

**Victory Lutheran Church- Jacksonville, FL**  
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**Worship Series: *The King Shall Come***  
**Service Theme: *He Is Coming to Save Us***  
**Sermon Theme: *Come and Save Us!***  
**December 3, 2023—Isaiah 64:1-9**

***“Don’t make me come down there!”*** Does that phrase make you feel a little panicky? If so, then there were probably times in your childhood when you were playing downstairs, or down in the basement and things got a little too rowdy with shouting or screaming; or things got a little too rough and somebody got hurt and started wailing. And you’d hear footsteps approach the top of the stairs, followed by one of your parents, loudly warning, ***“Don’t make me come down there!”*** Panic ensued because if you didn’t shape up, and they did indeed have to come down there—somebody was going to get it! If they came down there, you knew they’d put an end to your shenanigans with swift power and justice. So you most definitely did NOT want them to “come down there.”

But that’s precisely why people in today’s Scripture readings wanted God to “come down there.” They wanted God to come down and put an end to their enemies with swift power and justice! And I think we get their desire.

The Jews in the Palm Sunday crowd lived under the oppressive rule of the hated Romans. As they shouted “Hosanna!” and hailed Jesus as God’s chosen Messiah, they were expecting his ride into Jerusalem to pre-empt a powerful coup, and a powerful political regime that would restore Israel to the glory days of King David! They wanted God’s anointed Messiah to come with impressive power; to bring wrath and destruction on their enemies, and to save them!

Isaiah wrote the words of our sermon text with God’s prophetic insight into the future, that the people of Judah would be conquered and taken away into exile by the Babylonians. God prophesied through Isaiah that these ruthless enemies would besiege their city, tear down their

walls, desecrate God’s temple, steal their possessions, kill and abuse their family, friends, and neighbors, and deport them from their homeland to a pagan empire half the world away. Who would blame them for crying out to God, **Come and Save Us!** Who would begrudge them the desire for God to “come down there!” and display his swift power and justice by freeing his people and destroying their enemies?

It’s easy to picture Isaiah’s words coming from the pleading lips of the oppressed Jews exiled in Babylon: ***“Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains would tremble before you! As when fire sets twigs ablaze and causes water to boil, come down to make your name known to your enemies and cause the nations to quake before you! For when you did awesome things that we did not expect, you came down, and the mountains trembled before you.”***

They wanted God to tear open the heavens, come down, and save them. They wanted power! Fire! Destruction! Vengeance! Justice! They wanted to see God doing the kind of powerful acts of deliverance their forefathers had witnessed. They wanted the angel of death cutting down every Egyptian firstborn. They wanted God parting the Red Sea to deliver his people, then destroying their pursuing enemies. They wanted the fire of God consuming Elijah’s altar and defeating the prophets of Baal. They wanted the angel of the Lord decimating the besieging Assyrian army while they slept. They wanted God to come down with impressive power and justice, pouring down wrath and destruction on their enemies, in order to save them.

We get where they’re coming from, because don’t we sometimes feel the same way? Living in this world so broken by sin and evil, we’d also like to see God come down in power and destroy our enemies! Wouldn’t we like to see him bring justice on that bully at school who makes your life miserable? Or that jerk at your office who gets ahead through deceit and backstabbing? Or that unscrupulous politician who never keeps their promises? Or your ex who broke your heart and your ability to trust? Wouldn’t we like to see God display his power and justice by silencing the atheist, the Satanist, the false prophet, and all

those who mock, ridicule, and persecute his people? If nothing else, can't God at least use his power to grant us success in our endeavors, provide us with wealth, and free us from struggles and suffering? We want God to come down with impressive power and justice, pouring down wrath and destruction on our enemies, in order to save us! After all, as Isaiah says, ***"You come to the help of those who gladly do right, who remember your ways."***

But that's the problem, isn't it? If God were to follow through on our desires-- that he come down in power and justice and destroy the wicked and all those who oppose him-- what would the implications be for us? It's almost as if Isaiah's request gets stuck in his throat: Tear open the sky, Lord! Come down in power and justice and destroy the wicked! But...oh... ***"When we continued to sin against [your ways], you were angry. How then can we be saved? All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away. No one calls on your name or strives to lay hold of you; for you have hidden your face from us and have given us over to our sins."***

It seems so simple to our minds. God should always come down in power, wrath, and justice on all those who sin against him. But in reality, we have to confess that means we'd also be calling God to come down in power, wrath, and justice against us too!

Isaiah acknowledged that the people of Judah wouldn't be innocent victims in their defeat and exile by the Babylonians. Their pervasive sin and unfaithfulness to God necessitated his calling them to repentance through this defeat and exile. Their turning their backs on God completely warranted him turning his back on them. As unholy people before a holy God, on their own the people of Judah were just as worthy of judgment, destruction, and justice from God as their enemies were.

And the same is true for us. Aren't we just as capable and guilty of harming someone's body or reputation as the bully at school? Aren't we just as capable and guilty of deceit and betrayal as the jerk at the

office? Aren't we just as capable and guilty of breaking our promises as the unscrupulous politician? Aren't we just as capable and guilty of breaking hearts and trust as your ex? Aren't we just as capable and guilty of loving, worshiping, trusting in, and prioritizing other things ahead of God as the atheist, Satanist, false prophets, and persecutors? Therefore, as unholy people before a holy God, aren't we just as deserving to receive God's power, wrath, and justice as the enemies we pray for him to come down and save us from? Just like rambunctious kids in the basement, we definitely do NOT want our heavenly Father to come down here, or we're going to get it!

But as Isaiah, whose name means ***"The LORD saves,"*** gratefully, humbly confesses, ***"Yet you, LORD, are our Father. We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand. Do not be angry beyond measure, LORD; do not remember our sins forever. Oh, look on us, we pray, for we are all your people."*** If a good father has to act on his threat, ***"Don't make me come down there!"*** and actually go down there, he'll do so in order to lovingly discipline his children so that he can teach them obedience, or protect them from further harm! Their heavenly Father allowed the people of Judah to be taken away to Babylon in exile as discipline; a wake up call to get them to return to their Father instead of continuing to turn their backs on him. And God promised that when the time was right, rather than destroying them like they deserved, he would bring a remnant of them back home to Jerusalem. And he did, just as he promised!

In love, the all-powerful holy God knew he couldn't come down in all of his power, glory, wrath, and justice, or we'd be destroyed. So instead, God came down in weakness and humility, in order to save us! As the Apostle Paul writes in Philippians 2, ***"[Jesus Christ] being in very nature God did not consider equality with God something to be grasped but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness."***

That helpless baby, whose mother was a virgin, whose palace was a stable, whose cradle was a manger—that is God, come down to us not in power and wrath, but in weakness and humility. That man, riding

not a warhorse, but a humble donkey into Jerusalem—that is God, come down to us not in power and wrath, but in weakness and humility. That man who rode into Jerusalem, not to establish a powerful earthly kingdom, but to suffer and die—that is God, come down to us not in power and wrath, but in weakness and humility. That man on the cross, dying the death of a criminal; that man on the cross, the sinless one suffering Hell for a world of sinners—that is God come down to us not in power and wrath, but in weakness and humility.

And he does it all, so that the cries of ***“Hosanna!”*** “Lord, save us!” on Palm Sunday would be answered with a resounding yes. Not in the way they expected—but exactly in the way that they needed. Because the same omniscient son of God who knew exactly what would happen on that Palm Sunday, and exactly what would happen in the week that followed, knew exactly what needed to be done to answer our plea, ***“Lord, come save us!”***

Still today, he comes down to save us in ways that don’t look powerful. In simple words read around the dinner table, or in quiet bedrooms, or spoken from the lips of flawed, sinful messengers. In that simple word combined with simple bread and wine, connected to body and blood humbly given in suffering and death. In simple water combined with the simple words, poured over foreheads. In order to save, God continues to come down to us in simplicity and humility, but with so much power to change hearts, defeat the forces of darkness, and give life that never ends.

One day, that God who came down in weakness and humility will come again with all of his power, glory, and justice on display. But because God was willing to come down in weakness and humility in order to save undeserving sinners like us, we can look forward to that day with eager joy. Come down here and save us, Lord Jesus, just as you did the first time. Come, Lord Jesus, quickly come!