

Isaiah 45:22-25
Palm Sunday
March 28, 2010

Isaiah 45:22-25 (New International Version)

22 "Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other. **23** By myself I have sworn, my mouth has uttered in all integrity a word that will not be revoked: Before me every knee will bow; by me every tongue will swear. **24** They will say of me, 'In the LORD alone are righteousness and strength.'" _All who have raged against him will come to him and be put to shame. **25** But in the LORD all the descendants of Israel will be found righteous and will exult.

Did you ever notice how the rescue of someone in danger or in need of help draws a crowd? When a rescue squad, fire truck, or police car pull up to a house in the neighborhood, people gather to see what has happened. Or when there is a hostage crisis or a rescue attempt of a child who has fallen down an abandoned well or mine, people gather around the television set to watch. It grabs our interest whenever rescue attempts happen.

Did you ever stop to think that that is what happened on that first Palm Sunday? When Jesus rode into Jerusalem large crowds gathered waving palm branches, throwing garments in the road, and shouting "Hosanna" which means "Lord save us, deliver us." Why did they gather? Because there was a rescue going on. No, someone wasn't dying of a heart attack or trapped in an abandoned mine. People were heading for hell and a rescuer was on his way, Jesus of Nazareth!

That is why we have gathered on this Palm Sunday of Holy Week 2010. As we gather to celebrate and commemorate the events of that first Palm Sunday, we are here to celebrate our rescue too! Jesus rode into Jerusalem to deliver us from sin and hell. So today, on the basis of our sermon text let us celebrate again this truth:

OUR DELIVERER HAS COME!

- I. **He is the holy One of Israel,**
- II. **He makes us the holy ones of Israel.**

One of the growing crimes in our culture is identity theft. If that has ever happened to you, you know how devastating that can be! If someone uses your social security number or steals information about your credit cards or bank accounts, you not only can lose thousands of dollars but also spend thousands of dollars trying to get back what was stolen--your identity.

Did you know that Israel had been guilty of stealing someone's identity? No, they hadn't hacked into someone's computer and stolen bank account numbers or social security numbers. But what they had stolen was the glory and praise and honor and trust that belonged to God and gave it to idols. And even when God brought judgment on them for that crime by sending neighboring nations to conquer them, they still didn't turn to Lord for rescue but relied on their own strength and other kings and armies.

But by their own strength or that of other armies and earthly kings they couldn't save themselves. It wasn't necessarily because those armies or kings weren't powerful enough to stop the Assyrians from conquering the ten Northern tribes of Israel in 722 B.C. or the Babylonians from conquering the nation of Judah in 612 B.C. It was because the Lord God had planned to bring this judgment on his people for their sins, and nothing was going to stop that from happening. This plan of God's judgment on his people for their identity theft was the main message of the first 39 chapters of the book of the prophet Isaiah.

But God is a merciful God who is long-suffering and will always keep his gospel promises. He had promised Abraham that his descendants would live in the land of Canaan and that one of those descendants would be the great deliverer of all men. And God was going to keep that promise in spite of his people's unfaithfulness. So what was God going to do? He was going to send a deliverer. After the Babylonians had destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple and carried God's people off into captivity, God was going to raise up a king who would deliver the people from that captivity and return them back to Palestine to rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple. That deliverer whom the Lord called his chosen servant and anointed one was Cyrus the king of the Persian empire. This rescue plan is a big part of the

second half of Isaiah's book of prophecy covering chapters 40-66. And what God promised happened. Cyrus did come to power and just as God said, his people were rescued and allowed to go back to the Promised Land.

But who was really the deliverer? Let's identify him correctly. Yes, the instrument in the Lord's hand who accomplished the rescue was Cyrus. But the identity of the real deliverer was the Holy One of Israel, the only true God who keeps his Word!

As we hear about this rescue plan of God's Old Testament people, we fast forward to the events of Palm Sunday. As we watch Jesus ride into Jerusalem we see God fulfilling another rescue plan that he had made before the world began and which he repeated through the prophet Isaiah. The Holy One of Israel was going to send a greater deliverer who would come with a greater delivery for all sinners. God himself, in the person of Jesus Christ, was going to come and deliver sinners from sin, death, and hell. He was going to do that in a most unbelievable way. He wasn't going to ride in on mighty stallion, wielding earthly weapons with legions of angels behind him slaughtering our enemies. No, he was going to ride in on a lowly donkey and he was going to deliver us from our enemies by dying on a cross like a common criminal to pay the debt of the world's sin. When our deliverer, the Holy One of Israel, laid down his life on the cross, God declared all people forgiven.

You and I have reason to be eternally thankful to our deliverer Jesus for what he did. I say that because you and I are often guilty of the crime of identity theft too! How often aren't we guilty of putting our money and our possessions above God! Those things can become idols to us just as surely as the Israelites were bowing down to the idols in Canaan. How often aren't we guilty of putting our spouse or our children or earthly pleasures before God and his Word! Those things can become idols to us just as surely as the idols that the Israelites worshiped. And are we ever guilty of thinking that we aren't as sinful as other people and so God surely must love us and surely will have to take us to heaven? Relying on our good works to deliver us from hell is replacing God's rightful place as the Holy One of Israel who alone delivers his people! The point I'm getting at is simply this: You and I need to be delivered from the punishment that we deserve for all our sins, yes even the sin of idolatry. The good news is that God offers us that deliverance through Jesus who is our strength and our righteousness. That's the gracious invitation and glorious promise God gives to us through Isaiah again today: **22** "Turn to me and be saved all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other. **23** By myself I have sworn, my mouth has uttered in all integrity a word that will not be revoked: Before me every knee will bow; by me every tongue will swear. **24** They will say of me, 'In the LORD alone are righteousness and strength.'" All who have raged against him will come to him and be put to shame. **25** But in the LORD all the descendants of Israel will be found righteous and will exult."

By the grace of God we have accepted that invitation. By the faith the Holy Spirit worked in our hearts, we are now the holy ones of Israel, holy through faith in the Holy One of Israel, Jesus our great deliverer.

Speaking of large crowds, do you know when the biggest crowd will ever gather to watch a rescue? That will happen on Judgment Day. For you see, Jesus is going to come back again and all people of all time will be gathered before his judgment throne. What a crowd that is going to be! And then the biggest delivery will take place! All those who have rejected Jesus in unbelief will have to bow the knee and confess Jesus to their shame and embarrassment. And then Jesus will deliver them over to Satan and to everlasting condemnation. But all those who believe in Jesus, who are his holy ones by faith, will be delivered from their graves and from this sinful world and brought to their everlasting home in heaven. There they shall wear the crown of everlasting life and wave palm branches and sing his praises forever! What a delivery, what a rescue that will be! Amen.