

Isaiah 62:1-5 1/17/10 Pastor Bill Uetricht 2 Epiphany

For Haiti's sake, I will not keep silent, and for Port au Prince's sake I will not rest, until her vindication shines out like the dawn, and her salvation like a burning torch. For Haiti's sake I will not stop talking, quit preaching until the city that was destroyed becomes again what it was created to be, shines forth like a torch in the dark. "It will not be possible to make me shut up. I will talk and not stop talking, proclaim and not stop proclaiming, preach and not stop preaching. I will shake the skies with my voice. I will not pause. I will not rest, for the sake of the precious city God loved and [appeared to have] left. And I will keep this up until every nation and king can see that Port au Prince has been declared innocent and lifted up to a place of glory and honor" (Anathea Portier-Young--workingpreacher.org).

That, for me, is the effect of our first lesson for today. Although it is hard to discern, I sense that it is the prophet who is speaking today, a prophet who is advocating on behalf of the holy city, Jerusalem. He speaks at a time when some of the exiles of Jerusalem have returned home. The city that had been destroyed was not looking so good. We came home for this? Jerusalem once was a light on a hill, a strong and beautiful city. But its fortune had been radically changed. The prophets said that God had left her. She was labeled "forsaken." Her land was named "desolate." And now, the prophet says, he cannot stop talking or proclaiming until Jerusalem's glory is returned, until she is declared innocent. God, the prophet seems to be saying, needs to remember God's promises. God needs to give Jerusalem a new name, a new status. Yes, God said he left. But now he has returned. He needs to act like he is back home. He needs to come through on behalf of the city that he says he loves. After all, he promises that she shall be

a “crown of beauty in the hand of the Lord, a royal diadem in the hand of God.”

Forsaken and desolate. It doesn't take much for us to name experiences that lead us to that kind of conclusion. Lately, it seems that it has been one crisis after another. Forsaken and desolate. How else can the people of Haiti feel? This has been a land that has been plagued by the worst poverty that our part of the world knows. This has been a nation that has experienced coups, civil unrest, human rights violations of all sorts. Hunger has been a daily companion for many Haitians for years. And now, a devastating earthquake! And now, an infrastructure that has been practically destroyed! Thousands and thousands dead, including one of our own, Ben Larson, a student at Wartburg Seminary, the son of April Larson, our church's first female bishop. Ben was in Haiti as a part of a seminary program that immersed students into learning and serving opportunities there. Dead, because of his commitment to service and the gospel. Forsaken and desolate.

Grandparents and parents devastated because their son and grandson was taken away from them. Young people and old people shocked with the diagnosis of the big “C.” Loved ones dying without warning. Parents and grandparents wanting to die, but lingering on and on. Diseases experienced that are mean and life draining. Jobs evading us. Financial problems forever plaguing us. Children who cannot be controlled or managed. Forsaken and desolate.

Come on, God. Come through for us. For our sake, for our kids' sake, for the sake of the people we love, for the sake of Haiti, we will not keep silent. We will not rest until life is as it ought to be, until our sense of shame about our condition gives way to a sense of humble

pride because of our health and our status. It is surprising how much our condition can lead to shame. Maybe it's not that we think that we feel responsible for what happened, although that can be true, too. But when we are sick, when life is out of control, we feel vulnerable. And vulnerability leads to a sense of shame. Come on, God. Come through for us—us who are beat down, broken, and ashamed.

You have made promises to us. Just last week, we heard that you love us, that we are precious to you, that you call us by name. And today, we hear the promise made to the desolate and the forsaken: "You shall no longer be termed Forsaken, and your land shall no more be labeled Desolate; but you shall be called My Delight is in Her, and your land Married; for the Lord delights in you, and your land shall be married." Come on, God, bring the delight. We've had enough sadness, enough crises, enough grief. Bring the joy of the wedding! We're ready for a party, a party that is robust, a party that is filled with goodness, a party that is not some tea-and-crumpet-with-a-few-finger-sandwiches-thrown-in experience. We want all the stops pulled. We want lots of food and lots of drink.

What do you mean there is no wine? What do you mean that it's run out? Come on, God. Come on, Jesus. Do something about it! Your Mom has the right spirit, Jesus. She's not content with the way things are. She wants the full joy of a full wedding. No wine, no party. Come on, Jesus! Do something about it! Who cares if it is not your time right now? It is **our** time. We need you to come through now!

"Now standing there were six stone water-jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to them, 'Fill those jars with water.' And they filled them up to the brim. And he said to them, 'Now draw some out, and take it to the chief

steward.' So they took it [to him]. [And then the steward tasted the water that had become wine, and he said], 'Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now.'"

Excuse me. Let me do the math. Six times twenty is 120. Six times thirty is 180. Whoa! 120-180 gallons of wine! The good and expensive wine at the end as well as at the beginning! This is some party! Bring it on, God. Bring it on! Bring on the feast of abundance! Bring on the joy of the wedding! We've had enough sadness, enough death. After all, God, you are the God of promise. After all, God, you have named us, claimed us, made us your own. After all, God, you say that we shall be a crown of beauty in your hand, a royal diadem in your palm. After all, God, you say that our desolation and forsakenness is being replaced by a sense of deep connectedness. You say you delight in us.

For our sake, for Haiti's sake, we will not rest, we will not stop praying to you, until our vindication shines out like the dawn, and our salvation like a burning torch. We will not stop until the grieving gives way to rejoicing, the mourning gives way to dancing. We will not stop until the party of abundance includes all, especially our friends in Haiti.