

Sermon Draft

Text: Isaiah 45:1–7

Sermon: “God’s Way”

Isaiah saw a dismal day ahead. Yes, it would be more than a century after his lifetime, but it would deeply affect his people. Judah would be carried off to captivity in Babylon. The city of Jerusalem would be flattened to the ground. It would seem to be the end for God’s people as a nation; countries simply didn’t rise again from this kind of death. Worst of all, the line of kings, successors of David, from which the Lord’s Messiah was to come, would be cut off.

And yet, Isaiah also saw that there was hope. Against all odds, Judah would come home. Jerusalem and the temple would be rebuilt. And somehow, God would continue the line of the Messiah, the Savior.

But here is the really remarkable thing about our text. Isaiah sees that the Lord would accomplish this through a type of messiah or savior, one who didn’t even believe in him. Talk about against all odds! But as we read and study Scripture God uses unlikely people to accomplish His will.

This other messiah, savior type would think he was accomplishing so much by his own power and with the help of his many gods, but our text, and the history that did indeed come true just as Isaiah saw it, is in fact another proof that there is no god like our God.

Throughout the world, people choose their gods. We see this in our society. All kinds of religions, denominations in the various religions and cults are represented, and people combine them at will. People choose whom or what to trust with their lives.

Martin Luther tells us in his explanation of the First Commandment in the Large Catechism: “A god means that from which we are to expect all good and in which we are to take refuge in all distress. So, to have a God is nothing other than trusting and believing Him with the [whole] heart.”)

But those gods are no help when it counts. They were powerless against the military and political developments of the prophet’s time. They leave us powerless against the developments around us.

But with the one true God, it is the other way around. God chooses an unlikely “savior,” “messiah,” to bring the people of Israel back to himself (vs 1–2, 4). Cyrus doesn’t know the one true God. He worshipped all kinds of deities, including those of Babylonia, which he had conquered. He doesn’t realize that all political power comes from the Lord (John 19:11). The Lord reveals to Cyrus that he is responsible to God. God names him, meaning God was first, and Cyrus’s life comes from him. He has to answer to God.

Cyrus, is a preview in history of the coming “Anointed” Christ—like a low-resolution thumbnail picture. His origin is unimpressive; Babylonia is the superpower of his time, but he is from Persia. His rise to power surpasses all expectations. His idea that everybody should choose his own gods is a pagan doctrine, but this policy saves those whom God has chosen—that is, those who believe that there is only one God.

This true God, Jesus Christ alone the Savior of all men. Yet he seemed even less impressive than Cyrus. A God in human nature doesn’t seem impressive. He was born into a poor family and grew up in a insignificant town, Nazareth (John 1:46), with no formal education.

And in the end, he was seemingly deprived of all power, condemned to death by two courts.

But he has won the victory in this world once and for all. The ruler of this world is disarmed. The tomb of death and the gates of hell break open. People will know that there is none besides him (v 6).

Unlike the other gods or “saviors,” our God is in charge, always (v 7). That gives us comfort . . . When our experiences seem different. When we feel powerless against the developments around us. When we struggle or wonder what we are going to do. Life’s trials and struggles are real.

“There is a story about three farmers whose fields were adjoined. One was Jewish, one Muslim, and one Christian. Each observed the Sabbath on a different day of the week. One harvest season, bad weather limited the days available for work, and skipping a day for Sabbath observance risked financial ruin. Nevertheless, all three farmers in turn observed their faith, making the choice to stay home on their respective Sabbaths.

Upon waking the next day, each farmer found a barn filled with harvested crops. They gave thanks and praise to God, assuming angels had been sent to do the work. In fact, it was the neighbors of differing faiths who did the work in secret.”

Sometimes we are surprised by whom God sends to help, especially when they are different from us. This passage from Isaiah describes God making an unexpected choice to aid the people of Israel. Having suffered in exile, they believe God has promised to send them a Messiah, someone to set them free. They have waited a long time for liberation but count on God’s promise to come true.

God is in charge, always. This gives us certainty that he will bring us home against all odds. That in the end, the whole world will have to acknowledge the truth that we confess: the Lord is God, and there is no other.

Even those who don’t believe that there is only one true God live by his power and by what he daily provides for their lives. But without him, they will be lost eternally. That is why God calls us with the First Commandment, saying:

“I am the Lord, your God, who saves you.”

In our text, God is ready to act, but not in the way Israel expects. God selects Cyrus, the king of Persia, to defeat Babylon and allow Israel to return home. As a Gentile and foreign king, Cyrus is perhaps the last person they would have thought of to rescue them. Why not one of them, a native Hebrew? Why a potential enemy? But God's ways are not our ways.

God is delivering His people by means of a King who will break down the bars that hold us in. It was strange but it was a real deliverance. Cyrus, was a kind of savior who pointed towards something hidden in God until He revealed the true Savior and Anointed One, the Messiah in Jesus for us.

Jesus broke down the gates of death that stood over us through His own death and resurrection. Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of the living God who was unrecognizable to us as the Savior. Yet, God would, through Jesus, break the prison doors and even the gates of Hell could not stand against Him

He gives us every reason to trust him against all worldly opposition and to believe that he will bring us to our heavenly home. In Jesus name.

Amen