

Day One

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul talks about the Church as a body whose every part works together with all the others for the good of the body – for its proper functioning. Team sports become a good illustration and also a place where the application of what Paul writes is critical to the success of the team.

There are no insignificant parts and there are no superior parts. Every part has its function and if one part doesn't do its job, then the whole body suffers. I don't care how good the quarterback is, if his offensive line doesn't block for him, he will spend the whole game lying on his back. It would be the same for the running back. The offense would go nowhere.

In the Church, the problem isn't so much folks not doing their job, but thinking that they don't have a job – that they aren't necessary for the proper working of the body – because I'm not an eye, I don't belong to the body. Many don't know what their gifts are or feel as if they have no gifts – nothing to contribute.

But God has placed us in His Body right where we need to be. We need to pray to God to give us eyes to see the opportunities He gives to us to use the gifts He has given for the building up of His Body. We need to ask God to help us see and respond trusting Him to work through us to accomplish His purposes.

Day Two

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Here in Isaiah 35, we see evidence of what is called the great reversal, It is a word of promise spoken to a people who have been left destitute. They are like the desert. They are a parched land. They are dried up and wasting away.

So God speaks to them when they will be glad – when they will rejoice and burst into bloom. Water will gush forth. The burning sand will become a pool. It will be a time of peace and security.

And it is a time that God will bring to pass. He will come and His gifts will be in His hands. That is the good news for us. God comes with His gifts of forgiveness and eternal life. He comes through the means of grace (His Word, Baptism and the Lord's Supper) to be present with us – to cause us to become streams of living water that bring refreshment to those around us.

Day Three

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Here in Isaiah 11, we see God's promise to restore all of His creation to the state it enjoyed before Adam and Eve sinned. The picture painted here of God's creatures existing together in peace (They will neither harm or destroy) is how it was when God looked on all that He had created and said that it was very good.

Jesus, the Son of God (the Branch of Jesse's stump) has accomplished this through His life, death and resurrection. He has overcome the power of sin and death setting His creation free from their chains. He has swallowed up death in His life. Righteousness is His belt and by sharing that righteousness with us, we are now children of God – holy and blameless.

These promises are a now and not yet kind of thing. They are now by faith in Jesus Christ, but we are not living in the full reality of that promise fulfilled. That day is yet to come. But it will come because Jesus is faithful and He will bring to completion all that He has promised and given to us.

Day Four

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What Isaiah speaks here in chapter 9, has been fulfilled in Christ. Even though He was born in Bethlehem, He began His ministry in Galilee of the Gentiles. He is the light that has dawned on those living in darkness. And He shattered the yoke that burdened them (and us).

By His life, death and resurrection Jesus destroyed the power of sin and death to hold us captive any longer. We have been joined to a new master who gives us life. Jesus is our Lord. We have become subject to Him – dependent on Him for life.

And His light still dawns through God's Word. Whether it is being read or spoken, the light who is Jesus

Christ shines. The hope that is ours in Jesus and the resurrection that He shares with us shines forth. And we become beacons of that light as we share that hope with others we know.

May His light continue to shine in this dark world drawing others to Him.

Day Five

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Isaiah 7:10-17 deals with an issue of trust. Ahaz is told by God through Isaiah to ask God for a sign. And Ahaz won't do it. He won't, as he says, put the Lord to the test. And that is generally good advice. Putting God to the test could imply that one doesn't trust God to keep His promises.

But that's not the real issue of trust here. Ahaz doesn't trust Isaiah as a prophet – as a spokesman for God. If God Himself had told Ahaz, then maybe his response would have been different. But Isaiah is a man. And Ahaz doesn't trust his word.

And if it was his word, then Ahaz would be doing well not to trust it. But God is speaking through Isaiah, just as God speaks to us through His written Word. If we don't trust the messenger (God's written word), then we won't trust the message.

And that's where a lot of people are today. They don't believe that Scripture is God's Word. They think that, at the very best, it is God's Word that has been altered by men over time. At worst, they think that it is just the writings of men and carries no more authority than any other writings.

But it is God's Word. And Jesus is the Word made flesh. Jesus' word carries some weight – carries a great deal of weight – because the tomb is empty. If Jesus had not risen from the dead, then we could indeed say that the Bible is just another book. But He did validating all that He said and promised. We can trust Him at His Word because He lives.