

Listening for the Promise

WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL

Second Sunday after the Epiphany – January 19, 2025

*“You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the Lord,
and a royal diadem in the hand of your God.”*

- Isaiah 62:1-5 -

The prophet Isaiah had quite a lot to say to the people of Judah. In fact, it took him 66 chapters and many years to say it all. Isaiah’s book contains some of the most beautiful and stirring words of the Bible. What he had to say was both good news and bad news. Our reading today gives us glimpse of the good news. Israel was going to be restored. God’s people were, once again, going to be a light to the nations. They were going to be redeemed. They were going to be a royal diadem in God’s hand.

But Isaiah also brought quite a bit of bad news. Restoration was being promised to Israel because destruction was coming first. The faithlessness and idolatry of God’s people was catching up with them. They were going to experience the consequence of their sin and it was not going to be pleasant. They were going to be defeated by their enemies and taken into exile. They were going to taste God’s wrath. Becoming a royal diadem in God’s hands was going to be a radical change, because, at the moment, they thought God had abandoned them.

Most of us would certainly like to get the Good News without the bad news. We’d like it if the Gospel could be summarized as “everything is going to be just fine. Because of Jesus you aren’t going to have any problems ever again.” But that isn’t how it works. The Good News is not that your sin has no consequences. The Good News is not that your sin is no big deal and you don’t need to worry about. Rather, the good news is that God is bringing life out of death, your life out of your death.

As disciples of Christ we do not avoid the darkness in this world. We do not avoid suffering. We do not avoid death. We do not avoid the cross. But the promise we cling to is that God will prevail, God has prevailed, over the darkness, over sin and death. You will be restored. God’s wrath will not burn against you forever because of your sin and faithlessness. God’s final word to you is the word of forgiveness, the word of restoration. The Good News gets the final word, and that Good News is your salvation.