

“Ecce, Deus: Surely, it is God who saves me” | Isaiah 12:1-6 (Scripture Set to Worship)

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Good Morning,

My name is Marty O’Rourke and I am the youth pastor here at The Falls Church Anglican. What an honor and privilege it is to be here to share a message with you this morning. Please turn with me to Isaiah 12, which is on page _____ of your pew Bible.

Before we jump into the message, I wonder if as I open in prayer, would you pray for me that the Lord would speak through me to you.

--Prayer--

- I took a group of students to Uganda to install solar panels for an orphanage. I was talking to the director and asked how most of the orphans got here. The stories were hard to hear. Some the result of violence, others drugs, and others accidents. The standard of poverty to be accepted into the orphanage was that if someone didn’t have parents but had an uncle or aunt who owned more than 3 goats, you would not be accepted. They were the sweetest and kindest people. The students I brought were left in tears, but not for the reason you think.

Where is the hope of these orphans? I believe that question is answered in our text today.

CONTEXT:

- Today, we are continuing our sermon series on the Scripture set to Worship as we talk about the great song of hope we find in Isaiah 12.
- I understand that the song ‘Surely it is God who saves me’ from Isaiah 12 has deep meaning to this congregation as this was an anthem through the years of leaving the Historic building and moving into a period of tabernacle. What a fitting song during that time. We will join together in singing this later.

I want to give some background so we can fully understand this song.

- Isaiah was a prophet in a very difficult time in the history of Israel.-There was not a lot of hope.
 - They had been living in a state of disobedience for quite a while and they were beginning to reap what they had sowed.
 - The tribes of Israel were splintered into different countries.

- The leaders of the remaining faithful nation had turned their hope from God to forming an alliance with a previous enemy.
- Only a move a desperate person would make. The king had lost faith. The people had lost faith. The country of Israel would soon be no more.
- We find Isaiah 12 at the end of a section beginning in from Isaiah 6 that is foretelling what will happen to Israel. That is important to remember.
- Chapter 6 depicts the call of Isaiah. It is a famous passage as Isaiah has a vision of the throne room of God. He falls before the Lord and says he is unclean. The lord cleanses him with a coal, than asks who will I send to this sinful generation. Isaiah says, here I am send me.
- In Chapters 7-11 is full of grim warnings of God's judgment coming for Israel's wickedness and the forthcoming destruction. Yet sprinkled through this section is the hope of Immanuel, the coming savior who would make all things right. It is like a dark stormy night for the ship of Israel. The storm is raging, and they can see crushing waves coming their way. The message of Immanuel is like light houses scattered down the coast with their lights piercing through the darkness and storm pointing towards hope.
- In chapter 12 the tone completely shifts, and it is written from viewpoint of Israel finally arriving in safe harbor and everyone joins in singing this song of hope. The dark and stormy night is over and into the safety of the harbor where God had made things right. It is a beacon of light for the people in that age and it should be a beacon of hope for us as well. It is saying, yes even though it may be dark and stormy now, the coming Immanuel will bring a harbor of safety and in that you will rejoice.
- As I meditated on the Scripture 3 themes of the song struck me. Since this sermon series is on song, (all of these of these I thought it fitting to see these themes as notes. When these notes are played together, they form a beautiful song. I will call it the song of hope!
 - If you are taking notes, write these 3 Themes/Notes down:
 - **The Lord is my Salvation He is our STRENGTH and SONG**
 - **Rejoice in the Lord**
 - **Tell others about the HOPE**

Transition: ***The first note is that the LORD IS OUR SALVATION. We were lost, yet he found us. We have drawn upon the wells of salvation and found comfort in the love and acceptance of Jesus. We have found safe harbor in the shelter of his mercy.***

Look at verse 1-3 with me.

You^[a] will say in that day:

"I will give thanks to you, O LORD,

for though you were angry with me,
your anger turned away,
that you might comfort me.

² “Behold, God is my salvation;
I will trust, and will not be afraid;
for the LORD GOD^[b] is my strength and my song,
and he has become my salvation.”

³ With joy you^[c] will draw water from the wells of salvation.

- We see that in that day, meaning the day that everything we hoped for has come true. The day our salvation has been realized. We give thanks to God because we have drawn from the wells of his salvation. It is hard to relate to the analogy here in America. It is more than us just going to the faucet to get a drink.
- Years ago, my friend and I hired a guide and 3 camels to take us on a 7-day trek through part of the Sahara Desert. I was a little worried when we arrived and our guide did not have a map, GPS or even a compass, but only brought 6 cartons of cigarettes for the trek. We rode on camels/walked through the desert with only half of the water needed for the trip because we were going to a well to refill about halfway. This was not bougee camping where in the middle of the desert there is a tent setup for you and somehow a shower. I had a sleeping bag and pillow I would just put in the sand somewhere far enough from the camels, so they didn't bite me in the middle of the night, but close enough so I didn't get lost. Oh, but the stars were worth sleeping outside. Sand was everywhere and caked to my body. I am pretty sure I made a swishing sound every time I took a step. After 3 days of travel our guide safely guided us to the well.
- I will never forget the refreshment that came from that well. Thankful our guide got us there with no compass. Thankful we would have enough water to make it home. Thankful I could un-cake some sand from my body and not swish for a little while.
- Is this not a great analogy for life. Life is dry and sandy and sometimes scary. Sometimes we don't know if we are going the right direction. We are tired and hot. We collect the sand of stress, worry, pain, and sorrows that chaff us. Yet, when we find the well of salvation, we realize there is true hope! Our salvation is an infinitely deep well that continues to wash the sand off us.

Transition: We draw from this well by making the Lord our Strength and Song.

How do we draw upon the Lord by making him our strength?

- The Lord being our strength sometimes feels like an empty platitude we throw out when we don't have the words to comfort someone. But how do we really draw upon this strength.
 - We must put aside our strength, ask God for his, and then we trust his will, will be done. (x2)
- Many times, the way to find out what it means for the Lord to be our strength is to be driven to our knees by circumstances. There in brokenness, helpless on your own, you cry out to God for his strength. When the Lord picks you up amidst the brokenness and chaos and gives hope and peace, then you will realize the Lord IS MY ONLY STRENGTH
- I think of the story of Horatio Spafford on writing the words to the famous hymn, "It is well with my soul." Adding to early tragedy, he lost 4 daughters in a shipwreck and as he passed the place where the wreck happened the words came to him.

*"When peace like a river, attendeth my way,
When sorrows like sea billows roll—
Whatever my lot, thou hast taught me to know
It is well, it is well with my soul."*

- This is what it means for the Lord to be your strength. Even in the midst of great suffering and sorrow, trusting that God will walk with you through.
- It is not by our work ethic, education, finances, power, or looks that will save us. We fool ourselves when we do lean on those things. They may hold for a while, but we always must make sure we are building them up.
 - It is like building a sandcastle that continues to fall and would not hold up to what Horatio experienced.
 - When we realize God is our strength it frees us from the striving. When we rely on God's strength, we trust in a firm foundation that cannot be moved and great stories are made.

What is your strength?

Transition: Remember that we draw upon the well by making God our strength, but we also draw upon the well of salvation by making God our Song.

--My Song--

- Song is a powerful tool that is somehow hardwired into our DNA. Song has a way of breaking through to our hearts when nothing else will.
- **But, what does it mean that the Lord is our song?**
 - I was talking to a friend of mine when this car drove by with the bass shaking you and rattling every bolt loose in my car. I said some grumpy comment to the tune of why anyone would blast it that loud. My friend insightfully explained why he did just that same thing. He was going through a hard time in his life where he was having unhealthy thoughts and without much hope. He said he used to go into his car and blast the music as loud as he possibly could so that he couldn't hear his thoughts as he was caught up into the song he was blasting. This gave him reprieve from those thoughts for just a moment. It allowed his hope to be tethered to someone else's through song. Just for a minute.
- This was a light bulb moment for me. **Songs have a way of centering our thoughts on something else besides ourselves.** They give us reprieve from despair as we join in singing about the hope in the song. See the great thing about our song this morning is our song offers real hope that is lasting compared to the song blasting in cars that only offers temporary and fleeting hope.
 - **You may think that is silly to blast music, but don't we all do it in some way to drown out whatever else is going on with work, family, media, or substance.**
- When we say the Lord is our song, it means that he is the constant focal point of our thoughts, praise, and petition. We allow the praise of the Lord to drown out our worries and anxieties.
 - We remind ourselves through song that God is Good, He is in Control, and that he wins. We tether ourselves to the hope of Christ. Isaiah 12 was created to do just that. To be sung together to remind us that there is HOPE.

Transition: **So we have drawn upon the well by making God our strength and our song. How could we not rejoice and give thanksgiving to God for our deliverance.** This is our second note in our song of hope to rejoice.

- **When we rejoice in the Lord, it allows us to relive what God has done for us stirring up those feelings and emotions and keeping it at the forefront of our mind.** Think about that favorite story you like to tell. When you tell it allows you to relive that moment again as if you were there again. If we are being honest, we like to tell stories that make us look good because it feels good to remember we are funny or brave etc. When we rejoice in the Lord it shows God's greatness. It reminds us of God's Goodness, his strength, his mercy. It reminds us that there is always HOPE in him.
 - [Trying to be a little humorous] Some people like to relive stories so often that we could tell the story for them as soon as they say, "when I was growing up."

Everyone is thinking of someone right now. That is how we should be with what God has done for us. However, When God is our strength and song there will be no lack of new stories.

- When we are rejoicing in the Lord, it allows others to participate with us in that sacred moment. Testimonies are powerful tools. When people share what God has done in their life it reminds the audience of how powerful God is and reminds them of what God has done in their lives as well.
- So, think about when we are rejoicing in the Lord, we are reminding ourselves of what God has done and who he is, which gives us confidence to push through stormy seas.
- One of the greatest works of the evil one is to steal our memory of what God has done for us. We forget that we were dry and crusty, swishing when we walked, and he cleaned us.
 - **When we forget what God has done, we turn our focus from the source of life to ourselves.** This sets us up for Spiritual doubt, disappointment, and failure. The narrative of Israel through the Old Testament exemplifies this all too well.

What are you rejoicing in today? What testimony can you share about God's faithfulness or hope he has given you?

Transition: Why would you find a well that wells up to eternal life, but not tell other people about this well. How could you not tell people about the well. This is the final note in our song of hope.

- We see this theme as a part of the song of hope as it repeats it in verses 4 and 5. MAKE KNOWN HIS DEEDS AMONG THE PEOPLE/ LET THIS BE MADE KNOWN IN ALL THE EARTH.
 - Somehow telling others is part of our hope and spurs on the hope that we have and encourages others in theirs. Someone who is bubbling over with joy and thanks and cannot help but share. I think of a child who just got an awesome toy, or a massive swift fan meeting Taylor swift. Everyone they know will hear about it.
 - We need to be intentional about sharing what God has done especially to those who do not have hope.
- Many times, the most zealous evangelist are those who have most recently come to faith because a person who has recently been lost at sea, but found, is going to be someone who joins the crews of those going out to look for others who are lost. They remember vividly the feeling of dread. The loss of hope. The uncertainty and want to save people from that.

- This is evangelism. When we go back out into the storm on a rescue mission to seek and save the lost. This takes us walking back into uncertainty as we walk back into the storm of people's lives. It is not a clean exercise but is this what Jesus did with his disciples and his ministry.
- This is what Jesus has done for us! He entered into the mess and sin of this world. Now we too must go and do likewise.
- You may say, I am not equipped. I don't have a seminary degree..
 - We each are equipped with the testimony of what God has done for us remembering that despite appearances, there are storms raging in people's lives.

My challenge for you this week is to spend some time in prayer writing out your testimony. The story of God intervening in your life. Update it with what he has done recently. What struggle has he walked you through, what blessing has he bestowed upon you, and what prayers has he answered. Then, be intentional about sharing these things with others.

Conclusion

- I hope you can see how these notes come together to play a great Song of hope as the notes overlap. We draw upon the well of salvation by making God our strength and song. We rejoice in God that he has delivered us and remember his great deeds, and we cannot help but to share about this well that has brought us life to others **becoming lighthouses to a dark and stormy world. It forms a beautiful Song of hope.**
- When we are singing this song of hope in the Lord are singing the song we created to sing. It is a powerful experience to sing the national anthem at a ball game with 60,000 other people and it moves some to tears. When we join in singing this song of Hope, we join the chorus of millions of believers, hosts of angels, and all of creation. This song reverberates into our very soul shaking doubt and disappointment off.
- The question I asked at the beginning of the sermon was how can my friends at the orphanage have hope? I found the answer out that week in Uganda. These orphans would have worship times, not led by teachers, or forced, but pure worship that was overflowing from the hope that had in Christ that someday everything would be made right. Someday they would be with their true father in heaven and everything they "missed out on" would be fully experienced.
- **Their hope was not based on anything they could do, but purely upon what God will do.** This hope sent my students who had every earthly hope to tears, because they realized their hope was feeble compared to the hope of these orphans. **This hope must be shared.**

As we left the orphanage, they sang their song, which I will read as a fitting way to end the sermon.

I am a special child of God chosen and separate. My life has been difficult. It is not my fault my parents are dead. I will miss them until the day that I die. I choose to forgive the people and circumstances surrounding their death. My own healing and well-being begins in forgiveness. Whenever I feel sad or angry, I will find someone who loves me and tell them how I feel. I know I can always go to God in my heart, and I know no one can take that away. I am going to be grateful in my life so that God can use me to help others who also have a difficult life. Life is hard, but God is good. –CLOSE IN PRAYER--

Discussion Questions:

1. Marty noted three themes here. However, there are likely more. How is the anger of God a fitting backdrop to Isaiah 12? What other themes stick out to you?
2. How does Isaiah 12 parallel Isaiah 6?
3. How has the Lord been your Strength and Song? What things do you lean on or distract yourself with when you are not allowing the Lord to be your strength and song?
4. What is something you can rejoice in that God has done for you recently?
5. How can we stir up the zeal of someone who has just come to faith, so we can share with urgency?