

**Isaiah 62:1-5**

We cannot hear these words at this time without thinking of the people who live in Haiti, can we? If any country right now on the face of this earth feels forsaken and desolate, it would be that country. Have you seen the devastation? Have you watched the news footage showing how the earthquake destroyed that tiny nation? I was on the phone with a pastor from Indiana last week who has been to Haiti many times. Not only are scores of Haitians dead and injured; they also fear for the lives of many missionaries and medical missionaries, many of them Lutheran, whom they have not heard from since the quake. At the very least, let us keep them all in our prayers; and can we not help them also with our offerings? I fear the worst is yet to come because of the lack of food and water, and the spread of disease which is certain to follow.

There may be a time in everyone's life when we feel like the land of Haiti. For the Israelites it was after their country was destroyed and they were carried away into captivity. It was no earthquake that did this. It was the Babylonians who leveled Jerusalem to the ground. Because you and I dwell in the same sinful world that the Israelites lived in, and that the Haitians live in, we too will at times, like them, feel forsaken and desolate. You may never live through a horrific earthquake. You may never be assaulted by enemies. Yet even here in Augusta where we seem to be safe from massive earthquakes, hurricanes, murders, and attacks from terrorists--even here we can live with an emptiness inside of us; we can look at our troubles and wonder whether God has forsaken us; even here life can be pretty desolate at times.

If you were an Israelite living in the Sixth Century B.C., all you wanted was to come home...to leave the land of Babylonia and rebuild your houses and cities in the land of Judah. If you are living in Haiti today, all you want is help. With your home destroyed, loved ones dead, injured, or missing, you need help and you need it now. Compared to these troubles, our own troubles are so insignificant. And yet they are our troubles, and no trouble is too small for our Lord. In Cana He helped a couple who ran out of wine at their wedding. God heard the cries of His people in Babylonia and He helped them. He hears the cries for the people in Haiti and He is helping through rescue workers. And He hears your cries as well.

Maybe your cry is from a lonely heart. Maybe you cry out because of a sickness in your family. Maybe you cry because of bills that you cannot pay. Maybe it's because a friend has betrayed you. Troubles do not always come from earthquakes. But our troubles can, like an earthquake, shake us pretty hard and turn us away from ourselves to the Lord for help.

You are not going to see God sending helicopters filled with relief workers to help you with your problems. Trucks are not going to roll down your street with food, supplies, and money. You're not going to see water turned into wine to save the day. But you will receive God's help in the wine given to you this day. God does not hide His face from your troubles. He jumps in feet-first to rescue you. You could not travel to Haiti right now if you wanted to. They would not let you in. And perhaps you and I have been telling God the same thing. We need help with our troubles, yet we have been keeping His rescue efforts out of our lives. We do not attend Bible Study very well. We rarely read His Word in our home. Even here in church we come more to make an appearance than to cling to His words with an eager heart. God is jumping feet-first into your life, but are we really wanting the help that He comes to give?

It took seventy years before God brought the Israelites back home. Jesus turned water into wine the very day the wine ran out. God is helping Haiti right now, but only He knows how long it will take

before all there are helped. God's help for you is as close as your baptism; as close as the bread and wine on this altar; as near as His words coming into your ears. And His words are the same words He spoke to His people through Isaiah: "You shall no more be termed Forsaken, and your land shall no more be termed Desolate; but you shall be called My Delight is in Her, and your land Married."

No matter how forsaken you may feel, this is not who you are. God has claimed you; your baptism is evidence of this. He delights in you as a young man delights in his new bride. It is true that you and I often live in such a way that our Lord is not in the picture with us. We leave Him alone. We forsake His Word. We delight not in His salvation, but in what this world has to offer. This does not change who you are. You are married to your Lord. He will never divorce you no matter how adulterous we are. He will never lose His delight over you even though we sin against Him day after day. His love for you never fails. All your sins, all your wrong-doings, all your bad thoughts and hurtful words are forgiven. Jesus' death for you makes this so.

Picture a young couple newly married. The young wife stubs her toe and cries out. Will not her husband rush to her side? This is the picture Isaiah portrays for you. No matter how slight, or how great and troublesome your problems in life, your Lord is by your side. He does not push you away; He draws you close with words of mercy. He doesn't just sympathize; He heals your wounds and makes you whole again; He gives you His very body and blood so that you have His strength in you, His peace, His hope, His life, His forgiveness. You or I may be the most unlovable person in the world, but God loves you. You are His delight. He loves nothing more than to forgive you and to care for all your needs day after day.

This earthquake in Haiti, some are saying, is a sign of God's wrath. Yet we know that earthquakes and famines, and all sorts of troubles come, and will come, because we live in a dying world. These are death throes which point to the end. But Jesus is coming, and He, your Husband, is even now here by your side--so that whatever earthquakes shake your life, whatever troubles cause you concern, whatever guilt is upon your heart--Jesus puts His words within you: "You are My Delight...To you I am married forever." And He, your Savior, rejoices to calm your fears, ease your troubles, and forgive your sins always. Amen.