

Third Sunday of Advent
Narrative Lectionary Year 1
December 14, 2014
Readings: Matthew 12: 15-21; Isaiah 42: 1-9
Haven Lutheran Church Hagerstown MD

Grace and peace to you from God - Father, Son, Holy Spirit –Amen

(Play first part of song: “Such a Time As This”

Now all I have is now
To be faithful to be holy
And to shine
Lighting up the darkness
Right now
I really have no choice
But to voice the truth
To the nations
A generation looking for God

“For such a time as this I was placed upon the earth
To hear the voice of God and do His will, whatever it is.
For such a time as this
For now and all the days he gives
I am here, I am here and I am His
For such a time as this.”¹

People in the right places at the right time. We’ve all heard stories. Maybe you have one of your own. Those times when the situation seems dark, circumstances tangled and irreversible. Suddenly a person enters the room, comes to your door who has just what is needed — information, special skills, an insight, a dinner. And you know you’ve just been graced with a breath of God’s kingdom, a breath of the way God wants the world to work. And how we wish we could experience it all the time.

As amazing as it is to experience such a time as this, it can be just as astonishing to **be** that person who shows up at the right time with what was needed. You thought, “It’s only a casserole.” Or you don’t know why exactly you began to talk to that person next to you. You couldn’t say why you picked up the phone and called at that moment. But there you are – for such a time as this — you are the fresh air that brings new light, a glimmer of hope.

Last week we heard Esther was queen at such a time when the Hebrew people were about to be destroyed and she was able to use her influence with the king to save them. This week we hear a prophet called to speak when the people of Israel are defeated and traumatized — different circumstances than the original Isaiah knew. The prophet speaking in the first 39 chapters of Isaiah was addressing a people surrounded by danger, turned away from faithfully following the Lord and under the misconceived notion that surely Jerusalem or the Temple could never be destroyed. Isaiah warned them. He told them that even when it doesn't seem so, God is present and faithful.

The prophet we encounter in chapters 40-55 of Isaiah is addressing a different time. The unthinkable *did* happen. The Babylonians defeated Judah. The Hebrew people saw their city destroyed, the Temple ruined, treasures plundered, family and friends killed or taken away to exile in Babylonia. Had God abandoned them? Were they still God's people? Was God still God? For such a time as this, Deutero-Isaiah was sent to speak God's words of hope and assurance... "to help people think anew about how to live amidst the terrible chaos that had broken into their lives."² This time the prophetic task was to help those sitting in exile to find meaning and see a future when it seemed there was neither. Perhaps you know how that feels to be unable to sense any purpose or see any future? Perhaps, we, at Haven, feel this. Perhaps, we, the church, are here for such a time as this.

The Lord does not send the typical "pep talk" to a defeated people living in a strange land. There's no talk of circling the wagons and keeping isolated. There's no talk of revenge or becoming the next brutal empire. Instead God tells them they still have a mission even in exile — to be a servant "whom I uphold, my chosen," in whom God delights; upon whom God has put God's spirit to "bring forth justice to the nations." We hear this and think "Jesus" but to those first listeners, the servant was the people of Israel. Here they were dislocated and feeling powerless under Babylon's rule, still God called them "chosen" and empowers them for mission. Listen to this prophet speaking to you the

next time you are feeling too old, too achy, too young, too dispirited, done, finished — hear these words of God addressed to you even now ---- “Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights.” There’s no retirement form being God’s son or daughter or a disciple of Jesus. There’s no one who has nothing to contribute. Whether you are sitting here or in a nursing home, God has something for you to be and do. We are each and all here for just a time as this.

Our job as God’s servant is to bring forth God’s justice. That’s not about enacting God’s judgement — bruised reeds are not to be broken or dimly lit wicks put out. That is not the way of God’s servants. The power of God’s servant is not brutal or oppressive. Instead the power of God’s servant will be passionate compassion. God’s justice is about setting things right, making things as God meant them to be. God’s servants, alive and grateful in God’s love and grace, are born to bring light in darkness, sight to those who can’t see hope, freedom to those captive in all kinds of prisons. Isaiah was calling the people of God — like you and me — to be mirrors of God’s mercy and peace for such a time as this — in our homes, neighborhood, workplaces, schools, communities. This is our time. We are God’s servants for this time. To what is God calling Haven to do and be? To what is God calling you to do and be at such a time as this?

Verse 2. You, do you ever wonder why
Seems like the grass
Is always greener
Under ev’rybody else’s sky
But right here
Right here for this time and place
You can live a mirror of His mercy
A forgiven image of grace

Refrain:“For such a time as this I was placed upon the earth
To hear the voice of God and do His will, whatever it is.
For such a time as this
For now and all the days he gives
I am here, I am here and I am His

For such a time as this.”

(Bridge)

Can't change what's
Happened till now
But we can change what will be
By living in holiness
That the world will see Jesus

Refrain:“For such a time as this I was placed upon the earth
To hear the voice of God and do His will, whatever it is.

For such a time as this
For now and all the days he gives
I am here, I am here and I am His
For such a time as this.”³

Linda M Alessandri 12/12/14

ENDNOTES

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1. Wayne Watson, “Such a Time As This” © 1998 Material Music (Admin. by Music Services, Inc.)
 2. Juliana Classsens, “Commentary on Isaiah 42: 1-9” posted on www.workingpreacher.org
 3. Wayne Watson, “Such a Time As This” © 1998 Material Music (Admin. by Music Services, Inc.)