

Date: February 25, 2025

Texts: Isaiah 32. 1-8, 14-18 / Mark 8. 31-38

Title: "Rest in the Wilderness"

### **Intro -**

cf. - we began this "Lenten look" at the prophets' call  
for the people to prepare for God's coming  
with some tough words from Jeremiah -  
a stark warning about the need for repentance...  
for change...  
confronting us with truths we sometimes  
would rather brush aside  
we continue with a more promising vision...  
a more promising prospect...  
of what God would have us enjoy  
in a Kingdom of Righteousness  
where -  
by his spirit -  
we experience "the rest..."  
- the quietness and the confidence -  
of shalom

### **I) A King**

cf. - a vision... a prospect... a promise -  
that is dependent on a King  
(or - for those of us with no experience of a monarchy, and -  
who have little time for the British fascination with all things  
- well, most things - royal)  
this is dependent on where we place our trust for the welfare of  
our lives -

which - typically - involves some connection with ...

... the political framework... and - the actual people involved -  
in governing our lives

imagine you lived in Russia... or - China

in Venezuela... or Hungary

in North Korea... or Iran

or - in any number of other places - far too many places -  
where evil... oppressive leaders hold sway

... places where this promise... this prospect

seems like a distant, and ephemeral dream

relate - as it was for the people to whom Isaiah wrote -

the Assyrian Empire is on the rise, and -

Israel is on the decline

during this time, the nation experienced brief spells of faithfulness

and of a sense of God's active presence, but -

the ever present threat of Assyria undercut all that, and -

they gave in to their fears...

turning from the God who would bless them -

and coming up with all manner of ideas for where

they might look for and find

their security

which typically meant giving in to evil, oppressive leaders

who make promises they cannot keep, as long as

the people don't question their authority

by way of contrast -

Isaiah offers a vision of the Messianic Age -

an age ushered in as God's people have their eyes opened, and -

look away from the empty promises of the Putins,

the Orbans, and the Mullahs of this world...

and instead -

find their hope in what God offers:

a king who will reign in righteousness

relate the description that follows in the first part of this passage

serves as a kind of “plumb line” for our times

a standard against which to measure

just how well our leaders - those in whom all too many

place their trust -

how they are doing...

will - “Each one will be like a shelter from the wind

and a refuge from the storm...”?

will - “the eyes of those who see will no longer be closed,

and the ears of those who hear will listen”?

can we say that: “No longer will the fool be called noble

nor the scoundrel be highly respected...”?

cf. - I could go on, but I think we clearly have room for improvement...

we clearly have the need to “straighten up” and come closer -

much closer -

to what God intends, and - what God makes possible

and - it’s not all that hard...

not all that complicated...

relate - plumb lines are tools that have been used since antiquity...

by sighting along the string, workers can see whether the wall

is perpendicular to the ground.

If the wall’s “out of plumb” — if it’s leaning to one side,

even the slightest bit — it won’t stand for long.

in Jesus - we have a “living plumb line” against which to measure our lives

*“I am the way, the truth and the life.” I am the truth, Jesus says.*

*I am the one against which you are to measure what it means to be*

*loving and kind and just...”*

cf. - When construction workers unroll a plumb line,  
they generally don't touch the line. They don't move it or manipulate it  
in any way - they let it hang free, right next to the  
wall they're constructing.

Looking at it is all they need to do.

In the same way, we look to Jesus. He is the way —  
the road we are meant to follow.

He is the truth — the standard by which  
we are to measure our efforts to be faithful.

... he is the plumb line that can change our lives, and -  
change the world

## **II) His Reign**

... and bring this world to a place where we are blessed,  
instead of feeling burdened

cf. - the vision of vss. 14ff -

the Spirit is poured out from on high...

the desert becomes fertile...

justice can be found...

and peace marks all lives

the fruit of this righteousness

is wonderfully presented as shalom...

- an experience of "quietness and confidence forever"

(as opposed to insecurity and

grasping after straws...)

- an experience of "living in peaceful dwelling places..."

places of undisturbed rest"

(as opposed to constant worrying about what

tomorrow will bring...)

cf. - looking at what is promised here -

and consider the importance of "confidence" ...

i.e. - It's an interesting word... ("confidence")

Break it down into its component parts, and you'll see it begins with  
the Latin *con*, or "with."

Then it goes on to *fides*, which means "faith."

(think of the word "fidelity," which comes from the same root)

Confidence literally means - "with faith" or "having faith in."

do you have faith in those who would claim to rule in this world...?

or -

will you place your faith in the God who promises more...?

*and* - how do you picture / distain guise the outcome...?

relate -

An art competition awarded a prize for the best expression of peace.

One painting depicted a deer and a fawn grazing at the skirt of a

mountain meadow rimmed with pines and cedars stretching heavenward.

Another showed a cat curled up in a basket, resting with all its being,

as only cats can do.

(and there were others, executed in a similar vein...)

But the first prize went to the painting of a tumultuous waterfall.

Torrents rushed downward, crashing on the rocks below,

sending spray high above.

A tree branch extended just above the mist, with a bird's nest in a fork.

Safely within were the mother bird and two babies.

cf. - that's tranquility...

that's "quietness and confidence...

a peaceful dwelling place...

an undisturbed place of rest..."

i.e. - the ability to relax in the most rushed circumstances.

Serene surroundings don't produce peace.

The absence of animosity doesn't.

If peace depended on the setting, many could never find it... but -

Peace is being in harmony -

allowing God to fit all the pieces of our lives together.

Peace is found -

when we find ourselves... place ourselves...

in and under the reign of God -

- in the quietness... the confidence... of shalom

and - we don't have to wait for some far off

Messianic Age / promise to enjoy this...

cf. - per Henri Nouwen, in "Bread for the Journey" -

The marvelous vision of the peaceable Kingdom, in which all violence

has been overcome and all men, women, and children live in loving

unity with nature, calls for its realization in our day-to-day lives.

Instead of being an escapist dream, it challenges us to anticipate

what it promises.

Every time we forgive our neighbor, every time we make a child smile,

every time we show compassion to a suffering person,

every time we arrange a bouquet of flowers,

offer care to tame or wild animals, prevent pollution,

create beauty in our homes and gardens, and

work for peace and justice among peoples and nations

- we are making the vision come true.

... every time we do this, and do more like this...

we find ourselves...

we place ourselves...

firmly and completely

in and under the reign of God

- confident that that is where we will find peace...

(because... none other can even come close)