

17 April 2019
Holy Wednesday

St. Athanasius Lutheran Church
Vienna, VA

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Holy Wednesday Meditation
Text: Isaiah 62:11 - 63:7

Who is this who comes from Edom? Isaiah asks. Edom was Israel's old foe, stretching back to long before Isaiah had ever come around. Which you'll understand when I tell you that Edom is the nation that sprang from Esau, and Israel is the nation that came from Jacob. Jacob and Esau. The twin sons of Isaac and grandsons of Abraham that battled one another from their mother's womb. There had been truces along the way, but over the years and through their descendants, they made the Hatfields and the McCoys look like a minor disagreement.

So when Isaiah sees someone coming from Edom, the first instinct is caution. But something doesn't make sense. His garments are ***crimsoned*** - covered in blood. Yet they are ***splendid*** garments, not torn and tattered, and he is walking not as a wounded warrior, but ***in the greatness of his strength***. Who is this? he wonders. What does this odd picture mean?

So Isaiah asks. And he receives his answer. This mighty warrior has trodden down Israel's old foe like grapes in the winepress. And he had no army - he did it alone; there was no one to help. His garments are stained with blood for it is the blood of Israel's enemy, who had been crushed under his feet.

Isaiah is amazed at the picture, but he shouldn't have been. For hadn't God said:

*I will put enmity between you and the woman,
and between your offspring and her offspring;
he shall bruise your head,
and you shall bruise his heel (Genesis 3:15).*

And what God promises, God fulfills.

This picture, this vision, given to Isaiah, is of our conquering Saviour. It is what this Holy Week is all about. For Jesus has come not only to save us from our sin, but to crush our old, ancient foe, under His almighty, divine-human feet. He Himself will be injured, but a bruise on the heel is nothing compared to a heel to the head. There will be no question as to who is victorious. The one covered in blood is not the vanquished, but the conquerer.

And that is what we are about to hear again as we enter the days of remembrance of our

Lord's Passion. He will be covered in blood. He will look vanquished as He bows His head on the cross and breathes His last. His body will be laid in a tomb, sealed shut. For any of us, for a mere mortal, that would be the end. But not for this one. The mighty one. The one who is no mere mortal, but the Lord of righteousness, mighty to save.

The scene brings great joy to Isaiah. The joy that would be yours if you were held in a dungeon and being tortured by your captor, until a mighty one breaks in, defeats your enemy, and rescues you. If you had snuck out, you'd have to worry about being captured again. But now, no fear. Your captor has been defeated, and you are truly free. This is what Jesus has done for you. This is what these next three days are all about.

And so Isaiah marvels and rejoices. In the love of the Lord, the great goodness of the Lord, the strength of the Lord, and the compassion of the Lord. That He would do all this for us.

And one day, we'll see this one coming, too - not from Edom, but from heaven. Coming to take home His Bride. On that day we'll be the ones coming out of our graves, as He did. And all our enemies, which are His enemies, will lay defeated at His feet. Sin, death, grave, devil, and hell, vanquished. And then only love, only life. Forever.

And so as Isaiah said:

*I will recount the steadfast love of the Lord,
the praises of the Lord,
according to all that the Lord has granted us,
and the great goodness to the house of Israel
that he has granted them according to his compassion,
according to the abundance of his steadfast love.*

In the Name of the Father, and of the (+) Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.