3-3-2019 Message – Look to God!

 I would like to begin today by sharing something about the prophets of God and the prophet Isaiah who wrote the words from God in today's message.

 The New Oxford American Dictionary defines prophet as; a person regarded as an inspired teacher or proclaimer of the will of God.

 The prophet’s role was to speak for God, confronting the people and their leaders, this confrontational stance and the continuing tendency of people to disobey God, made true prophets not very popular.

 But though their message was most often ignored, they faithfully and forcefully proclaimed God's truth.

 Over a period of several hundred years, the Hebrew people gave birth to an extraordinary number of prophets—men and women distinguished by the power and skill with which they presented the reality of God.

 They delivered God’s commands, His promises, and living presence to communities and nations who had been living in their own god-fantasies and god-lies.

 Some people do their best to keep God on the margins of their lives or, failing that, they refashion God to suit what works for them.

 Prophets insist that God is the sovereign center, not off in the wings awaiting our beck and call. Prophets insist that we deal with God as God reveals Himself, not as we imagine Him to be.

 These men and women tried to wake people up to the sovereign presence of God in their lives. They yelled, they wept, they rebuked, they soothed, they challenged, they comforted. They used words with power and imagination, some blunt, some subtle.

 The hard-rock reality is that prophets don’t fit into our way of life.

 For a people who are accustomed to “fitting God” into their lives, or, as some like to say, “making room for God,” the prophets are hard to take and easy to dismiss.

 The God of whom the prophets speak is far too **BIG** to fit into our lives. If we want anything to do with God, we have to **Fit Into Him**.

 The prophets of the Old Testament, like Paul in the New Testament agonized and wept over the people who rejected God's promises and plan, choosing the ways of the world instead.

 Isaiah is the first book of the prophets in the Bible. He is considered by many to be the greatest Old Testament prophet, quoted at least 50 times in the New Testament. He brought powerful messages of both judgment and hope, especially in the Messiah.

Our passage today is Isaiah 45: 22:

 *22 Let all the world look to me for salvation! For I am God; there is no other.*

 Right up front, from the get-go God tells us who this message is for, "Let All the World".

**1. Let All the World**

Wow! What an amazing promise from God, a promise for All the World.

 What do you see when you hear "All the World"?

 Do you see everyone else out there, all those other people?

 Some tend to forget this is personal and each individual is included in "all the world". This promise is from the heart of God and intended to bring us all into a loving, saving relationship with Him.

 Some may think only of passing the message on to all the others who need it so very much, instead of taking it in, receiving and embracing the promise, surrendering and committing to the message as if it were for you alone.

 I am not saying you don't share God's Word with everyone He puts in your path but making sure you accept and surrender to the message, live the Word and look to God, will speak louder to other people's hearts than your voice.

 Speaking through Isaiah, God is making it perfectly clear that salvation is not only for the Israelites. It is available to all people who follow Him.

 The Israelites, God's chosen people, were to be God's ambassadors, representatives, the means by which the world would come to know Him as Savior and Lord.

 When that didn't happen, Jesus, the Messiah, fulfilled Israel’s role and gave all people the opportunity to know and chose to follow God.

 As Paul writes in Romans 11: 11 *Did God’s people stumble and fall beyond recovery? Of course not! They were disobedient, so God made salvation available to the Gentiles. But He wanted His own people to become jealous and claim it for themselves.*

 And again, some Israelites rejected the long-awaited Messiah when God sent His Son to redeem and restore them all.

 In Psalm 22: 28 we read of the extent of God's rule *28 For royal power belongs to the LORD. He rules all the nations.*

**All Means All!**

 The message in Isaiah points directly to Christ Jesus and His saving power.

 Paul writes in Galatians 3: 28 *There is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male and female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus.*

 God's plan for salvation is all inclusive for those who Look to, trust in God for this promised gift of salvation.

**2. Look to God for Salvation**

 *22 Let all the world look to me for salvation!*

 The use of the words "look to" denotes respect trust in whoever or whatever you look to. There is also an expectation of response, in this case we look to God and receive the promise of salvation.

 I'm sure most of us would be willing to *do* a hundred things to earn our salvation, but God commands us to only trust in Him – to *look* to Him and be saved!

 Micah understood the promises, as written in Micah 7: 7, As for me, I look to the LORD for help. I wait confidently for God to save me, and my God will certainly hear me.

 You can have a relationship with God that will allow you to have confidence like Micah’s. It doesn’t take unusual talent, or knowledge it simply takes faith in God, knowing not thinking or wishing but KNOWING He keeps His promises and a willingness to act on your faith.

 There are many people, organizations, and businesses we look to in our everyday lives. We all look to law enforcement, firemen, emergency medical, all first responders for assistance and protection of our person and our stuff.

 Many look to the government for much the same things in addition to protection, to provide for our needs when we do not have the means or ability to care for ourselves.

 We look to utility companies for clean water on demand, consistent electrical service, safe delivery of natural or propane gas, and TV/internet service for entertainment and information.

 We even look to, trust other people we meet every day in business, on the road, medical professionals, in all areas of our life, that they are capable, and well trained to be doing what they are doing.

 We do have a choice in who or what we look to, trust for protection, provision, any kind of assistance and direction in life.

 Joshua made the choice in 24: 15 *But as for me and my family, we will serve the LORD.”*

**3. Only God**

 *22 Let all the world look to me for salvation! For I am God; there is no other.*

 Again, WOW! Only God can deliver on His amazing promises.

 In Scripture God, through His prophets, reminds His people regularly who He is, what he has done and will do for them if they will look to Him, repent, receive His promises, and follow Him.

 God spoke through Moses delivering the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20: 2 – 3 *2 “I am the LORD your God, who rescued you from the land of Egypt, the place of your slavery. 3 “You must not have any other god but me."*

 God has expectations of us just as we have expectations of Him for guidance and direction, He desires our love, honor, and praise.

 Psalm 46: 10 *“Be still and know that I am God! I will be honored by every nation. I will be honored throughout the world.”*

 God will direct you to do things for His Kingdom, some of them may not make sense, seem illogical, or be counterintuitive to cultural standards. Our thoughts are not His thoughts.

 But God, is the best and wants only the best for us as written in Leviticus 18: 5 *If you obey my decrees and my regulations, you will find life through them. I am the LORD.*

 We are so blessed to have the entire Word of God to read, study and hopefully learn from. The prophets purge our imaginations of this world’s assumptions on how life is lived and what counts in life.

 Over and over again, God's Holy Spirit uses these prophets to separate His people from the cultures in which they live, putting them back on the path of simple faith, honest obedience, and heartfelt worship in defiance of all that the world admires and rewards.

 Prophets train us in discerning the difference between the ways of the world and the ways of the gospel, keeping us aware, alert, and attentive in the Presence of God.

 We are all in this life together and we have the best news ever to boldly share with others. Look to God and be saved!

 Lord, thank you that we are a family in Christ. Help us to share His love and legacy with everyone we encounter this week. May we pour out Christ’s loving goodness upon our families, friends, and coworkers.

 Holy Spirit, come and equip us in our workplace, guide us in our school life, and inspire us in our neighborhoods.

 May we be your hands and feet to the needy, your words of love and assurance to the lost, and your arms of comfort to the lonely.
 Thank you for choosing to use us to bring your Kingdom here on earth.  Amen