

Prophet
Isaiah 1:1, 10-20

The vision of Isaiah son of Amoz,
which he saw
concerning Judah and Jerusalem
in the days
of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah,
kings of Judah.

¹⁰ Hear the word of the LORD,
you rulers of Sodom!
Listen to the teaching of our God,
you people of Gomorrah!

¹¹ What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices?
says the LORD;
I have had enough of burnt-offerings of rams
and the fat of fed beasts;
I do not delight in the blood of bulls,
or of lambs, or of goats.

¹² When you come to appear before me,
who asked this from your hand?
Trample my courts no more;

¹³ bringing offerings is futile;
incense is an abomination to me.

New moon and sabbath and calling of convocation—
I cannot endure solemn assemblies with iniquity.

¹⁴ Your new moons and your appointed festivals
my soul hates;
they have become a burden to me,
I am weary of bearing them.

¹⁵ When you stretch out your hands,
I will hide my eyes from you;

even though you make many prayers,
I will not listen;

your hands are full of blood.

¹⁶ Wash yourselves;
make yourselves clean;
remove the evil of your doings
from before my eyes;

cease to do evil,
¹⁷ learn to do good;

seek justice,
rescue the oppressed,
defend the orphan,
plead for the widow.

¹⁸ Come now, let us argue it out,
says the LORD:

though your sins are like scarlet,
they shall be like snow;
though they are red like crimson,
they shall become like wool.

¹⁹ If you are willing and obedient,
you shall eat the good of the land;

²⁰ but if you refuse and rebel,
you shall be devoured by the sword;
for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.

Gospel
Luke 12:32-40

32 'Do not be afraid, little flock,
for it is your Father's good pleasure
to give you the kingdom.

33 Sell your possessions,
and give alms.

Make purses for yourselves
that do not wear out,
an unfailing treasure in heaven,
where no thief comes near
and no moth destroys.

34 For where your treasure is,
there your heart will be also.

35 'Be dressed for action
and have your lamps lit;

36 be like those
who are waiting for their master
to return from the wedding banquet,
so that they may open the door for him
as soon as he comes and knocks.

37 Blessed are those slaves
whom the master finds alert
when he comes;

truly I tell you,
he will fasten his belt
and have them sit down to eat,
and he will come
and serve them.

38 If he comes
during the middle of the night,
or near dawn,
and finds them so,
blessed are those slaves.

39 'But know this:
if the owner of the house
had known
at what hour
the thief was coming,
he would not have let his house be broken into.

40 You also must be ready,
for the Son of Man is coming
at an unexpected hour.'

Isaiah - 44 vs 3

³ For I will pour water on the thirsty land
and streams on the dry ground;

I will pour my spirit upon your descendants
and my blessing on your offspring.

Reading the Prophet This Week

The church's lectionary introduces Isaiah this week,
Moving to Judah in the south, and to the end of 8th century
From Amos and Hosea preaching to Israel in the north

If an original prophet Isaiah preached at least 731 to 701BCE
Through this flurry of the last kings of Judah, names listed here
Assyria defeated Israel, besieged Jerusalem

Isaiah's call in c.6, clearly tied to Uzziah's death in 734BCE
Also ties the prophet to the temple sanctuary,
Corresponding to a heavenly palace throne room

Samaria's fall has begun, completed in 721BCE
Israel is the cautionary tale, a 'second Sodom' –
Will Jerusalem be a second Gomorrah?

God challenges the Judahites
Denying mechanistic protection from sacrifices
Challenging their sufficiency in bloody hands

Sacrifice is not abolished –
Theirs just lack proper intention,
And are offered inadequately

The stronger accusation is moral:
Harm to oppressed poor, widow, orphan,
Amounting to blood guilt, and blood punishment

The threat is death by sword of invaders
The sword cut making a mouth of a wound
The promise, red washed to white wool

Where have you heard that image,
In Québécois *pure laine* xenophobia
Or evangelical 'washed in the blood' exclusivism?

Next week, the lectionary is from Isaiah 5,
Imagery of a vineyard gone wrong,
More of the threat to Judah

Isaiah's a long book, broadly shaped, edited:
c1-39 as the 'first' Isaiah anticipating fall of Judah
'second' Isaiah c40-66 – assumes exile in 597, 587, 582BCE

Even in 'first' Isaiah,
C13-23 'oracles against the nations'
talk about the fall of Babylon
(to Persia in 539BCE)
Either prescient vision – or later editing

Even in 'second' Isaiah,
Scholars split 40-55 as a voice from exile in Babylon
And 56-66 as a voice during restoration (post 539BCE)

So, you might place the verse, 43:3,
chosen for hymn sing Sunday,
Isaiah 43:3,
a hope for water in a desert,
As a different, exilic hope and promise
Separate from this lectionary reading of threat

How is our circumstance like, or unlike:
First Isaiah in the last decades of Judah
Second Isaiah in the century of exile in Babylon
Third Isaiah in restoration of a second Temple time?

Is 'prophecy' simply prediction?
If so, is it magical, supernatural?
If not, and it's editorial hindsight, is it 'fake'?

If the events remembered or anticipated are past,
Does this still show the 'shape of things' for us?

Reading the Gospel This Week

Here's another reading peculiar to Luke,
Apparently all about money, like last week –
But veering into mortality and judgment, again

(Matt 6:19-21 is a partial parallel to the early bit,
Matt 25:1-13 a similar parable about wise/foolish virgins
Matt 24:43-44 a partial parallel to the end bit)

Luke's selection and arrangement of Jesus quotes
Flows from this version of 'consider the lilies',
In contrasting Caesar's world with God's reign

That 'travel light' advice echoes a Luke theme
the sending of the 70 (or 72), '2 by 2', with nothing
trusting that they'll have what they need

Try to get the story straight from its approximate parallels
(Mark 13:35-36 has one too)
Who is waiting how, for whom?

What's the reward for being alert and vigilant,
Good stewards, security guards for the owner,
Are assessed by resisting what or whom?

This set of 'post-it notes' continues,
Inviting discussion about the role of stewards –
But allegorizing every character is hard – or even wrong

So, what's our job? Protect assets for owners?
Maybe it's not all about money after all –
What's your treasure – and what's your timeline?

Is this about the day you are tested, the day you die,
Or the day the world ends and Jesus returns?
In any event: what's your legacy, your measure?