The Mountain of God

Fall Quarter: The Sovereignty of God
Unit 1: The Sovereignty of God

Sunday school lesson for the week of September 11, 2016
By Rev. Denise Walton

Lesson Scripture: Isaiah 25:6-10a
Background Scripture: Isaiah 25

Greetings and blessings to you in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. The lesson this week entitled “The Mountain of God” emerges from First Isaiah (25:6-10a). I must admit, as a preacher, this is an excellent text to explore as we lift up and provide for the challenges in our lives. In other words, I want to preach right now, but instead, I sense the need to allow the text to speak. I invite the community of readers to move slowly this week and absorb the scriptures before we move to the life application of the text.

Read the scriptures aloud and slowly. I invite you to use your physical senses this week to listen slowly and carefully to the text, visualize the images described in the text, explore the texture of the images of God's mountain, and allow your senses to taste and smell the scripture.

Isaiah 25:6-10a

*On this mountain, the Lord of heavenly forces will prepare for all peoples a rich feast, a feast of choice wines, of select foods rich in favor, of choice wines well refined. He will swallow up on this mountain the veil that is veiling all peoples, the shroud enshrouding all nations. He will swallow up death forever. The Lord God will wipe tears from every face; he will remove his people's disgrace from off the whole earth, for the Lord has spoken. They will say on that day, “Look! This is our God, for whom we have waited – and he has saved us! This is the Lord, for whom we have waited; let's be glad and rejoice in his salvation!” The Lord's hand will indeed rest on this mountain.*

As you read the text, what does the scripture tell you about God’s nature? What does the Scripture reveal about God’s relationship to humanity? What does the Scripture reveal about humanity’s relationship to God?

There is a pattern emerging as we embrace the Sunday school lesson this week entitled, “The Mountain of God.” I invite you to slow down and return to the theme and purpose of last week’s lesson entitled, “The Peaceful Kingdom.” In lesson one, the central theme was God’s sovereignty. As the reader, allow the stated purpose of lesson one to inform and build upon the stated aim of this week’s lesson. The former is a message of hope for God’s sovereignty and a
peaceful kingdom on earth and the latter is a message that God is sovereign and we can trust God to intervene and end oppression.

As you recall from the introduction, the major overall theme for the fall Sunday school lessons is the divine sovereignty of God. The writer of the Adult Bible Studies describes the divine sovereignty of God as such: “To be God means that our Creator has authority over all that is…When we say God is ‘over everyone and everything,’ we are not referring to just human beings, governments, and events, but also to all categories, including right and wrong, good and bad, righteousness and sin, and so forth.” (Adult Bible Studies, pg. 5)

It is critical that we read and understand the scripture in its original context. The biblical, historical narrative presents the prophet Isaiah, commonly referred to as First Isaiah, speaking a message of hope and trust to the people of Judah who are under the constant threat of attack from Assyria, the dominant power of that time.

Death and mourning are presented as instruments of oppression. Israel and Judah had experienced this form of oppression from the invading Assyrians. Many of Isaiah’s prophecies concern the Assyrian invasion. The northern kingdom of Israel fell in 722 B.C. to an Assyrian invasion.

The southern kingdom of Judah would have also fallen had not a plague weakened the Assyrian army to the degree that it had to turn back. The Assyrians were brutal in their conquests. So those of Isaiah ben Amoz’s time would have experienced the twin oppressions of death and mourning often. (Adult Bible Studies, pg. 34)

The problems are REAL, death and mourning are a constant part of the existential realities of the people. The words of the prophet Isaiah give hope to individuals who are losing hope and trust in God. They are powerless to change the circumstances alone; the threat is ongoing, unchanged and unstoppable by human efforts. However real the problems, Isaiah uses the metaphor of the mountain to show that God’s presence is REAL, God’s power is real, and God’s deliverance is real. God can be trusted to end the oppression of God’s people.

My brothers and sisters, oppression in many forms still exist today. For many, the existential realities of poverty, abuse, war, famine, slavery, and brutality are a constant threat. Just as the people of Judah had no way to relieve the suffering or stop the attacks without God neither do we today have any help without God. Instead of fighting over who has a right to claim oppression perhaps we as Christians can simply offer to a world full of anxiety, fear, mistrust, death, and destruction a few words of hope.

God is present among, us not distant and unconcerned.

God is sovereign.

God can be trusted to end oppression.
He will swallow up death forever. The Lord God will wipe tears from every face; he will remove his people’s disgrace from off the whole earth, for the Lord has spoken. Isaiah 25:8

Perhaps our Christian role in the face of today’s realities should be agents of hope and change that this world and our problems within the current realities through God’s will be addressed. How can we join God to see the real truth and work for true peace?

Now that's something to ponder…

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