

A MAJESTIC ANNOUNCEMENT

"How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion **THY GOD REIGNETH!**" Isaiah 52:7.

"And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for **THE LORD GOD OMNIPOTENT REIGNETH.**" Rev. 19:6.

Here is the world's most majestic announcement. In a time of darkness and discouragement, Isaiah spoke to his people with a genuine outburst of joy because he had a word from the Eternal. He had received a renewed conviction of the sovereignty of God and he hastened to proclaim it. His message constitutes one of the major themes of the Bible.

The people who were in exile were informed that a way to the homeland was about to be opened. They were told God had not forgotten them but would set their feet on paths which He Himself had chosen. This message was the response of heaven to the most profound need of their souls. It still startles us today because it is a declaration of eternal truth which answers perfectly the deepest yearnings of our own hearts. No department of human experience can be complete without the fulfilment which Isaiah here proposes. No worthy faculty can function properly without the inspiration here provided. No group of people can maintain right and satisfying relation with others if the spirit which is quickened by the Lord of life is lacking.

To those who have been responding with eagerness to the lure of the world, to those who lust after money and despises the dignity and worth of the soul, to all who live for pleasure and neglect the cultivation of their best, who permit dull routine in home, school and church to take the life and luster out of love and truth and prayer, and to all those whose lives are based on compromise and who are missing the excellence of which their spirits are capable, comes this ancient and majestic announcement: "Thy God reigneth!" How beautiful upon the mountains, or upon our city streets, are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace and salvation, that rescueth the lives of drifting youth and disillusioned, toiling men and women of riper years! How needed in our day are the words of him who stirs, rebukes and encourages. The wilderness to which our vaunted culture is in danger of reverting can be made to rejoice again and blossom as the rose, if our eyes are opened to see the glory of the Lord and the excellency of our God. Let every person burdened with responsibility and care, and every yearning, confused and trembling soul know the glorious truth that this world belongs to God and that He is on the throne forever.

What is the biggest fact in life to you at this moment? What is the real center of your universe? One replies, "Well, I reckon it is my home. That, for me, is the center of everything." A very noble thing to be able to say! Another says, "The main fact in life to me is, without any shadow of doubt, my work. If you take that away from me, you take just everything." A third says, "The central thing for me is health and happiness. As long as I have that, I am quite content. I can't bear to be unhappy." But what is your own answer?

I know what Jesus' answer was. Was it home? No -- though none has ever hallowed home-life as Jesus hallowed it. Work, then? No -- though none has toiled so terribly as the Son of God. Health and happiness? No -- though none has been responsible for nearly so much clean happiness and mental and physical health as Jesus. The central fact in life to Jesus was this -- "The Lord God Omnipotent Reigneth!"

Is that your answer? More blessed than home, unspeakably blessed as home may be; more crucial than work, be that work never so urgent; more vital than health and happiness, though sometimes, especially when you lose them, health and happiness seem to be the only things that matter --- greater and higher and deeper and more paramount than them all --- the fact of God. The power behind every thought of your brain and every beat of your heart and every breath of your body -- God! The One in Whom you live and move and have your being is God. The final, irreducible, and inescapable denominator of your universe is God. That was the conviction on which Christ staked His life and marched to Calvary; that is the conviction which inspired the saints of the ages; and that is the conviction which can turn very ordinary people like ourselves into men and women of whom Christ and the saints will not need to be ashamed; this conviction, strong as steel, firm as a rock, and stirring as a battle-cry: "The Lord God omnipotent reigneth."

To see God, to recognize Him, to adjust one's life to Him, to know His love, to obey His holy will, to know His redeeming power and abiding companionship -- there is no higher experience open to a human soul than this. What are some of the results of this cardinal conviction that the Lord God Omnipotent Reigneth?

1. It liberates life.

(1) Release from self-contempt.

One fact which modern psychology has been driving home to our minds is this, that there are multitudes of people today who are losing half the happiness which God intended them to have, and are being made quite unnecessarily miserable by inward repressions and conflicts with which they do not know how to deal. And all the time there lies in Christianity the power to end the conflict and to set the imprisoned soul free. What is the key with which Christ's religion unlocks the prison door? Nothing but the text. There is the Father of Whom even you are a son. Therefore, stand upon your feet, lift up your head and be free.

(2) Release from petty worries.

Every one knows how sometimes things which are comparatively unimportant can obsess the mind and blot out all the sunshine. For example, here is one to whom some injustice has been administered and he cannot get it out of his mind but broods over it until the last vestige of peace of soul has been destroyed, his whole outlook on life warped, and all his sky obliterated by the mists and fogs of a triviality. Tell such a one that "The Lord God omnipotent reigneth." Tell him to bring his worry into the light of that great truth, and just see how the fretting thing will fade and die.

Robert Browning wrote, "'Tis looking downward that makes one dizzy." The man who has his gaze riveted on the narrow little circle of his own experience, obsessed with the sticks and straws and dust of the floor, never thinking of the stars and the crown, cannot see life in true perspective. If only he would look away from all that into the facts of the Lord how that would reinforce and liberate him.

(3) Release from the fears of life.

Especially from the fear of tasks that seem too great for us. Life is always trying to make us lose our nerve and turn away from new responsibilities, saying like Jeremiah, "I can't do this! You must let me off: I am not the one for it. Please, get someone else." Why not, if "the Lord God omnipotent reigneth?"

2. It makes life worth while.

The children of Israel, as they sat by the rivers of Babylon and remembered Zion, wept. They could not sing their songs in a strange land. When people cannot sing their own most cherished songs, when the music has departed from the heart, life has lost its joy and the spirit of man its sense of worth.

There has always been more or less of gloom in human life. The skies have been black at intervals since the world began. During recent years we have been particularly aware of it. Some have even told us that the sun of the world's light and life is setting. Well, that depends on whether or not God is brought into the situation. If men today, like Pharaoh, harden their hearts to the majestic announcement that the Lord reigneth the worst is yet to come.

Not long ago, in a discussion group, various religious doctrines were criticized. At a certain point one young man broke in and said, "I would gladly give all I possess if I could believe in God as my father believed in Him." It was the acknowledgment of the disappointment and emptiness of a life which lacks the support and inspiration of religious faith. But why should anyone deprive himself of the cheer and hope and genuine worth which trust in God imparts? The inspiration, courage, joy and peace which Abraham, Moses, Augustine, Luther, Bunyan, Wesley, Spurgeon and Moody found and passed along with fervor to others found their meaning in God. Life to be worth while must find its meaning in Him.

3. It means that evil is doomed.

Text proclaims the ultimate defeat of evil in every shape and form. Look at the background of the book of Revelation. It is one of blood and smoke and martyrdom and reckless cynical laughter. Here you have the Rome of the Caesars and the church of the Galilean locked in the death-grapple. Here you have the mailed fist of Nero and Domitian smashing its way through the hopes and dreams of the saints. Here you have the second Babylon, mother of all the abomination of the earth, drunk with the blood of the friends of Jesus, laughing in the intoxication of her triumph, shrieking with laughter to see the poor, pathetic body of Christ being crushed and mangled and battered out of existence. That is the background when John took up his pen to write. And you and I look over his shoulder, wondering what his message is going to be. What can it be, we think, but an elegy and a lament? "The battle is lost! Our cause is ruined. There is nothing left but to sue for mercy." Is that what we see him writing? No! But this --- "Hallelujah! Babylon is fallen, is fallen!" Text. Because God is on His throne, evil is doomed. The mainspring of Christian hope and courage is the certainty that we are not fighting a losing battle, although it may seem so at times. Fight on then, you who have lost heart because your own conflict is so difficult, your tempter so strong and dogged and subtle. Fight on for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.

4. It affords comfort in sorrow.

Do you remember how the Psalmist in the twenty-ninth psalm sums up the story of the Flood in Genesis? He is looking back across the ages, and in imagination he can see that horror of the encroaching waters, rolling their waves higher and still higher, creeping up with slow, inexorable destruction and death, beating down all fragile human defences built against them -- until men and woman, staring at those mounting waters, felt terror clutching at their throats, for the end of the world seemed nigh. All that, he saw; but he saw something else as well. He cried, "The Lord sat as King at the Flood." Then, like a great shout -- "Yea, the Lord sitteth King for ever!"

And what of the floods of life? What shall we say of the days which every soul must know when your whole structure of things all your philosophy of life is threatening to come toppling down? What about the happinesses you build for yourself -- the plans you lay, the dreams you dream, the hopes you cherish and the heart's desires you yearn for -- and then, thundering and rolling mountain-high come the waves and the breakers, crashing down on that shore of dreams, leaving only some poor bits of wreckage behind? What then? Why then, the Lord sits as King at the flood, which simply means that the heartbreaking things of life have meaning and purposes and grace in them, for -- text.

There was once a flood called Calvary. And all the bitterness and ugliness, all the shame and sorrow of life, entered into that flood, and came beating around the brave soul of Jesus, sweeping Him down to the infamy of the death of the cross. What was God doing then? He was sitting as King at the flood, that surging flood of Calvary; and out of that grim cross He has brought the salvation of the world. If God did that with the cross of Jesus, He can also make your cross shine with glory.

5. It emphasizes the fact that we are accountable to Him.

Someone asked Daniel Webster what was the supreme idea that ever occupied his mind. He replied, "The sense of my individual responsibility to God." It is a staggering thought, is it not? Amos 4:12 - "Prepare to meet thy God" is an ominous message because it nearly always quickens a sense of alarm. This meeting with the supreme Judge is a serious matter. Pulpits today seldom sound Jonathan Edwards' theme of "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God." We have been placing the emphasis on divine love. In doing so we have given many the impression that God is only an indulgent Father and religion merely an affair of sentimentality and weakness.

The important matter now is that each one of us, in his own personal life and in all his relationships, should recognize Him and give Him the first place that is properly His. It cannot finally go well with you if you reject the sovereignty of the everlasting God. Nor can it go wrong with you if, without any reservations, you will yield to the blessed Redeemer of your soul. Tenderer than the kiss of a little child, mightier than the flashing lightnings of Heaven, He stands at the door of your heart and knocks. What will your answer be? Let Him in!