

Ben Libby

Sermon

June 6th, Pentecost Sunday

To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. (Rev 1:5-6 NKJ)

Our sermon text for this Sunday are the first 6 verses of Isaiah 44:

But now listen, O Jacob my servant, O Israel, whom I have chosen. ² This is what the LORD, your Maker, says, the LORD who formed you from the womb, who will help you. Do not be afraid, my servant Jacob, Jeshurun, whom I have chosen, ³ because I will pour out water upon a thirsty land, and streams of water upon dry ground. I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants. ⁴ They will spring up like a tree in a grassy meadow, like willows beside flowing streams. ⁵ One person will say, "I belong to the LORD." Another will be called by the name of Jacob. Another will write on his hand, "Belonging to the LORD," and he will take the name of Israel. ⁶ This is what the LORD, the King of Israel, Israel's Redeemer, the LORD of Armies, says. I am the first, and I am the last. Except for me, there is no god.

This is the Word of the LORD!!!

Mercy, Grace, and peace are yours through your God and Father, and through His Son, Jesus Christ, true God and Man, dear fellow Sons and Daughters of the King...

"You need help?" How many ways could those words be understood? Some one might ask you this if you were at a store and look like you can't find the thing you drove there for. Or, if your car broke down and another person stopped, they might ask you those same words. They see that you need help, but perhaps help is on the way, so they pulled over to see if you could use their help. Or it could be used in a completely different context. It could be more of a statement than a question. "You NEED help" might be something you would say at an intervention for a loved one.

Do you need help? This weekend was graduation at ILC. When I graduated high school, I did so with a pretty average GPA. Looking back at it, I think I understand why I didn't do better. It wasn't only due to my intelligence. One of the reasons I didn't excel was the fact that I often was afraid to ask for help. Many times, I think I didn't understand the concept, and instead of trying to figure out what I didn't understand, I just went along with it. This is something that teachers try to train students to deal with. There is

nothing wrong with raising your hand and asking for help. If you don't actually ask for it, then the help you require may never arrive.

Today is Pentecost Sunday. It is the day when we celebrate the outpouring of the Holy Spirit some 50 days after Christ's resurrection. 10 days prior, Jesus ascended into heaven. But before He did, He told His disciples that He wouldn't just leave. Rather, He was going to send the Helper! **"But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me. 27 "And you also will bear witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning. (Joh 15:26-27 NKJ)**

There were many things that did not make sense to the disciples until that day. When we talk about Pentecost, we focus on the tongues of fire and the different languages. But there was more to it than just the outward signs. There were things inwardly that would click, things that Jesus said and did that now suddenly made sense. Peter showcased that. Afterward, he preached a tremendous sermon, the

result of which was the addition of about 3,000 souls to the church.

Help is always given to us by God. It is given when we ask for it, and more often it is given even without us knowing or asking for it. It's not just students who are bad at asking for help, it's mankind in general. But praise be to God that He sends us His Holy Helper. **He is our help since the beginning, His help produces confidence, and there's really no other help besides Him.** Let us ask for this help always, and let's ask for it now! We pray: LORD, SANCTIFY US BY YOUR TRUTH, YOUR WORD IS TRUTH, AMEN!

The Pentecost was a long time coming. It wasn't just foreshadowed by what Jesus said about it. Peter got up to speak that Pentecost sermon, He quoted from the book of Joel. But we also see it referenced here in our sermon text from Isaiah.

Isaiah's prophecy is multifaceted. Here, he speaks comfort and promises restoration to a people 100 years in the future. He is speaking to the people who would be carried away in captivity and would eventually return. But he also speaks to the Pentecost, and speaks even to us here today:

But now listen, O Jacob my servant, O Israel, whom I have chosen. ² This is what the LORD, your Maker, says, the LORD who formed you from the womb, who will help you. Do not be afraid, my servant Jacob, Jeshurun, whom I have chosen

The names spoken here are significant. He speaks to both Jacob and Israel, which were originally two names for the same man. When the twin boys Esau and Jacob were born, even though Esau was the first born, Jacob would receive the birthright. This was foreshadowed by Jacob's birth and subsequent name. **Afterward his brother came out, and his hand took hold of Esau's heel; so his name was called Jacob. (Gen 25:26 NKJ)**

The name Jacob means, "heal holder" or "supplanter". That's not super flattering. But God would rebrand him. When Jacob wrestled with God,

literally, God said, **"Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel; for you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed."** (Gen 32:28 NKJ) The nation Israel would often struggle with God. Luther said, "Israel means a prince or God's fighter; that is, he who wrestles with God and wins. This happens through that faith which holds so firmly to God's Word, until it overcomes God's wrath and obtains God as the gracious Father."

That struggle would continue throughout the generations. Eventually, the nation would be divided, the Southern nation would be known as Judah and the Northern nation would be called Israel. When Isaiah speaks to both Jacob and Israel, he is speaking to the turbulent past of that nation. But he is also speaking about a nation which was already wiped out. This restoration is a complete one, one that is exemplified through the Holy Christian Church today.

Then we have this other obscure name. Jeshurun. It's only used a few times in the Bible. It's more of a poetic name. It means, "the upright/honest/godly one". Perhaps this name is the goal of both Israel and Jacob.

What is the point of all of that? It is the comfort that God spoke to His people, to the people He Himself had named. He says here, **This is what the LORD, your Maker, says, the LORD who formed you from the womb, who will help you.** Saying that He is our help is not nearly going far enough. Not only does He help us, He created us in the first place! He is the one who formed you in the womb! We did not get here by happy coincident. King David puts it like this: **For You formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother's womb. 14 I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Marvelous are Your works, And that my soul knows very well. (Psa 139:13-14 NKJ)**

God is our help. The problem is that we easily forget about just how much help we truly need. The world denies creation or that there is a God at all. We want to take credit for everything that we do. But there

is no world without God. He's the One who made it. We would be no where without Him.

Look at it from the nation of Israel's point of view. Who was responsible for the nation of Israel? God was there when Jacob ran away from home with nothing. God was there when he returned with a large family and much property. God preserved them through famine and slavery. He gave them the promised land. It was there that Jesus would be born. The spiritual Israel, the Church, also would grow under God's help. The Helper came, and the Apostles were able to do great things. God is the creator and the helper.

Once you realize just how much He has helped you, you can go on to do tremendous things! **I will pour out water upon a thirsty land, and streams of water upon dry ground. I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants. ⁴ They will spring up like a tree in a grassy meadow, like willows beside flowing streams.**

There is growth. Even in hospitable places. Look at us here in the Pacific Northwest. You wouldn't think the Word of God would grow here. It seems like a place very much set against what God's Word stands for and speaks. Yet here we are. The fact of the matter is that God can do great things wherever He wants.

Where did those men go after Pentecost? Jesus told His disciples before He ascended, **"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."** (Act 1:8 NKJ) Jerusalem, the city that killed Jesus, would become a central hub for Christianity. Persecution suffered there would push Christians further and further away from it. They would go to Samaria, a region which was despised by the Jews. Now, it was another place that the Gospel thrived. It would move up and over, into Greece and Asia Minor. Eventually it would go to Europe, and then on to the ends of the earth.

When you have help, you can do things that you wouldn't normally be able to do. The employee who gives you help in the store saves you time by telling you where to go. The concerned citizen who pulls over to help you with your car troubles can save you from having to pay someone to come out. The person who sees that you have a problem can point out the fact that you might not have previously been aware of, "I need help".

But the help is only as good as the helper. If the employee in the store doesn't know much, they are not helpful. If the person who pulls over knows nothing about cars, they really aren't that helpful either. If the person who says you have a problem in fact has a problem themselves, then you might disregard that good advice.

But that's the beauty about the Holy Spirit. He usually doesn't get much attention. Why is that? Well, the Spirit is the One who props up the rest of the Godhead. Without the Spirit, we would not know about Jesus or believe in Him. Without the Spirit, we would be just lost. But the Spirit is professional. He works in you to know the truth that the Word speaks.

The outward signs that were done on Pentecost get a lot of attention. But that's not what Pentecost was about. It was about the Spirit filling the disciples and growing the Church. Today, the Spirit is at work again. He works through the Word spoken in church and tells you that Jesus died for you. That you are forgiven. What better help could you get?

One person will say, "I belong to the LORD." Another will be called by the name of Jacob. Another will write on his hand, "Belonging to the LORD," and he will take the name of Israel.

Not only does He help us, He dwells within us! Not only did God become Man, flesh and blood just like us. God doesn't just dwell among us, He also dwells within us! The Spirit resides inside of you! You have been made temples of the Holy Spirit. That Spirit that lives inside of you assures you that you belong to the LORD and the LORD belongs to you. We are given the LORD's name. We are Christians!

And really, when you think about it, there isn't any other forms of help out there. There's only One God. People will look for help. But so few actually look in the right place! That help is always available. But it's only available from the LORD! **This is what the LORD, the King of Israel, Israel's Redeemer, the LORD of Armies, says. I am the first, and I am the last. Except for me, there is no god.**

When it comes to help, the LORD is the beginning and the help. He's it!

When it comes to the topic of help, I can't help but think about the Beatles song of the same title. How does that song start? "HELP! I need somebody. HELP! Not just anybody. HELP! You know I need someone. HELP!!!" I think those words are supposed to be a plea to a girlfriend or something. But they also apply to us and our spiritual needs. WE NEED HELP!!! We are dead in our trespasses and sins. We need help in the worst way. There's nothing that we can do about it. We need somebody to help us. But not just anybody. He knows that we need someone. And that's where the Helper comes in. He's the Helper but He also lets you know that you need help in the first place!

How does God describe Himself here? He's the ALL CAPS LORD. Whenever you see the word lord in all capital letters, it means it is talking about Jehovah, the I AM God, Yahweh. He is the King of Israel, not just the leader of that nation, but the Head and King of the Church. He's the LORD of Armies, that is, He is the God of hosts. He has all authority on heaven and on earth. And of course, He is our redeemer. He has bought us back from sin and death by the precious blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He is the first and the last. The Alpha and Omega. There is only one God, and when it comes to help, there's no one else who can help you in the way that you need it.

God, the help from the beginning, created us which this knowledge built in. People today try to deny that truth, but it is ingrained into every person. It's the natural knowledge of God. Everyone knows there is a God and that we have done wrong against Him. It's a

great jumping off point, but the natural knowledge of God is not enough.

The natural knowledge of God lets you know some basic truths. But it just lets you know that you are doomed. You need the revealed knowledge of God to get you down the road that the natural knowledge starts. The revealed knowledge of God lets you know exactly who that God is, all those titles here. It also lets you know that you have sinned against Him, but He has done something about it. The revealed knowledge comes from the Word of God, and it reveals this most important truth. **"Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." (Act 4:12 NKJ)**

When Peter spoke that phrase after Pentecost, he was talking about Jesus. But who helped Peter to get there? **"Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. (Mat 16:17 NKJ)** Peter got there by the Father. The Father sent the Spirit to Peter, and through that faith worked by the Spirit, Peter was able to make a confession which Jesus would build the Church upon. It is only through the all caps LORD, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, that we are able to get helpful help, the help that saves!

"You need help?" This can be understood in many ways. Depending on how you understand it, you may think that you do need help.

But spiritually, we all need help! You may think "I need no help". Maybe you have convinced yourself that the natural knowledge of God is not true, and therefore you need no help for there is no God. Maybe, you think you need no help because you can handle it yourself. You may not think you need help because you know where to find what you need. But none of these are the case. We need help because we are dead in our sins and we can't be holy like God has demanded. We need help because there is nothing we can do help ourselves. We only do what hurts ourselves. We need help, we need to know that

we need help, and we need to know where to go for that help!

That's where the Spirit, the Helper comes in. He tells us that we are helped. We've always been helped! We were helped when we were in the womb. We were helped when the Word first came to us. We were helped in the greatest way when Jesus went to the cross. The help is immense. It is overwhelming. It produces in us the confidence to offer help to others. We all need help, so don't be afraid to ask for it! It's always there! It is the help of the LORD, and there is no other help besides His that is actually helpful. The LORD has helped us, He will continue to Help us, that help will help us in life and death, and it will deliver us into heaven! Praise the LORD, for He has helped us and He is our Help forever! AMEN!