

**Sunday, August 21, 2022 – Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost**

**“Restored”**

Isaiah 66: 18-23

Rev. Derek S. Klemm, Mountain View Lutheran Church, Las Vegas, NV

Adapted from CJ, 2010

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen.

It looked like something no one gave much thought to anymore. It was old and worn, ugly, in fact. Yet, somehow, also beautiful, reflecting a former glory. Faded, splintered pieces of plywood replaced window panes. However, its form still stood brilliant. Tall and majestic, red brick with white trim. This house had been someone's home, someone's life. The sounds of children's voices echoing through the hallways now gave way to the sounds of the howling wind. Once filled with life, now abandoned, empty. It looked like a place which had no hope. It probably didn't. It was one of those kinds of places about which people say, "I bet that place was magnificent in its day." Now, it probably conjured up more feelings of pity, if anyone noticed it at all.

You might notice a house like this and wonder what brought it to this state, this end, this abandonment. Someone invested much time to construct a home so stately that it could still reflect beauty through its decaying structure. Good for something at one time; I am sure good for much. Today, good for nothing but that which inhabits hollow spaces.

Abandoned, empty, desolate also describe the house of David. Its people dragged off to a house not their own amongst a tongue not their own. Their rebellion against God led them and their house to this place. When he called, no one answered. When he spoke, no one listened. They did evil in his sight and chose what displeased him (Is 66:4). The result? "Your holy cities have become a wilderness; Zion has become a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation" (Is 64:10). Jerusalem—the city captured by David from the Jebusites. A city which held David's palace of stone and cedar. The city of the mighty King David who grew more and more powerful because the Lord Almighty was with him (1 Sm 5:10). The city with

the Lord's temple and all its detail and splendor. It is this city, which now desolate, with the temple destroyed.

Although the city lay in this state of destruction with its breath sucked out, the promise remained alive. The Lord fulfilled his promise of rescue and restoration: "But be glad and rejoice forever in that which I create, for behold, I create Jerusalem to be a joy and her people a to be a gladness" (Is 65:18).

It is here in this joy and gladness that we find Jerusalem in our text. Those who survive the desolation will go to the nations and proclaim that the Lord has restored this great city, that salvation has come to the people of God. Distant people and distant lands will hear of the salvation that comes only from the hand of the Lord. He has punished them for their sins and, because of his mercy, he brings them back to this city which will be his delight.

The nations will hear of the Lord's glory and come to this city, but not empty handed. Notice they will bring "your brothers (Is 66:20)," the people of Israel, back to Jerusalem as "the Israelites bring their grain offering (Is 66:20)." Just as the grain offering is offered as a pleasing aroma to the Lord, how much more will the return of his people be pleasing to him? Look who is doing the bringing: the nations, the Gentiles! Look who the Lord will now make priests and Levites: the nations, the Gentiles! This good news of salvation by God's hand is for them, too, and to be delivered by them.

It's an interesting history, isn't it? What God has done for his people! However, you may be thinking, "Sure it's all very interesting, but what does this story have to do with me? This history is not my history." Not so fast! This is more than history. You share much in common with the children of Israel. How often have you not listened when the Lord spoke by his word? How often did you follow after your own desires, instead of the Lord's? How often have you chosen what displeases the Lord? Can you say with complete certainty that your life at all times and in all places pleases the Lord? Is what you

say, what you do, what you think, how you treat (or do not treat) your neighbor, pleasing in the eyes of the Lord? So it is that you too deserve to be carried off and away in punishment. This is not just history!

The Lord will certainly gather all nations and tongues, and they will see his glory, but first they will see his cross. Jesus said, "And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself" (Jn 12:32). Certainly all will be drawn to this man dying on the cross. Some will simply gawk. Some will weep. Some will ridicule. But for all, salvation is at hand. Their debt is being paid. Your debt is being paid, on this cross. In this Jerusalem, in this house restored you get Christ and him crucified and all that his sacrifice offers, namely the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. Just history?! No way! He restored Jerusalem. He gathered all nations back to see his glory and what he could do to this city laid desolate.

Now, the word will get out about what happened here. The word will certainly get out about what God did on this hill outside the city of David. Here the word of this cross will be delivered by those who survive death, the devil and sin because another dies on their behalf. Yes, this word gets out. It got out even to you. The word got out that this Jesus died for you to give you forgiveness for all of the times you did not listen to him. He died for you to offer you forgiveness for all of the times you did evil in his sight. He died for you to offer you forgiveness for all of the things you have done which displeased the Lord your God. Yes, the word has gotten out, even to you. And look who brought it to you! A priest? A Levite? No, most likely your mom, your dad, your pastor, your teacher, your friend. These are the ones who brought you into the house of the Lord "as the Israelites bring their grain offerings (Is 66:20)," and it is certainly pleasing to the Lord that you would be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. And how long will this house last? "'As the new heavens and the new earth I make will endure before me,' declares the Lord, 'so will your name and descendants endure' (Is 66:22)."

You live restored just as those brought back to a city once destroyed and now rebuilt. Certainly you will not die, but live, and you will proclaim what the Lord has done (Ps 118:17). Your daily response

and your daily prayer is, “Lord I love the habitation of your house and the place where your glory dwells”

(Ps 119:89). In Jesus’ name, Amen.