

Palm Sunday
April 14, 2019

Isaiah 45:22-25
131-133-749*-130

*CW-S – “The Love of Christ, Who Died for Me”

God's Holy Week Invitation

- I. To repent and be saved.
- II. To take comfort in God's faithfulness.
- III. To serve and share our Savior.

Dear Christian friends,

Invitations. **Sometimes** they come ALL FANCY and FORMAL – **like** some wedding invitations. **Other** invitations are more INFORMAL and CASUAL – a phone call to **come over** for supper or a simple let's get together for some cards. WHATEVER FORM the invitation takes the person wants to SPEND SOME TIME with you. The person wants to SHARE something with you.

As enter another Holy Week we turn to these verses. Consider them a PERSONAL INVITATION – God's Holy Week invitation to you and me. **This Holy Week** God personally invites us 1)to repent and **be saved**, 2)to take comfort in **His faithfulness** and 3)to serve and share our Savior.

I. To repent and be saved.

God's Holy Week invitation begins with a CALL to **repent and** a PROMISE of **salvation**. **“Turn to Me and be saved.”** The Israelites of Isaiah's day certainly needed to hear this INVITATION TO REPENT. More and more the Israelites were TURNING AWAY from their Lord God and His Word. **More and more** they were living just like their **heathen** neighbors. Isaiah's book begins, **“The Lord has spoken: ‘I reared children and brought them up, but they have rebelled against Me. The ox knows its master, the donkey its owner's manger, but Israel does not know, My people do not understand.’ Woe to the sinful nation, a people whose guilt is great, a brood of evildoers, children given to corruption! They have forsaken the Lord; they have spurned the Holy One of Israel and turned their backs on Him.”** That's GOD TALKING about people who CONSIDERED THEMSELVES to be **God's** people – people who thought everything was OK between God and them! Unfortunately the Israelites rejected God's INVITATION TO REPENT and instead fell under God's JUDGMENT.

But God's invitation wasn't just for His WAYWARD people. **“Turn to Me and be saved, ALL you ends of the earth.”** God's Holy Week invitation is FOR ALL people because all need to repent. God makes that point with the SIMPLE FACT – **“because I am God, and there is no other.”**

There is only one REAL, TRUE God – the triune God of the Bible. But that **one real God** faces plenty of STIFF COMPETITION. In Isaiah's day that competition included the **idols** Baal, Dagon, Molech and so on. Just before these verses we read, **“Ignorant are those who pray to gods that cannot save.”**

This Holy Week God's INVITATION TO REPENT of **idolatry** still rings out. God calls to the **“ends of the earth”** to turn from the FALSE gods of the **Moslems** and **Mormons**, **Buddhists** and **Hindus** – from the generic gods of the **Masonic lodges** and **scouts**. They are all worthless idols for they are not the triune God of the Bible.

This Holy Week God invites YOU and me to repent of worshiping false gods. Sure we don't bow down to a Baal or Allah but **idolatry is behind** EVERY sin **whatever sin** it may be. A person's god is **whatever/whoever** is MOST IMPORTANT to them – what they LIVE FOR. A person's god can be his JOB – money – **sports** – **family** – being popular, etc. **Probably** the greatest competition God faces is that idol we see in the mirror every day – that false god of SELF. **Whenever** we don't let God control EVERY AREA and **every minute** of our lives – **whenever we overrule** God with an “I'LL DO what I

want” – that’s idolatry AS SINFUL as **worshipping Allah**. When we have EXCUSES for God but NOT TIME and OBEDIENCE for God – that’s idolatry AS SINFUL AS **worshipping Baal**.

This Holy Week God invites you and me to TURN AWAY from WHATEVER is coming between Him and our hearts. Gods invitation comes with a PROMISE. **“Turn to Me and be saved.”**

This week we see the DREADFUL CONSEQUENCES of sin. If we want to excuse our sins with a **“no big deal”** – an “everybody else is doing it – nobody got hurt” – then PRAY TELL what was Jesus doing on the cross?! God says He will **“not be mocked”** – that **“the wages of sin is death”** – and Good Friday shows HOW SERIOUS God is. **How** can we go stand at Jesus’ **bloody cross** and just shrug our sins off with an “OH, WELL!”?

“Turn to Me and be saved,” God calls to ALL this **Holy Week**. That is what this week is ALL ABOUT – God saving us. That Man riding that donkey – the Man with spit running down His face and a **“crown of thorns”** on His head – that Man IS OUR GOD – the eternal Son of God Most High. In that Man riding a donkey and dying on a cross **“all the fulness of God’s being dwells bodily.”**

This week Jesus’ mission on earth REACHES ITS CLIMAX. **In our place** Jesus had perfectly obeyed all the commandments. Jesus always put His heavenly Father FIRST in His life. Now it was time for **the sin** of the world to be paid IN FULL. Only Jesus could pay that **debt** – and the only way Jesus **could pay** it was BY DYING in our place. What a HOLY Week! The sinless Son of God is punished for the sins of the **whole world!** Jesus endures the **hell** – dies the death – that FULLY PAYS for every single one of our sins.

This Holy Week God invites you and me and **all people** to TURN TO JESUS and **“be saved.”** There is ONLY ONE real God and there is ONLY ONE real Savior – Jesus. Turn to Jesus for **ONLY in Jesus** do we have God’s forgiveness full and free and God’s promise of eternal life in heaven when we die.

II. To take comfort in God’s faithfulness.

God’s Holy Week invitation continues. **“I have sworn by Myself. From My mouth a righteous word has gone out, and it will not return unfulfilled.”** God’s point is QUITE SIMPLE. “I gave you MY WORD and I don’t go back on My Word. I keep ALL My promises.”

HOW COMFORTING that would be in the **coming days** for these Israelites. **Because** of their **impenitence** they would go through some PRETTY TOUGH times. Their armies would be **defeated** – their cities and homes **destroyed** – God’s temple in ruins – they would be hailed off to exile in Babylon. It would LOOK and FEEL **as if** God had had enough of them and was GIVING UP on them. It would look as if God was taking back His promise of the Savior. That promise was ALL TIED UP with the Jews living in the **Promised Land** not in Babylon.

The Israelites needed to learn the HARD LESSON that you don’t play games with God and expect to win. IN LOVE GOD was going to teach them that lesson but He WASN’T giving up on them. We can be so FAITHLESS and FICKLE but God ever remains **faithful**. God’s Word – God’s plans – God’s promises STAND FIRM.

The Babylonian exile wouldn’t being for **another 100 years** or so. It would last for **70 years**. But already in this chapter God ANNOUNCES BY NAME that He will use the Persian king Cyrus to **bring His people** back to the Promised Land. God’s plans and **promises** STOOD FIRM.

This was all part of God’s BIG PLAN of salvation. God had promised that **His Son** – the **Savior** – would be born a Jew and live in the land of the Jews. God may have taken HIS TIME **keeping** that promise but God did keep it. **“I have sworn by Myself. From My mouth a righteous word has gone out, and it will not return unfulfilled.”**

This Holy Week God invites us all to TAKE COMFORT in **His faithfulness**. All through Jesus' life – but especially now during Holy Week – we hear the words, **“This happened in order to fulfill...”** Palm Sunday is MORE PROOF of God's **faithfulness**. JUST AS God had promised through Zechariah Jesus came to Jerusalem **“righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey.”** Jesus dying on the cross – Jesus rising from the dead – ALL AS God had planned and promised.

This Holy Week God invites us all to take comfort in His **faithfulness**. When God promises to **“never leave or forsake us”** – to **“meet all our needs”** and **“work all things for the good of those who love Him”** – when God promises that **“whoever believes in Jesus shall not perish but have everlasting life”** – promises, **“Be faithful unto death and I will give you a crown of life”** – there's NO NEED for us to cross our fingers or knock on word. TAKE COMFORT in God's promises and God's faithfulness.

III. To serve and share our Savior.

God **“has sworn”** – promised – **“to Me every knee will bow, ... they will say of Me, ‘Only in the Lord is there true righteousness and strength.’ All those who are angry at Him will be ashamed.”** The only real God is God OVER ALL people – a fact joyfully acknowledged by believers – a fact fiercely resisted by unbelievers.

This Holy Week **“bow the knee”** to Jesus your Savior and gratefully SERVE and boldly SHARE Him. God's **Holy Week** invitation is for **“the ends of the earth”** – for everyone. Isn't **this week** a perfect time to PASS ALONG God's invitation? Can you think of someone to INVITE or **bring** to church this week? **Someone** who doesn't know Jesus – who has fallen away from Jesus – who NEEDS Jesus' love, forgiveness and promise of eternal life. That someone COULD BE a neighbor, friend, family member. **This Holy Week** share with them GOD'S INVITATION to **“turn to Him and be saved.”**

This Holy Week God invites us to RENEW our zeal and efforts to share Jesus with **“the ends of the earth.”** As we gather as Jesus' bloody cross and empty grave aren't they the PERFECT PLACES to review our offerings to Jesus? Isn't **Holy Week** a perfect time to consider INCREASING our offerings or to bring a SPECIAL GIFT to **share God's Word** with others? **This Holy Week** God invites you and me to **“exult”** – to REJOICE in our Savior's love and forgiveness – and to share that joy of Jesus with the world.

“Turn to Me and be saved, all you ends of the earth.” Those words aren't actually an INVITATION from God – a would you please **turn to Me** and be saved.” They are really a COMMAND – a DIRECT ORDER from God. **“TURN to Me and be saved, all you ends of the earth.”** That's how seriously **God wants** US TO TAKE this “invitation.” **This Holy Week** God not only INVITES us – He ORDERS us and all people – to **“turn to Him and be saved.”** Amen.

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