

Tear Open Heaven
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Preaching Text: Isaiah 64:1-9 NRSV

1 O that you would tear open the heavens and come down,
so that the mountains would quake at your presence—

2 as when fire kindles brushwood
and the fire causes water to boil—

to make your name known to your adversaries,
so that the nations might tremble at your presence!

3 When you did awesome deeds that we did not expect,
you came down, the mountains quaked at your presence.

4 From ages past no one has heard,
no ear has perceived,
no eye has seen any God besides you,
who works for those who wait for him.

5 You meet those who gladly do right,
those who remember you in your ways.
But you were angry, and we sinned;
because you hid yourself we transgressed.

6 We have all become like one who is unclean,
and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy cloth.
We all fade like a leaf,
and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.

7 There is no one who calls on your name,
or attempts to take hold of you;
for you have hidden your face from us,
and have delivered us into the hand of our iniquity.

8 Yet, O LORD, you are our Father;
we are the clay, and you are our potter;
we are all the work of your hand.

9 Do not be exceedingly angry, O LORD,

and do not remember iniquity forever.

Now consider, we are all your people.

Background

10 Your holy cities have become a wilderness,
Zion has become a wilderness,
Jerusalem a desolation.

11 Our holy and beautiful house,
where our ancestors praised you,
has been burned by fire,
and all our pleasant places have become ruins.

12 After all this, will you restrain yourself, O LORD?
Will you keep silent, and punish us so severely?

Introduction

We are like the student who travelled an enormous distance to learn from a great teacher. The teacher invites her in, and begins to pour tea. Meanwhile the student begins to recite all her accomplishments, her achievements, her successes. As this goes on and on, the teacher continues to pour, and the tea overflows the cup. Finally the student notices and asks, “Why do keep pouring? Don’t you see that the cup is full?”

“So it is with you,” the teacher said. “Until you can be empty again, there is nothing I can teach you.”

The unprecedented events of Isaiah’s day, and ours, reveal the emptiness.

Advent is about becoming empty again.

The three cries of hearts of holy emptiness:

- Come down to us!
- Look at us!
- Remake us!

Come down to us!

Verse 1: “O that you would tear open the heavens and come down...”!

Come down and set things right.

I was in a prayer meeting recently and someone prayed, “This would be a good time for you to come back!” We tend to think Advent is about celebrating that Jesus came. But it is really celebrating that he will come again!

Because we can’t come up to you. LONGING for a world made right.

Instead of allowing this holy emptiness to do its good work in us, we see a culture that fills itself up with stuff, experiences, distractions.

God’s people are the ones who should keep asking: How’s this working for us?

Come down us, because we can’t come up to you! We cry Come Down and God- in love – does!

Look at us!

Verse 5: “You meet those who gladly do right, those who remember you in your ways.”

Verse 7 describes the natural consequence: When we hold onto something other than God, God “delivered us into the hand of our own iniquity.” In other words, we are allowed to experience the consequences of our choices. For God’s people, a close encounter with a holy, justice-loving God always makes us aware of our sin.

What of the wonderful things about the Old Testament is how it preserves and even celebrates the voice of the prophets, who called God’s people on the carpet. Until we see that the prophets were confronting the exact same behavior we see in our newsfeeds every day, they can’t teach us anything. Until our gaze goes from the headline, to the scripture, to the mirror, we will continue to miss the point.

Look at us, so we can truly see ourselves!

Remake us!

Verse 8: “Yet, Lord, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand.”

Longing to become who God always intended for us to be.

Without confession, we never get to conversion.

Reshape us, because if you don't then the world will.

CONCLUSION

Come to Jesus with an empty cup, a beginner's mind, and a constant prayer: O that you would tear open heaven and come down! Come, Lord Jesus!

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