**Isaiah 30:8-17**

And now, go, write it before them on a tablet and inscribe it in a book, that it may be for the time to come as a witness forever. **9**  For they are a rebellious people, lying children, children unwilling to hear the instruction of the Lord; **10**  who say to the seers, “Do not see,” and to the prophets, “Do not prophesy to us what is right; speak to us smooth things, prophesy illusions, **11** leave the way, turn aside from the path, let us hear no more about the Holy One of Israel.” **12** Therefore thus says the Holy One of Israel, “Because you despise this word and trust in oppression and perverseness and rely on them, **13** therefore this iniquity shall be to you like a breach in a high wall, bulging out, and about to collapse, whose breaking comes suddenly, in an instant; **14** and its breaking is like that of a potter’s vessel that is smashed so ruthlessly that among its fragments not a shard is found with which to take fire from the hearth, or to dip up water out of the cistern.” **15** For thus said the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel, “In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and in trust shall be your strength.” But you were unwilling, **16** and you said, “No! We will flee upon horses”; therefore you shall flee away; and, “We will ride upon swift steeds”; therefore your pursuers shall be swift. **17**  A thousand shall flee at the threat of one; at the threat of five you shall flee, till you are left like a flagstaff on the top of a mountain, like a signal on a hill.

**“Timeless Truth In Our Time”**

Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen. As we wait for the start of a new year, it is sometimes interesting to look back at what life was like 100 years ago. For instance in 1915, the maximum speed limit in most cities was 10mph. Only 8% of homes had telephones. The tallest structure in the world was the Eiffel Tower. Eggs were fourteen cents a dozen and coffee fifteen cents a pound. Our nation’s flag had 45 stars. Celebration of Father’s Day or Mother’s Day was not on the calendar. Nobody could buy crossword puzzles, canned beer, and iced tea because they were not yet invented. Compared with modern day life, it is shocking to consider what things will be like in another 100 years.

Of course, time can be a tricky thing because it is not merely about progress. Our minds focus on that ticking of the clock or under stress we might blurt out, “I don’t have enough time!” The Old Testament has a view of time different from being against us or a thing to control. Instead, time is about the relationship, events, and quality that come from God.[[1]](#endnote-1) In other words, it was treasuring the fact how God’s love spoke creation into existence not trying to date it by billions of years. Likewise, it was recognizing the value of life even in the womb not trying to define exactly when a person is a person. Since Scripture is a witness forever, God caring for Israel long ago speaks to our times. The primary verse to consider are these words, “For thus said the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel, ‘In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and in trust shall be your strength.’” In the midst of the times, the timeless truth is refuge for us in God.

The refuge for Israel was in turning away from self to the Lord. Times had changed from the good days of Solomon and David. God’s people were once again acting out in rebellion against His Word. They thought the trouble was outside Israel, when in truth it was actually within Israel. In order to keep up the illusion of this falsity and perversion, they set up an ultimatum against the prophets. It stated plainly, “let us hear no more about the Holy One of Israel.” They shut their ears to hear. What they treasured was a life cut off from God. It was now time to repent of such selfish ways.

Whether it is a day or a lifetime turning away from God happens. The baptized are saints, but still have a nature that wants its way. This is why the Word is more than a witness forever in a sinful world. It is now in Christ the Word become flesh. His desire is to turn hearts back to good news from God saying, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear” (Matt 11:15). In order to keep the illusion as if we have not fallen short of God’s Law this past year. In order to have a carefree new year where self will be the ultimate truth. It is to shut our ears and treasure the times as if they belong to us. Instead, hear again the call to repent and believe in the Gospel.

The refuge for Israel was rest from their works to the Lord’s Word. Isaiah came preaching when God’s people were deluded in sinful ways. Yet, they still had unsettling fears starring them in the face. The Assyrians were such a threat against Israel, so the timely fix was to join forces with Egypt. The nation of slavery God delivered His people from years ago was now to be their ally. It would come at the cost of oppression more than of life, but in false gods. The better solution was to refrain from such maneuverings of man and to rest in the Lord. Israel was never its own savior; it was always a work of God’s grace.

Resting is always hard, since the clock is against us. We already know many do not get enough sleep for their bodies. What does this say about our souls? Jesus explained it is different from sleep saying, “Stay dressed for action and keep your lamps burning…” Sounds like works are the priority, but this work centers on, “waiting for their master to come home from the wedding feast.” Are new studies, political agendas, or technology in 2016 going to save the day? Did they do it for us in 2015? If we rest in the things of man, they can be false gods and a new kind of slavery. Christ alone saved us by His onetime sacrifice on the cross. He is the master now by the Word and Sacrament coming to serve His servants who rest in Him.

The refuge for Israel was quietness that kept calm against their enemies. God offered a right relationship with him by forgiveness. What seemed sturdy in Israel was a sham of iniquity. Their might was actually weakness about to collapse. Right before their eyes, it was going to shatter like a piece of pottery. Who would be quite over such tragedy? Who would not despair at such a sight? Only God provided relief that lasted longer than for a time. Silence was not a weakness, but a sign of strength looking to God to keep His promises for them.

If we felt heartache or disappointment in 2015, what will give us peace in this new year? Not all the screaming and cheering of “Happy New Year” removes the busy cares and eagerness we bring into 2016. God already gives us the peace we need. It was silently born on Christmas to greet us with great joy that is for all people. Keep calm because you still have Christ. His peace comes to bury our world of cares, losses, and eagerness. He cries out, “I have borne every year, month, week, day, and minute for you.” Peace is to stay fixed on Jesus for God’s promise for us at all times and in every way is in Him.

The refuge for Israel was trust in God looking to nothing else for comfort. Whether it was other nations, fleeing on warhorses, or playing the numbers, Israel would eventually find defeat. Rebellious children were to once again fear, love and trust in God above all things. Time was not on their side, but the Lord was long-suffering with His people. The remnant that trusted in Him would see better days according to God’s timing. The Lord does not age, so the fact is He remembers, “His steadfast love and faithfulness to the house of Israel” (Psalms 98:3).

Since Christ is the fulfillment to God’s promises, the baptized have a new way to look at the times. We face sin, death, and the Devil at the present, but the future is grander than any could ever plan for in this life. St. Paul saw nothing less proclaiming, “No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.” Rather than being distracted by the moment, Christ steps into our time and space with His redemption. By Word and Sacrament, His steadfast love and faithfulness tells us He is coming again, will raise the dead, and brings new life for all who trust in Him.

In the midst of the times, the timeless truth is refuge for us in God. “In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and in trust shall be your strength.” Thankfully, Christ is now the fullness of God’s love who seeks to restore and save any. What life will be like in 100 years is nothing compared to those who hope in Him. Amen. Now may the peace of God guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus for this new year of 2016. Amen.

1. http://www.ovrlnd.com/Eschatology/hebrewconceptoftime.html [↑](#endnote-ref-1)