



What if the Worst Should Come?



A Sermon By
The Rev. Richard D. Meadows, Jr.

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Grace Episcopal Church
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An audio version of this sermon can be found on the Grace Church website at:
<http://graceepiscopalchurch.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/2016-11-270RDM.mp3>.

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Luke 17:5-10

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Grace Episcopal Church
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Carolyn Ann Knight a former Homiletics professor at Interdenominational Theological Seminary in Atlanta Georgia preached a sermon titled If the Worst Should Come. I'd like to borrow that title and also use it for my Relevant Question, What if the Worst Should Come? For some the worst has arrived. For some the storm clouds are still gathering, for some it's the economy, for some it's immigration, for some it is voting rights, for some it is healthcare and their health in particular, for some it is the right to choose, for some it is the next meal, a warm place to stay, retirement and for some education.

James Cone in his book, *Black Theology and Black Power*, wrote this: The Kingdom (of light) which we may enter is not merely an eschatological longing for escape to a transcendent reality, nor is it an inward serenity which eases unbearable suffering. Rather it is God encountering us in the very depths of our being-in-the-world and releasing us from all evil that holds us captive.

I would say, Cone is saying in our relationships with God, God meets us in our poorest state of being, then releases us, freeing us from, sickness of mind, body and spirit. His work of Calvary releases us from bigotry, racism, discrimination, fear, trepidation and the feelings that we are prisoners in some far away captivity.

This morning we can call the captivity of Judah in Babylon the encounter with God; the political hermeneutics of their time. Judah is caught up in the web of the geopolitical power called Babylon, ruled by one Nebuchadnezzar.

The Isaiah text is a direct response to captivity of the mind, suffering, affliction, darkness and fear, We are to walk into, feel, then release the power of the light. Yes, Grace, Walk in Light. Reminds me of the songwriter who said...Walk in the light. the Beautiful Light, come where the dew drops of mercy shine bright...shine all around us by day and by night, Jesus the light of the world.

My Brothers and sisters, You are the light. Compare and contrast the call of Isaiah and our own lives. Isaiah is...the son of Amoz...he is a prophet who is called in the midst of his own objections. He reminds God that he is a man of unclean lips living among people who are of unclean lips. He however has a vision of God sitting high upon His throne, with Seraphim, six winged creatures flying about Him. They have two wings to cover their face, two wings to cover their feet and two wings to fly. One of the Seraphim pick up a hot coal with tongs and places the coal on the tongue of Isaiah.. Isaiah then declares after the call is given and the question, "Who shall we send?" Isaiah answers, "Here am I, send me." Like the text suggests, we must answer the call and we are not only walking in the light as New Testament witnesses of the light. we are light.

So here are we today, we must interpret the text, Isaiah 2:5; The word that Isaiah son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the Lord! If the worst has come, There may be a problem/struggle with being Light. It is hard to be something you do not believe you are capable of being. You may or may not have difficulty understanding that you are in the midst of a struggle for your life. You may not understand that you have to make room for others, who may not be like you. Your mind may be racing as I am speaking trying to decide what in the world is God saying to me?

There may be a disconnect, we sometimes have difficulty discovering who we are. Some have the toxic idea that as a people, African, Euro, Latin, indigenous, Asian, or Oriental, Christian people in particular, that we are not as beautiful, lovable, capable, and worthy of this call and this thinking continues to undermine our sense of self-worth, the well-being of our families, and our children's sense of positive possibilities. It contributes to the Global education and achievement gap, the epidemic of violence among our youth, the mass incarceration of men, women, and children, and many of the other challenges facing people today. Toxic ideas that exist about inferiority based upon skin color will not disappear on their own.

As a people, we have to be intentional about working to overcome these ideas and other negative emotional legacies of self captivity, enslavement, sin and racism. We are bound by our own ideas of being prisoners in a camp made for sinners. We have a Babylonian complex mixed in with the hermeneutics or the biblical interpretation of just what Isaiah and Jesus are saying to us. Somewhere between hearing the word, and living in our own realities we lose the power of light. We sit and promise ourselves and God that we will answer the call to be light. However it only takes a word, a wind, an election, a movement, a motion from the world and it separates us from the love and the power of God.

The enemy knows that imprisonment weakens the resolve; it separates us from love and family. Captivity is there to destroy the will, isolate you from the systems of love and support. When one is in captivity they have been gone so long that they forget what freedom looks and feels like. We forget the songs of Zion, we forget the power of the Good News and we most certainly hang on to the shame and disgrace that comes with being a prisoner and the power of sin.

Here is the good news; you are to walk in the Light. You are to become the Light of the world. A city built on a hill which cannot be hid. You can't put a lamp under the bushel basket, but you my beloved are on the lamp stand, and it gives light to all in your presence. Isaiah says it best in the midst of despair...For out of Zion shall go forth instruction, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations, and shall arbitrate for many peoples; they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the Lord!

The transformative statement is you are the light of the world. This is a big world, and full of trouble. Doubt that originates in the bowels causes you to believe that you are not light. Light is designed to bring growth and development, light causes you to reflect, and confess, "Yes I am light in darkness."

Isaiah speaks these words because now is the day and time when they would stand in the storms of life, not anchoring themselves on the doubt, fear and trepidation, they would not take the them and make idols of them, they would not take them and make anchors let down in the middle of their sea. No, based upon the words of the prophet Isaiah, no weapon formed against me shall prosper, Paul says the weapons of our warfare are no longer carnal...but mighty through God. Those same weapons would now become the pruning hooks and ploughshares, helping you to walk in the light Lord. Walking you now find there is now a highway through, a way up and a way out,

The goal of the enemy is to shake you. Shake the very foundation of your belief. The foundation of what you know is right concerning your walk with Christ. As Moulmann says move into the fight against evil, like Cone redefine your reality, and like Isaiah says walk in The Light of the Lord. Jesus said, become light in darkness. As children of God, our mere presence dispels the modalities of darkness, we erase its impact and see no shadows. For the people of a dark land now see a great light.

In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven. Jesus said, "You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.

You know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; the night is far gone, the day is near. Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; let us live honorably as in the day,

O house of Grace, yes the worse may have come but come, let us walk in the light of the Lord!