

PRAISE INTERNATIONAL

A SIGN

ISAIAH 7:10-16

Good Morning

Prayer Needs – Ronald and Nuri Hernandez, Preston, Ann, Luis Hughes

Isaiah 7:10-16 - read text

It was likely not one of my most sensitive moments. In October of 1996 I had the privilege of traveling to Holland with my Father and 3 brothers. We had an amazing time of walking through the village my Father and Mother grew up in and making some amazing memories together. I remember the first night that we spent in a small BNB near the home of my Uncle and Aunt near Dedemsvaart, Drenthe in north central area of the Netherlands. My brother Paul and I took a walk in this village that seemed like it had let time pass it by - cobblestone streets and tree line roads in and out - I turned to my brother and said if only these trees and streets could talk oh the stories they could tell.

It was the only time that all of us as brothers were able to be with our Dad in hopes of putting a 'place' to the 'stories' we had grown up hearing. So many of those stories were around the depression and the German Nazi occupation that had driven my Father to often hide overnight in a neighbors barn so as not to be rounded up and sent to a German work camp at the age of 16. Being able to see the store front in my parents home town of Beilen that my mother lived above and the Church were they were married. But it was on this trip that my older brother convinced my father to make a stop just 8 kilometers to the west of their home town at the former Nazi internment camp in Westerbork. The sobering reality of that day was knowing that 13 years earlier I walked the grounds of this place that at time was preserved simply as a park and did not have exhibits yet. When we began to walk the grounds my father was not able to talk and finally told my older brother he needed to leave - you see he had spent 11 days here following a time when he had helped the underground. Miraculously released from the place of the over 100,000 who went through this camp - less than 5000 survived. My dad was one of them. I remember the sobering reality of recognizing that I had been at this place before but my Uncle who spoke very little English did not share its history with me 13 years earlier. My dad had spoken more than once of how difficult it had been to forgive the German people.

So yes it was a bit insensitive to say the least when our little van load of men decided we needed to get one item off our bucket list - cross the border to Germany and drive the autobahn! As we approached the border I thought it would be funny (this was well before 9-11) as I sat in the back to see if I could get a reaction out of my father - so I took my passport and held it up to the window and *shouted I am an American Citizen and I am being held against my will!* Now for clarity we were several cars back from the check point and we had no cars next to us and I was sure no one could actually hear me.....but man did my Dad get fired up....*Vat are you doing! Shut your mouth!* After a laugh I passed my Passport to my older brother who was driving and smiled. Of course my other brothers were laughing their head off as their younger almost always compliant brother had just seemingly committed an act of treason!

I later apologized to my Dad and said I would never do something that stupid - but it was not my most sensitive moment. **What I had not factored was though it had been many years just the idea of crossing the border touched somethings very deeply in my Father - as he was nearly in tears.**

- I was by now embarrassed at my choice of humor - but then something incredible happened.

And the secret is simply this Christ in you!
Yes, Christ in you bringing with Him the hope of all the glorious things to come.
Col 1:27b JB Phillips

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To my left as we drove a short distance into Germany one of the most beautiful rainbows I have ever seen came into view, and as we looked we saw it was a perfect double rainbow. Now my Dad was crying - we stopped the van piled out to take a picture and my Dad rehearsed that it was the rainbow that had spoken to him so vividly on repeated occasions of his life. Beginning in Holland as young man his Father told him this is a sign of God's covenant of love with us, of course one of those moments was when Dad left my mom at Ellis Fischel Hospital in Columbia Missouri having heard the news of the return of Cancer he was devastated knowing somehow he would have to return 6 hours to tell his children. After spending the night in a hotel he opened the door to see a Rainbow and wept to be reminded of the kind mercy, grace and love of God on display in front of him - that carry him through those next difficult months. **And now here in Germany with his boys...we stood quietly staring deeply aware that none of us would even be there apart from the tangible mercy of God - it was a Sign I will never forget – I believe in Signs.**

...the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold a virgin will be with child and bear a Son, and she will call His name Immanuel...God with us!

A Sign - into a the valley of mans violence, destruction, angst, failure, brokenness and suffering God has placed a Sign of His Goodness in His Son Jesus Christ. God with us - higher than the highest obstacles lower than our greatest failure and brokenness to reveal light life and beauty and that beloved is Good News.

Our text today is one that is often quoted in this season **yet we often miss its context.**

- King Ahaz who is King of Judah with all of his Kingdom is facing the worst news they could imagine. The King of the North had made an alliance with the King of Syria and they were preparing to make war against Jerusalem. Such an overwhelming force struck fear in the heart of everyone in Jerusalem including King Ahaz.
- The Lord invites Isaiah to go and talk to the King and say **'Take care and be calm have no fear and do not be fainthearted...'**
- The invitation is to a place of faith to surrender to the possibility that something could be greater than the obvious strength of the Kings that were threatening them. This is really important to notice the call was not to better strategy but to surrender to a simple idea - **that God and His Goodness could be greater than the fierce threat of the Kings of the north.**

The invitation was simply ask for a Sign ...make it as deep as Sheol or high as the Heavens...

- And Ahaz does not ask for sign - we will look a bit more at that later but it was not in piety it was the result of what heart was actually fascinated by the power, glory and might of man.
- You see King Ahaz knows some history - he knows that this intersection between the North and the South was a hotly contested route that secured wealth and power - **the King who controlled this passage held a grip on the region**

Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a Sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son and she will call His name Immanuel - God with us.

- God's sign is not **seated in Reason** – but mystery – its about Faith...
 - Something greater than mans rationale – not a bigger army...a mystery.

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- **The Sign is a paradox** - a virgin pregnant - can't fully explain that one.
- Yet isn't that the reality of God with us - God who is 3 yet 1, Jesus who is fully God and fully man - the **Sign is about the Rationale of God not the reasoning of man.**
- **Beloved reason is not the explanation of Love - period!**
- The Sign is about the mystery of God's love - His abundant goodness, mercy and grace.

The Sign is the power of God coming in self giving self emptying love and forgiveness.

- This word Sign - first is recorded in Genesis 1:14 - it roughly translates into our alphabet as oth but it gets really interesting when we begin to take a closer look at the word and its origin.
- **Sign in the Hebrew is 3 letters**
 - aleph א = the ox head, thus strength, power, leader - The first letter of the Hebrew alphabet.
 - vav ו = the tent peg, thus add, secure, hook.
 - tav ט = crossed sticks, thus mark, sign, signal, monument - the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

ו - VAV: Bind/Connect (Nail/Hook) ו	ו	Nail
א - ALEPH: Strength/God (Ox Head) א	א	God
ט - TAV: Covenant/Mark (Cross) ט	ט	Covenant

Wait a minute now this is getting interesting - *I am the beginning and the end....*

- Beloved **the Sign is Jesus - the face of Divine Mercy.**
- Jesus the perfect representation of the Father who came and bound Himself in covenant to a Cross to reveal the fierce relentless Mercy of the Father to restore and make whole.



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I was praying early one morning this past week reading Isaiah 9 and I saw something plain as day that I had not put together before.

- Isaiah 9 vs 1-2 - remember that area that had grabbed King Ahaz's attention?
- This region between the North and the South is divided by a valley called the Valley of Jezreel - it has a historic city called Megiddo - Megiddo is a place that some historians say has been destroyed more than any other city - **26 times it has been completely destroyed.**
- In 600 BC the King of Egypt - Pharaoh Thutmose III said *to conquer Megiddo was to conquer a 1000 cities!*
- This city in the valley of Jezreel had known unspeakable violence, destruction and suffering - with each destruction the city it got taller - it is a hill now in the valley commonly known as the hill of Megiddo – sound familiar? Har Megiddo - later known as Armageddon (Rev. 16:16).

Isaiah proclaims: **to the that valley a light will come** - *a child will be born and the government will be on His shoulders, And His name will be called wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government there will be no end. Is 9*

Matthew carefully records this of Jesus in Matthew 4:12-17...*He came and settled in Capernaum, which is by the sea, the region of Zebulun and Naphtali...This was to fulfill what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet...*

- From that time Jesus began to preach and say *'Repent for the the Kingdom of heaven is at hand'*.

Wait did you catch that? Where did Jesus ministry begin?

- In the valley of Jezreel....at Armageddon...
- All my life I have heard a message of a coming Armageddon...something fearful when the Kings of the earth all wage war against Jesus...

But wait - Jesus already came to that valley according to Matthew...

- A Sign of the Goodness, Mercy, Grace and Mercy of the Father who overcame sin, hell, death and the grace by the Cross!
- He swallowed death and turned it into a banqueting table and He will wipe every tear from their eyes...Isaiah 25:6-9 and Rev. 21:1-4
- **Selah!** The earliest known Church building in Israel was discovered in 2005 near Tel Megiddo - a Church built at Armageddon in AD 230 - it was discovered with the help prisoners as it was found under a maximum security prison. The church is older than the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

Beloved I want to live captured by the truth of the Rationale of Heaven that came into mans worst to reveal Heaven's best by way of the Cross.

- **Jesus you have already invaded Armageddon!**
- Your message - Repent - change the way you think - about Me about your world.

What does all this mean to me?

- What Sign will I be captured by? The Cross of Christ that came into Armageddon?
- **Maybe there remains something greater that can change your world - the love of God revealed in human lives.**

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Ahaz - greatest failure was not his false piety when he refused to ask for a sign **but that he had not imagination that God and His goodness could be greater than his challenges.**

- Later in 2 Kings 16 we see this with clarity after the 2 Kings of the north are proved to be 'nothing' he still goes to the King of Assyria with the gold and silver from the temple and says to the King of Assyria - ***I am your servant.***
- There you have it - his god was revealed. He is not looking to Jehovah for aid but to the gods of power, wealth and title...
- **His greatest need was to change the way he actually thought about God.**

So let me say this clearly I believe Signs are real but they're not always explainable to a rationale - this is a paradox - but it is faith. **Not everything in your life can be explained by science.** Science can't explain shame guilt despair under a microscope, but we sure know when the weight of shame and guilty is taken away and removed.

- However, science can prove that our biology and our make up actual - response to freedom, forgiveness, peace, and joy.
- I do believe we encounter personal and corporate signs - we don't have time to go into all of it- the most important is to respond in gratitude when we encounter them.

The question of the morning is this - **what Sign will we be captured by this season?**

- The uncertain winds of the culture - politically - economically socially...
- Emmanuel - God has come - He is God with us.
- Higher than the highest obstacles - lower than our greatest individual or corporate failure and brokenness...

Here is our Sign - He is God with us...so be calm - the goodness of God revealed in Christ in enough...its enough for the valley we face.

- Light in the darkness - His name is Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace - of the increase of His government there will be no end!

A Sign - into a the valley of mans violence, destruction, angst, failure, brokenness and suffering God has placed a Sign of His Goodness in His Son Jesus Christ. God with us - higher than the highest obstacles lower than our greatest failure and brokenness to reveal light life and beauty and that beloved is Good News.

Closing Prayer and Communion

God of hope,
you call us from the exile of our sin
with the good news of restoration;
you build a highway through the wilderness;
you come to us and bring us home.
Comfort us with the expectation of your saving power,
made known to us in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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