

“ The King And His Messenger “

December 15th, 2013

Preached At St. Martin Of Tours

Eunice McGarrahan gave an inspiring talk on Christian discipleship in which she said, “A costume is something you put on and pretend that you are what you are wearing. A uniform, on the other hand, reminds you that you are, in fact, what you wear.”

Her comment sparked memories of my first day in US Army basic training when we were each given a box and ordered to put all our civilian clothes in it. The box was mailed to our home address. Every day after that, the uniform we put on reminded us that we had entered a period of disciplined training designed to change our attitudes and actions. (David McCasland, Our Daily Bread)

Isaiah 35:1-10

The Return of the Redeemed to Zion

The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad,

the desert shall rejoice and blossom;

like the crocus ²it shall blossom abundantly,

and rejoice with joy and singing.

The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it,

the majesty of Carmel and Sharon.

They shall see the glory of the Lord,

the majesty of our God.

³ Strengthen the weak hands,

and make firm the feeble knees.

⁴ Say to those who are of a fearful heart,

‘Be strong, do not fear!

Here is your God.

He will come with vengeance,

with terrible recompense.

He will come and save you.’

⁵ Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,

and the ears of the deaf unstopped;

⁶ then the lame shall leap like a deer,

and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy.

For waters shall break forth in the wilderness,

and streams in the desert;

⁷ the burning sand shall become a pool,

and the thirsty ground springs of water;

the haunt of jackals shall become a swamp,

the grass shall become reeds and rushes.

⁸ A highway shall be there,
and it shall be called the Holy Way;
the unclean shall not travel on it,
but it shall be for God's people;
no traveller, not even fools, shall go astray.

⁹ **No lion shall be there,
nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it;
they shall not be found there,
but the redeemed shall walk there.**

¹⁰ **And the ransomed of the Lord shall return,
and come to Zion with singing;
everlasting joy shall be upon their heads;
they shall obtain joy and gladness,
and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.**

NetBible Notes

35:9-10 Nothing will threaten or endanger the redeemed as they travel the holy highway to the holy city. This is the first of 24 occurrences of "redeemed" in Isaiah. The redeemed will come rejoicing into Zion, the New Jerusalem, where there will be no more sorrow or sighing, just unbreakable happiness, gladness, and joyful shouting (cf. 51:11; Ps. 23:6; Ezek. 36:24-28; 40—44; Zech. 14:16-19; Rev. 21:1-4).

While what Isaiah described here parallels to a limited extent the Jews' return from Babylonian captivity, the context of the chapter as well as its terminology point to a fulfillment in the future that that return only prefigured. Another foreview was the converging of pilgrims on Jerusalem from all over the world to celebrate the annual feasts of Judaism. Amillennialists normally interpret this chapter as depicting the blessings that would come to the church through the first advent of Christ (cf. John 16:33).

Matthew 11:2-11

Messengers from John the Baptist

2 When John heard in prison what the Messiah was doing, he sent word by his disciples ³ and said to him, 'Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?' ⁴ Jesus answered them, 'Go and tell John what you hear and see: ⁵ 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. ⁶ And blessed is anyone who takes no offence at me.'

Jesus Praises John the Baptist

7 As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John: 'What did you go out into the wilderness to look at? A reed shaken by the wind? ⁸ What then did you go out to see? Someone dressed in soft robes? Look, those who wear soft robes are in royal palaces. ⁹ What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. ¹⁰ This is the one about whom it is written, "See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you."

¹¹ Truly I tell you, among those born of women no one has arisen greater than John the Baptist; yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

(Even John the Baptist had doubts about whether Jesus was really the promised Messiah.)“Matthew includes the record of this interrogation for at least two reasons. First, the questioning of Jesus by John, a representative of the best in Israel, points up the misconception of Israel as to the program of the Messiah and His method. He had heard of the works of Jesus (Matthew 11:2), and they certainly appeared to be Messianic. However, Jesus did not suddenly assert His authority and judge the people as John probably had thought He would (Matthew 3:10-12). Because of this misconception he began to doubt. Perhaps his being in prison, a place which was certainly incongruous for the herald of the King, reinforced his doubts. . . .

“The second purpose of these few verses (Matthew 11:2-6) is to reaffirm the concept that the works of Jesus prove His Messiahship.”[513]

When I teach English composition, I require students to write in class. I know that in-class writing is their own work, so in this way I become familiar with each student’s writing voice and am able to detect if they “borrow” a bit too heavily from another writer. Students are surprised to learn that their writing voice—which includes what they say as well as how they say it—is as distinctive as their speaking voice. Just as the words we speak come from our hearts, so do the words we write. They reveal who we are.

We become familiar with God’s voice in much the same way. By reading what He has written, we learn who He is and how He expresses Himself. Satan, however, tries to make himself sound like God (2 Cor. 11:14). By using God’s words in a slightly altered fashion, he comes up with convincing arguments for things that are untrue. For example, by convincing people to do things that simulate godliness, such as trusting in an outward regimen of self-discipline rather than Christ’s death for salvation (Col. 2:23), Satan has led many astray.

God went to extremes to make sure we’d recognize His voice. He not only gave us His Word, He gave us the Word made flesh—Jesus (John 1:14)—so that we will not be easily deceived or misled.

(Julie Ackerman, Christian Writer)

Jesus uniform of Grace and Humility was not what was expected by the Jewish people at the time of his earthly ministry. However, it was the robe he wore as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. They wanted a triumphal King to come and wipe away the years of slavery or outright oppression over their land. Nevertheless he came, without fanfare, and with a message of Hope And Love. One that would take himself to the very epitomy of despair at the Cross, but whose emptying of himself would redeem mankind in ways the Jewish people could only imagine. Pouring out God’s love toward humanity in such a way, that would embrace creation in the Father’s Love and forever change the way we would look at a King, a Prince and our very God.