically/socially/culturally/in every way/literally to “love your enemies” like Jesus instructed(Matt 5:44)/did; “God proves his love for us in that while we still were enemies/sinners Christ died for us.”(Rom 5:9)]

This command must have shocked/angered/upset the exiled People of God (lost everything/loved ones/enslaved:Babylonians/enemies!), but God’s call to live in/serve the city is also for us. While this might have surprised the exiled People of God, as Christians, this should be evident in what Jesus did/said/commanded us to do/live out by pouring ourselves out to/for others as Jesus did when He came to us. This is what Jesus did when He came/died to/for us. God’s plan/purpose for us requires nothing less. Jesus went into the cities:lived/stayed there;loved/served/healed those in need – and “the *blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them.*” This is what He calls us to do in His name as we seek to be/bring Christ in/to the heart of the city. Amen.