

Isaiah 63:1–6

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[0 : 00] the scripture text is Isaiah 63, 1-6. Please stand for the reading of God's word. Who is this who comes from Edom, in crimsoned garments from Basra? He who is splendid in his apparel, marching in the greatness of his strength. It is I, speaking in righteousness, mighty to save. Why is your apparel red, and your garments like his who treads the winepress?

I have trodden the winepress alone, and from the peoples no one was with me. I trod them in my anger and trampled them in my wrath. Their lifeblood spattered on my garments and stained all my apparel. For the day of vengeance was in my heart, and my year of redemption had come. I looked, but there was no one to help. I was appalled, but there was no one to uphold. So my own arm brought me salvation, and my wrath upheld me. I trampled down the peoples in my anger. I made them drunk in my wrath, and I poured out their lifeblood on the earth. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

Well, good morning. It's good to be here with you. It's good to be here with you in a new year for Get 2020 on to 2021. I don't know about you, but as we closed out the last year with Advent season, it was a sobering time. Not necessarily a sad time, but a somber one. Advent is a time that the church spends every year reflecting and celebrating the coming of Jesus, both his first and his second coming. For me, this celebration of Jesus' first coming is always, let me be honest, dissatisfying. I mean, it's cute and everything. You know, little baby Jesus sitting in a manger, surrounded by people dressed in garb that could not have possibly been worn by the people of the time.

The lights and the Christmas trees and everything. It's a nice time, but it's severely dissatisfying. Because I'm always left asking the question, yeah, okay, but what now?

How long? I mean, this is fun and everything, but we keep doing this every year. I don't know if you ask the same questions. And now, it gets worse. Now we enter the frozen time of life in pandemical Chicago. Separated, freezing to death, still in a pandemic, still in a nation torn by strife. I don't know if this year has let you down yet, but for all of you who are just aching for 2021, buckle up. Because if it hasn't come already, it will come. I haven't even seen the sun this year.

[3 : 32] They tell me that tomorrow I might get a glimpse of it. Now, I don't say this as a prophet, but as a preacher who's been around the block once or twice, this year will inevitably let you down.

You might be thinking, come on, man. I came to church in the new year. This was supposed to be great. Well, I do want to provide some hope this morning. And hope can be hard to come by sometimes in days like these. But what I want to give you this morning is hope that is only to be found in Jesus.

And really, hope is to be found in Jesus, not in his first, but in his second coming. Comes from this passage that we read this morning. Isaiah chapter 63, verses 1 through 6.

And as it was being read, you might have been thinking, you ought to have been thinking, what in the world are we reading something like this for in church to begin with?

What are we reading something like this in the new year for? What in the world does, you talk about Advent, what does this have anything to do with Advent whatsoever? It's a good question. And I'll respond by asking you a different question.

[4 : 58] Why did we celebrate Jesus' coming anyways? Now, there's many answers to that question. But one answer that I want to argue for this morning from this text is this. You and I celebrate Jesus' coming because Jesus is the divine warrior who comes conquering to bring peace.

peace. I admit that that's probably not an obvious conclusion from this passage on its first reading, but I hope to make things clear in a concise fashion. Peace is something that you and I all long for.

I don't care if you're a Christian or not. I don't care who you are, where you come from. You and I all long for peace. Some of us are hopeful that peace might come down the road.

Some of us despair that we might ever see that day. But whoever you are, whether you're a Christian or not, I know that you long for peace. And so do I. The question is, where might peace come from?

How might peace be established? And Isaiah 63 tells us that it comes with the arrival of a divine warrior who destroys his enemies. Thus, my argument this morning, Jesus is the divine warrior who comes conquering to bring peace. This passage before us breaks down into two parts based on two questions and answers. The second one, giving clarity to the first. So I have two points. Number one, the return of the king. Number two, how the king gains victory. The return of the king and how the king gains victory.

[6 : 50] The return of the king is in verse one. Here it is. I'll read it again. Here's the question. Who is this who comes from Edom and crimson garments from Basra? He who is splendid in his apparel, marching in the greatness of his strength. Now, this question comes on the heels of a few chapters that have promised a coming day of salvation. It can be summarized in the last few verses of chapter 62.

Verses 10 through 12, which read like this. Go through, go through the gates, prepare the way for the people, build up, build up the highway, clear it of stones, lift up a signal over the peoples. Behold, the Lord has proclaimed to the end of the earth, say to the daughter of Zion, behold, your salvation comes. Behold, his reward is with him and his recompense before him. And they shall be called the holy people, the redeemed of the Lord. And you shall be called, sought out a city, not forsaken. Sounds pretty good, doesn't it?

Right after that announcement, we have this question. It's asked as if the questioner was a kind of a watchman and a guard tower as somebody approaches him. And he's trying to ask the question, who the heck is this that's coming my way?

He is clearly magnificent and also royal. Crimson garments, splendid apparel, marching in greatness. He also comes, we know, from enemy territory, Edom and Basra. Maybe not enemy territory for you and I, but enemy territory for the people to whom this was written. Magnificent one coming from enemy territory. Hence the question and a completely obscure answer. Ready? Here it is. It is I. Oh, thanks. Speaking in righteousness, mighty to save. Well, that clears things up.

It's not exactly clear here, but if you go back a few chapters to chapter 59, we're given an understanding of who this is. Chapter 59, verses 14 through 19, this is what it says.

[9 : 24] Justice is turned back and righteousness stands far away. Truth has stumbled in the public squares and uprightness cannot enter. Truth is lacking and he who departs from evil makes himself a prey. The Lord saw it and it displeased him that there was no justice. He saw that there was no man and wondered that there was no one to intercede.

Then his own arm brought him salvation and righteousness upheld him. He put on righteousness as a breastplate and a helmet of salvation on his head. He put on garments of vengeance for clothing and wrapped himself in zeal as a cloak according to their deeds. So he will repay wrath to his adversaries, repayment to his enemies, to the coastlands he will render payment.

You see, God is the one who had gone out in chapter 59. He had gone out to seek justice and here is the return of the victorious king.

I don't know about you friends, but this gives me incredible hope for at least three reasons. Number one, ours is not the first day to lack justice. I don't know if you heard those verses from Isaiah 59. I went, hold on a second. That sounds incredibly familiar.

My wife tells me that according to the statisticians, last year, 2020, saw a 50% increase in gun-related murders here in the city of Chicago.

[11 : 03] Things are trending in the wrong direction. Our day lacks justice on an incredible degree. There's already a lot of concerns. We heard it in the prayer this morning about the distribution of the vaccine.

It's not a question of if it's going to go wrong. The question is how might it go wrong? Who's going to get left out? Who's going to get passed over? We feel the tension because it's like, this has got to go wrong somehow. If it goes right, it'll be a miracle.

We live in these days of incredible injustice. And the first thing that I get from this passage, it gives me hope. It's a dark hope, but still it's a hope, is that ours isn't the first day to be messed up. Ours is messed up in unique ways, but it's nothing completely unique.

Here's the second thing that we get from this passage. God cares about justice. Yes, our days are messed up, but God does care about justice. Boy, that gives me hope.

Now, let me be clear. It doesn't always seem that way. You might think, well, Jeremy, it doesn't look like that to me. Oh, I agree. It doesn't look like it to me most of the time either. But he does.

[12:16] Texts like this remind me that he sees, that he cares, and that he acts. And all of those are important.

If he saw it and cared about it, but didn't do anything about it, well, that would be something. And if he wanted to do something about it, but couldn't, that would be another thing. And while God does do his things in his own time, God does care about justice.

Lastly, God is pictured to have won. And boy, is that good news. God wants his people to have confidence in him. Not just that he goes out to fight for his people, but that he wins.

And that he returns in victory. This is all good news, but the question remains, well, how did he gain this victory?

It's an uncomfortable answer. It's an uncomfortable answer that comes as a result of the second question. We've seen the return of the king.

[13:25] In verses 2 through 6, we see how the king gains that victory. The watchman follows up that first question with the second one in verse 2.

He also is not exactly clear about what's going on here. Verse 2, why is your apparel red and your garments like he who treads in the winepress? This question might not completely make sense to us in the 21st century.

Winepresses were a very big part of everyday life in Israel. Big vats that they would dump huge piles of grapes into.

And then everybody would have a party and stomp on those grapes in order to have the juice from those grapes be released in order to be turned into wine that everybody would share. It was an incredible celebration for a number of reasons.

So you had to have peace in order to have grapes. Grapes don't grow overnight. And they're not necessary for life. Therefore, if you've got a whole bunch of grapes, you've got a whole bunch of wine, it means things are going pretty well.

[14:28] Therefore, it was a celebratory event with the whole community coming together to stomp on the grapes. Wine is coming. It's a good day. There was only one problem with this celebration.

It's that you tended to get quite stained from it. Because that's what grape juice does. Thus the question. Sees him at a distance coming.

He has crimson garments. Hey, what are you doing? What are you all dirty for? It looks like you've been treading in a winepress. Which brings about the shocking and unexpected answer in verses 3 through 6.

You might have caught it the first time around, but I want to read it again. I have trodden the winepress alone, and from the peoples no one was with me. I trod them in my anger, and I trampled them in my wrath.

Their lifeblood spattered on my garments and stained all my apparel. For the day of vengeance was in my heart. My year of redemption had come. I looked, but there was no one to help.

[15:31] I was appalled, but there was no one to uphold. So my own arm brought me salvation, and my wrath upheld me. I trampled down the peoples in my anger. I made them drunk in my wrath, and I poured out their lifeblood on the earth.

You might be sitting there thinking, this is uncomfortable. Now, in case you were wondering, I'll sum it up here.

Here's what we learn in this passage. First, this garments that this one is wearing, who is the Lord, they're stained with blood. The blood comes from his enemies, and the Lord killed them out of vengeance.

He does this work by himself for the sake of justice because nobody else would. Now, I want to ask you a question.

You don't have to type it into the chat. You don't have to raise your hand. You don't have to say anything out loud here. But the question I have for you is, does this sound like the God that you worship?

[16:39] To be clear, this is not some obscure reference to God being a divine warrior bringing justice.

This theme is replete throughout the Bible. You might doubt that. You might be sitting there thinking, no way, Jeremy. That is not the God that I worship.

Maybe it's not, but if it's not the God that you worship, it's not the God of the Bible. You might be upset about that, frustrated. You might desire to challenge me, and in all the love I have in my heart, here's what I have to say.

Bring it on. I desire to sit down and go through the passages, to warn you, it's going to take a while, that talk about this idea that God is a divine warrior that comes wrecking his enemies.

Friends, to be honest, these are the kinds of passages that are the kind we would usually rather not have in our Bibles. But to be honest with you, I don't think I could be a Christian if they weren't in here. You see, living in a world full of sin and injustice is not easy.

[17 : 57] I don't know if it's easy for you. It's not easy for me. Evil must be dealt with. We all know that, and we all long for it.

Whether or not we desire for God to bring it about, we all long for it. Even if you don't believe there's a God, even if you believe there's no God, justice will never come, and this is all a complete waste of time, I guarantee you you're not happy about that fact.

You've just found it within yourself to embrace that reality. The Bible tells us that God does bring justice, and he does so because he's perfect, and his justice is perfect.

We all have a problem, though. As comforting as this is, that justice, that which we all long for is coming, is also kind of uncomfortable because, well, to be frank about it, you and I are evil.

You might think, come on, Jeremy, I already didn't like this, and now you're calling me evil. Now, let me admit, you might be thinking in this moment, well, here's the thing, I am not as evil as the person sitting next to me, either in this room or on the couch.

[19 : 19] They're more evil than I am, which, to be honest, very well might be true. Just know that if that's your argument, you've just claimed that you're evil, just less evil.

None of us are good. We might be better. We've all done that which is wrong. We're all, if we're honest, a bit surprised that we're not as evil as we could be.

The question is, how can we, being less than perfect, escape the perfect judgment that is to come? That which we actually want, we just don't want for ourselves, we just want for the person sitting next to us.

The person across the street. Those, quote, unquote, bad people, whoever the heck they are. How can we escape this? Clearly, some people will escape. Notice verse 4, For the day of vengeance was in my heart, and my year of redemption had come.

You go, how do I get on that team? I want to be on the year of redemption team. That sounds pretty good. Here's the answer. Trusting in the one that will bring the judgment.

[20 : 33] That's how you and I escape. You see, I have some good news for you this morning. You and I know more than Isaiah did. The divine warrior here has a name.

Maybe you've heard of him. It's the Lord Jesus Christ. Have you ever heard of his victory? It's spoken of in Revelation chapter 19, verses 11 through 16.

It says this, Then I saw heaven open, and behold, a white horse, one sitting on the ground, called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems.

And he has a name written on him that no one knows but himself. He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is the Word of God. And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses.

From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty.

[21 : 41] On his robe and on his thigh he has his name written, King of Kings and Lord of Lords. You see, Jesus goes out to conquer and is completely victorious.

He rides out with an army, but ironically the army only does one thing, they just follow him. They're dressed in the most ridiculous fashion for battle, all in white, because they've got nothing to do, except ride on horses behind him, riding in the train of his victory.

These are all who have trusted in him. You see, here's the thing. Jesus brings peace. He either brings peace to you or through you.

The choice is yours. Either way, the Prince of Peace is coming. Peace comes as he tramples his enemies. That day hasn't come yet.

In fact, people have been waiting for that day for a long time. You might be thinking, whether you're a Christian or not this morning, I think this all the time. Is this ever going to happen?

[22 : 53] Like seriously, seriously, is this ever going to happen? How many Christmases do I have to go through again? You might think, man, you're a Scrooge. No, I'm just a Christian. It's nice and all, but there's a reason why it was great when I was seven and now it's the starting to, you know, the glitter's long fallen off the slippers.

How long? The hope for Jesus' second coming, one in which he will bring peace, comes on the basis of his first coming and what he did when he came.

You see, we celebrate Jesus' coming during Advent and it is indeed good news. Something we should celebrate. The moment in which God sends his promised Savior into the world.

But never forget how he saved, what he came for. You see, that baby came to die. That's what made everything so confusing the first time around.

You ever read the Gospels and wonder like, why is everybody so confused about what's going on with Jesus? I mean, come on, baby, save people from their sins, die on a cross.

[24 : 10] We all know the story, but the people in the story seem completely confused. Here's why. They were reading Isaiah 63 going, yeah, that's my king. Sure, bring me the divine warrior.

When are you about to trample the lifeblood of people? And a shocking twist, Jesus the first time around doesn't trample the lifeblood of others, but pours out his own lifeblood for the sake of others. People like you and me. And the good news is that death, that he dies for our sake, is not defeat, but just the beginning of better things.

Why? Because Jesus lives. This all brings to mind that glorious hymn, maybe you know it. Living, he loved me.

Dying, he saved me. Buried, he carried my sins far away. Rising, he justified freely forever. One day he's coming. Oh, glorious day.

[25 : 13] Yes, friends, a day is coming when the Prince of Peace comes and destroys all of his enemies. Jesus is the divine warrior of Isaiah 63.

So the question is, friends, what will you do with Jesus? My prayer is that you would trust in him, waiting on him to bring this everlasting peace.

This is where hope is found, a hope that helps us to live patiently in the in-between time, a time between the first advent and second advent of Jesus, a time full of injustice when justice is promised, yet justice hasn't fully arrived.

It is my prayer that our song, not only during Christmas, but every day of our lives would become thou long-expected Jesus, born to set thy people free.

From our fears and sins release us. Let us find our rest in thee. Let's pray. Lord, we thank you for the promise of the divine warrior, Jesus Christ, who brings peace.

[26 : 35] It is an uncomfortable hope. I pray for all of those, Christian and not, who might be listening to this and severely, sincerely wrestling with this idea that in your wrath you trample enemies.

Lord, cause them to question, not just today, but for the rest of their lives with the fact that unless justice be perfect, justice doesn't truly exist.

help us all this morning to see Jesus as that divine warrior who also brings the year of redemption, who secures it all in himself and would we trust in him that the peace that he brings would be to us and not through us.

I pray these things in his name. Amen.