

## Pastor Roy's sermon from July 7, 2019

Home sweet home. That is what Isaiah is talking about at the end of that book of prophesy. Isaiah invites the Jews to remember Jerusalem with joy, to be comforted tenderly by her renewal and rebuilding, to find strength in the richness of her communal life. A place of spiritual and relational newness, a place of comfort and sustenance.

Now, with all those people returning from exile, Jerusalem was no quiet place, and there was conflict. Who should be welcomed, and who should be kept away. They built a wall to keep out trouble, since help from Persia was always weeks or months away. Some prophets insisted that God was demanding that they purify the unclean from among them and to cast out any who were not true Jews. *Other* prophets encouraged welcome and openness. These culture wars had their effect—as in the Samaritans who were not quite pure enough.

Jerusalem was an image of hope, peace and courage. Salem means peace.

So, what is **your** Jerusalem? In what, in whom do you celebrate and find strength? Think about it, and for this, saying “God” doesn’t count. Jerusalem was not God. Finding peace is about how and where you find and relate to God. Where you find courage over and over again? Jerusalem was the focus of the Jews’ hope, upon returning from exile. They dreamed of a good future. Perhaps your Jerusalem is family, or friends, home, community, the church, or prayer which grounds you in peace and love and holds you in the presence of God.

When we are travelling dusty roads of adversity and disappointment, it is helpful to be in the practice of refocusing our attention toward hope and the love. When we are, *so* mindful, of our true help, there is always comfort, invitation, and renewal. *This* is personal work, work which only you can do. Original research. Where and how do I meet God? Where do I hear the voice of God? Where do I find the deepest comfort and peace along the way? Where and how do I pray?

Paul has something to say about peace in Galatians. When there is trouble and conflict, we are Jerusalem for each other. Healing comes as we practice

love with gentleness. We bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ which is welcoming love. Everything in love. Love is our foundation.

In today's Gospel account, the disciples are sent out to proclaim the Good News to the towns and villages in Israel. At each town they were to trust deeply in God's provision of peace. That began with the initial welcome or rejection and the one household which provided them hospitality. In Isaiah's language, each welcoming household was their Jerusalem. Peace was exchanged. A message of grace and God's love was given and hospitality was received. And they were free. Imagine an age of such freedom, courage, and hospitality with radical trust in God and one another.

The only advantage to poverty is that it reduces the illusion that we are in control and that we can determine much of anything at all. The poor are free to love and to share their poverty. We who have plenty need no one. And so many of the saints, including the disciples, go out of their way to rediscover their own poverty. We are all poor in so many ways. . .and this is good because only out of our own poverty can we ever seek God.

And hospitality is a good path to discovering our own poverty and the ways it can be shared with others.

So today I hear an invitation to open the door of hospitality however, whenever we can. And to receive hospitality whenever, wherever, however you can. And if you can be hospitable to those who cannot repay you, your reward will reach far beyond your effort. Your soul will be rich.

The Kingdom of God has come near us and we can bring it near to others as well. The place to begin is that place we find peace—our Jerusalem. That peace will grow as we offer and receive welcome.