

Have You Not Heard?

Sermon Notes for Feb 4, 2018 at Brentwood

Psalm 147:1-11 (570) & Isaiah 40:21-31 (845)



**Have you not known? Have you not heard? Has it not been told you from the beginning? Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth?
(Isaiah 40:21)**

Provocative Ponderings that Call Forth Our Potential in Christ

The 16 chapters in Isaiah from 40-55 focus on God's plan for God's creation, running from creation through redemption and beyond – these words were heard and remembered by a people who were discouraged and despairing – the core message was that God was in charge – not just of their personal lives, but of the whole flow of human and natural history – God continued to bring about surprising changes to fulfill God's purposes – even to the point of working through the Persian imperialism of Cyrus to free Israel from Babylon – as Canadian biblical scholar and Christian educator, James D Smart, emphasized, an important and instructive example of God working through people outside of the church – we don't have a monopoly on the God who is lord over all creation and we are not the only place where that God is working

- A crucial truth to hear from this passage is that God is in control – that's a message that many of you know deep in your hearts – I remember particularly Chrissie and May saying this over and over as they endured their various aches, and pains, and falls, and failings – and Terry is especially faithful in continuing that tradition among us – but these were people who grew up in a Scotland and a Canada where the basic plot of the Christian story, the Christian worldview, was well-known in the schools, in the community, as well as in the churches – you may not have been involved in the church, but the Christian story shaped the values and morality of the broader community – that world is gone – Stuart Macdonald and Brian Clarke in *Leaving Christianity* (2017) – detailed documenting of the dramatic and irreversible decline of the influence of Christianity in Canada
- if we don't tell the story, who will? – the community that remembered and passed on Isaiah's words was speaking to their own people who had been raised in these traditions but had forgotten or rejected them – we are living in a land where even the basics of the story are not known by many – soon to be most, if the statistical trends continue – and many claiming to tell that story have so distorted its core message of justice, kindness, and humility that many more are repulsed and are rejecting Christianity because of such distortions – eg the Trumpist wing

*Notes for a sermon preached by Brian Fraser,
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of American evangelicalism - the prophetic words of Isaiah this morning remind us of how important it is to tell the story according to the full biblical witness, to tell the story of how things really are because of God's love for us, regardless of how indifferent or resistant to God's presence, purpose, and power people have become in their rebellions against their true natures as beloved friends of God

- the Brentwood Declaration is our own humble attempt to tell that full story so the Holy Spirit can work through us to make it known in our circles of influence – so we can know better, hear better, understand better that Jesus Christ is Lord of the whole creation – like the people who originally heard these words and thought they were important enough to write down and pass down from generation to generation, we are reminded in worship each week and in our daily devotions of who this God is, what this God calls us to be, and how this God wants us to contribute to the redemption of the whole of creation – that's what we are reminded of and fed for at this table this morning

So, what are we going to do with this ...

Here is my invitation and request this week – take the Brentwood Declaration pamphlet home with you – read it over at least three times this week – pray that it will deepen your participation in God's mission in the world, in the work and witness of this congregation, and in your immediate circles of influence (family, work, volunteering, etc)

Your Notes ...

Today's Framework for our Prayers

Thanks – for persistently speaking your word into your world in simple but surprising ways to draw us further into your mission of justice and kindness with all due humility ... [a time of silent prayer]

Help – in seeing your work throughout your creation – in and through those not yet convinced of your Lordship – in that vast invisible church that is working towards justice and kindness in the dark places in your world ... [a time of silent prayer]

Awe – that your light shines with such mercy and grace on all that you have created ... [a time of silent prayer]

Note – *the image of the broad and brilliant influence of the Holy Spirit for this Sunday is by the Rev John Stuart, a delightful Scot transplanted to Tennessee. More of his work can be found at www.stushieart.com.*