

TUESDAY COMMUNION
"Good News - in life and death!"

Hymn: 72 In all my vast concerns with thee.

Reading: Isaiah 52.7-10

Prayers:

Perhaps we ought to picture a city in Europe which has been occupied by the Nazis.

Foreign troops have left but the city is totally down at heel. The damage caused to the city is everywhere to be seen. The people are weary and exhausted. Many of those who had been carried off for one reason or another are still missing.

Jerusalem was also a city which had been terribly damaged as a result of the destruction caused by the armies of Babylon. Families were still painfully aware of those who had been taken as captive slaves to Babylon over forty years earlier.

The city not been allowed to restore herself and her economic, social and spiritual life was at a very low point.

Isaiah pictures a fleet-footed messenger being sent by Jews in Babylon to Jerusalem. He can not have run those hundreds of miles but as he comes in sight of the city his energy is restored and he runs towards the city.

As he reaches the walls the watchmen hear him shout something like, "Our people in Babylon are set free. They will be coming back!"

***"How beautiful on the mountains
- are the feet of the messenger who announces peace,
- who brings good news,
Who announces salvation,
- who says to Zion, "Your God reigns."***

The swift feet of the messenger brings great joy with his message and at the heart of that joy is the heart-felt belief of those who have been battered into hopelessness that God has the final word.

In the midst of the destruction wrought by armies and the destruction of hope God remains God. He is the God who brings peace to those who suffer and saves a people who feel abandoned. Of course, in this life not everyone shares in this joy

Today, as in the time of Isaiah's there are those who die before they see peace and justice restored. There are those who are so broken by the terrible events that they have seen and the suffering they have known that they live out their lives in misery.

Jesus himself died without anything around him to bring him comfort or consolation: abandoned by his friends, reviled as a traitor, seemingly destined to join the long list of those whose lives are taken young and their memory soon forgotten.

We don't always see the transformation for which we have hoped and prayed. Sometimes all that we have worked for seems lost, our energy spent in ways that which seems to have brought no benefit to ourselves or to others.

Yet, for Christians there is a dimension beyond the years that we spend on earth.

To proclaim, "Our God reigns" is to declare that he is Lord of life and death and that God's final act of salvation lies beyond what we can now see. Whatever has been of worth in our lives, our struggles against that which is false, our hopes and prayers, the work we have done, is not lost or without worth.

God takes all this material of our existence, the web and woof of our lives and weaves it into a glorious new pattern with the lives of others. The victories of God in this world do but foreshadow his victories in the world which is still hidden from our sight.

Isaiah sees God at work in this world.

He bears witness to the power of God- to change and transform life in this world even through those who do not acknowledge him.

Part of our witness is not only to point to what God is doing in our midst here and now but to proclaim God's ultimate victory over all that destroys the life God wants for all his people.

In Jesus' name.

Amen.