

## Monday, March 31st--Isaiah 58:8-14

**8** Then your light will break forth like the dawn,  
and your healing will quickly appear;  
then your righteousness will go before you,  
and the glory of the LORD will be your rear guard.

**9** Then you will call, and the LORD will answer;  
you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I.

“If you do away with the yoke of oppression,  
with the pointing finger and malicious talk,

**10** and if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry  
and satisfy the needs of the oppressed,  
then your light will rise in the darkness,  
and your night will become like the noonday.

**11** The LORD will guide you always;  
he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land  
and will strengthen your frame.

You will be like a well-watered garden,  
like a spring whose waters never fail.

**12** Your people will rebuild the ancient ruins  
and will raise up the age-old foundations;  
you will be called Repairer of Broken Walls,  
Restorer of Streets with Dwellings.

**13** “If you keep your feet from breaking the Sabbath  
and from doing as you please on my holy day,  
if you call the Sabbath a delight  
and the LORD’s holy day honorable,  
and if you honor it by not going your own way  
and not doing as you please or speaking idle words,

**14** then you will find your joy in the LORD,  
and I will cause you to ride in triumph on the heights of the land

and to feast on the inheritance of your father Jacob.”

For the mouth of the LORD has spoken.

## Points of Interest:

### **Image of the Day**--*A new and better flashlight*

We've talked a few times now about God's strong feelings in 50:10-11 that, as we walk in the dark, we should trust God's guidance instead of turning on our flashlights. In today's passage, God reveals that we're not meant to walk in darkness forever. God is making us a better flashlight--and I don't mean that God is making a better flashlight for us, but God is making us into flashlights. God will remove our temptation to grab for the flashlight by giving us righteousness that shines like a beam of light out in front of us. If we come with our own headlights, no dark road is of any concern to us ever again.

### **Today's Answer to a Previous Question**--*How is God both guide and rear guard?*

In 52:12, God promises to go ahead of us, and also to guard our backs. I wondered when we read that passage whether God planned to bounce back and forth from front to back, or had figured out some other way to provide for protection both front and back. Here we get our answer. With the new light God has made us into, we serve as our own column of light in the front, and God is the column of smoke in back.

### **Superhero Name of the Day**--*Restorer of Streets with Dwellings*

God's choices don't exactly roll off the tongue--maybe they have more of a ring to them in the Hebrew--but I love the idea of God coming up with a string of superhero nicknames for us: Repairer of Broken Walls; Paver of Potholes; Provider of a Fresh Coat of Paint. Our superhero ability: taking half-finished building projects on eerily empty streets and turning them into vibrant neighborhoods.

Throughout our reading, God has been talking about turning the old, empty husk of Jerusalem into a new, full, world-embracing city called 'Zion.' Here, God recruits our help in doing so, and grants us the power to accomplish it. This is the passage where we become agents in the big things God is up to.

### **Big Idea of the Day**--*Things go best when God supplies our needs*

Getting involved in God's plans is conditional, though. God would be happy to have us on board if we can stay away from cheating, slandering, and otherwise undercutting others. Even more than avoiding mistreating others, God is on the lookout for partners who choose to be generous toward others, even when it looks like there's not enough to go around.

God promises us that we're actually better off when we share. It's like there are two different, side-by-side realities: a sun-scorched land and a well-watered garden. We decide which one we live in by how we treat others. If we fight with tooth and claw, we live in the sun-scorched land. If we are kind and generous, we get the well-watered garden.

As long as we believe God, the choice is a no-brainer. In the hard-scrabble world of the sun-scorched land, there's not enough in the first place, and we end up dividing the small amount there is--or, worse, spilling it as we fight for it. In God's garden, there's more than enough to go around; if there's anything you need, just ask and God is happy to supply it.

## Taking it Home:

*For you:* How do you feel about the prospect that God is guiding you? I say I believe it, while simultaneously wishing God's guidance looked and felt more like Google Maps--showing me the overview, the turn by turn, and also, most importantly, how long the whole journey will take. Take some time to reflect and pray about your relationship to God's guidance: how has God guided you in the past? how do you sense God guiding you now? is there something specific you are looking for guidance on? Try asking God to guide you, while simultaneously thanking God for already doing so.

## Tuesday, April 1st--Isaiah 59:1-8

**59** Surely the arm of the LORD is not too short to save,  
nor his ear too dull to hear.

**2** But your iniquities have separated  
you from your God;  
your sins have hidden his face from you,  
so that he will not hear.

**3** For your hands are stained with blood,  
your fingers with guilt.  
Your lips have spoken falsely,  
and your tongue mutters wicked things.

**4** No one calls for justice;  
no one pleads a case with integrity.  
They rely on empty arguments, they utter lies;  
they conceive trouble and give birth to evil.

**5** They hatch the eggs of vipers  
and spin a spider's web.  
Whoever eats their eggs will die,  
and when one is broken, an adder is hatched.

**6** Their cobwebs are useless for clothing;

they cannot cover themselves with what they make.

Their deeds are evil deeds,

and acts of violence are in their hands.

**7** Their feet rush into sin;

they are swift to shed innocent blood.

They pursue evil schemes;

acts of violence mark their ways.

**8** The way of peace they do not know;

there is no justice in their paths.

They have turned them into crooked roads;

no one who walks along them will know peace.

## Points of Interest:

### **Funny Picture of the Day**--*The god with short arms*

Isaiah has something of a sarcastic sense of humor. Here he's poking fun at idols again. God doesn't have stubby little arms like the idols do, or wooden ears. If God isn't responding, something else must be the matter.

After having skewered the idols, Isaiah turns his sarcasm on his listeners. Whoever is complaining that God isn't there has an object permanence problem. They cover their eyes with their own twistedness, and think that God has disappeared. If you want to see God, take off the blindfold you put on.

### **Image of the Day**--*Cobweb wool*

Another metaphor for the futility of living life wrongly. We go through all of the work of spinning the yarn and knitting clothes from it, but instead of using wool, our material is something as insubstantial as cobwebs. The clothes simply disintegrate before anyone ever has a chance to wear them.

Trusting in idols and mistreating others take just as much effort as--likely more than--trusting God and treating others well. The sinful life is not a lazy or easy one. The question is, Why work so hard for something you don't want? A cobweb jacket is a poor alternative to one made of splendor.

### **Second Image of the Day**--*Sinning like it's going out of style*

Having extensively explored the idea in the last few passages that people are acting unjustly out of a misplaced idea that it's what they have to do to survive, Isaiah proposes an alternative theory: maybe they just like it. Maybe they're not so worried that the good food and drink at God's party will run out; they're worried that opportunities to treat others badly will. Like bread, milk, and water during a New England snowstorm, there's a sudden run on sin. We better get it while we

can.

## Taking it Home:

*For our city:* People work hard in this city. Maybe you're one of them? If not you, I bet you have a friend who does. Ask God to help our city not strive endlessly for things that in the end won't really protect us. I don't quite know what it looks like to have city systems reflect trust in a living God for protection, but it would be a neat thing to see God do. Ask God to help our city recalibrate--away from tireless work, and towards rest in God.

## Wednesday, April 2nd--Isaiah 59:9-14

**9** So justice is far from us,  
and righteousness does not reach us.  
We look for light, but all is darkness;  
for brightness, but we walk in deep shadows.

**10** Like the blind we grope along the wall,  
feeling our way like people without eyes.  
At midday we stumble as if it were twilight;  
among the strong, we are like the dead.

**11** We all growl like bears;  
we moan mournfully like doves.  
We look for justice, but find none;  
for deliverance, but it is far away.

**12** For our offenses are many in your sight,  
and our sins testify against us.  
Our offenses are ever with us,  
and we acknowledge our iniquities:  
**13** rebellion and treachery against the LORD,  
turning our backs on our God,  
inciting revolt and oppression,  
uttering lies our hearts have conceived.

**14** So justice is driven back,  
and righteousness stands at a distance;

truth has stumbled in the streets,  
honesty cannot enter.

## Points of Interest:

### **Image of the Day**--*Groping along the wall*

We're back in the dark, with neither guide nor flashlight. We're feeling our way along walls, banging our shins on the furniture, and tripping over unexpected items left in our way. The strange thing about this darkness is that it's as bad at noon as at midnight. Is this an abnormally dense fog? Or maybe the problem is not with the light, but with our eyes. Maybe it's not dark. Maybe we're blind.

It's a possible sign of progress that, despite the perceived darkness, as per God's instructions, no one has yet lit a torch.

### **Another Image of the Day**--*Growling like bears*

The growl of a bear and the moan of a dove are pretty different animal noises to be coming out of the same person at the same time. I think we're alternating through different waves of emotion: growling in the frustration of being lost, then moaning in despair that we will ever be found.

### **The Question of the Day**--*Who is today's subject?*

With one day's passage sort of tumbling into the next for several days now, it's easy to lose track of who we're talking about. I looked back, and in the speech which ends in Monday's passage God calls the subject of this series of passages Jacob's children. That doesn't entirely narrow things down, since Isaiah uses 'Jacob' to refer to so many things. This probably isn't Jacob's actual original 12 sons. But is it members of the 12 tribes descended from them? The returned exiles to Jerusalem? The new, broader, spiritual Jacob Isaiah has been talking about?

My thought is that this is about a sort of dark version of the last option. A theme throughout these passages is failed religion: fasts and sabbath observance that draw people farther from God instead of closer, largely because it's done at the expense of other people. I wonder if we could say that the subject of this series of passages, stretching all the way back to the beginning of chapter 57, is devoted religious people who nonetheless find themselves wandering in darkness. Whether it's the worship of idols that can't help, or corrupted versions of practices like fasting and sabbath that God himself recommends, religion done the wrong way can put us on the same bad path--or maybe even a worse one--than no faith at all.

### **A Third Image of the Day**--*Truth stumbles*

Justice, Deliverance, and Truth form a search party. But we've wandered so far off the path and gotten so far into the thickets that they can't find us. Deliverance is too far away to hear us calling. Justice hits a dead end. Truth practically faints from the effort of looking for us. The rescue party fails.

### **Spiritual Practice of the Day**-- *Confession*

They say that confession is good for the soul. I think that's true, and not (just) because doing the right thing takes a load off of our consciences. It's good for our soul because confession gives God the information God needs to bring our soul to good health.

When we go to the doctor, it's important that we're honest about whatever symptoms we're experiencing and whatever other health factors might be in play. That's the only way the doctor can figure out what's going on and assign the proper treatment. If we hide that embarrassing symptom, the doctor could misdiagnose our disease. If we hide, for example, that we smoke, it could lead to the doctor prescribing the wrong drug. Lying to the doctor doesn't do us any good--if what we want is to get well.

Confession, I think, is having that same level of unreserved honesty with God about our lives. It's letting God know the true state of our souls, and it's admitting the various spiritual risk factors that might be at play. When we start from how things really are, that's when God can help us get where we want to go.

Things haven't gone altogether well for Jacob's kids, and throughout our Isaiah reading, they've had a tendency to shift the blame for this, mostly to God: Why isn't God doing anything? Is God too weak? Has God abandoned us? In this passage, they finally confess their own part in their problems. They've held back the truth, and even outright lied to God about their situation. They've ignored God's prescriptions, or mixed them with other things that ruin their effect. They're finally admitting that they've gotten themselves into this trouble. Now, God can start to help them out.

## **Taking it Home:**

*For you:* Let's practice confession. Maybe you're a pro at it and do it all the time, but if you're like me and still feel on the spectrum of squeamish to avoidant upon hearing the word, here are two easy ways to practice what really is a freeing discipline (These are taken from a great book called *The Spiritual Disciplines Handbook* by Adele Cahoun.):

1. Ask God to help you see yourself as God sees you. Remember that God sees you absolutely and with love. Using the ten commandments as your guide, write down ways you've missed the mark. When you've finished, go through each commandment, one at a time, and ask God to forgive you and help you to change. Then throw your list far far away (or recycle or burn or shred it, or use whatever waste management strategy you wish to employ) .
2. Invite God to be with you and take away anything that might make you defensive. Ask yourself, *Who have I injured recently through thoughtlessness, neglect, anger, and so on?* As the Holy Spirit brings people to mind, confess your feelings about these people to God. Ask God to forgive you and if need be to give you courage to forgive them. Possibly, say you're sorry, make a phone call, or confess out loud in an attempt to put the relationship back on track.

## **Thursday, April 3rd--Isaiah 59:15-21**

15 Truth is nowhere to be found,

and whoever shuns evil becomes a prey.

The LORD looked and was displeased

that there was no justice.

**16** He saw that there was no one,

he was appalled that there was no one to intervene;

so his own arm achieved salvation for him,

and his own righteousness sustained him.

**17** He put on righteousness as his breastplate,

and the helmet of salvation on his head;

he put on the garments of vengeance

and wrapped himself in zeal as in a cloak.

**18** According to what they have done,

so will he repay

wrath to his enemies

and retribution to his foes;

he will repay the islands their due.

**19** From the west, people will fear the name of the LORD,

and from the rising of the sun, they will revere his glory.

For he will come like a pent-up flood

that the breath of the LORD drives along.

**20** “The Redeemer will come to Zion,

to those in Jacob who repent of their sins,”

declares the LORD.

**21** “As for me, this is my covenant with them,” says the LORD. “My Spirit, who is on you, will not depart from you, and my words that I have put in your mouth will always be on your lips, on the lips of your children and on the lips of their descendants—from this time on and forever,” says the LORD.

## Points of Interest:

### **Proverb of the Day**--*if you want something done right ...*

Yesterday, we discussed the fact that Jacob's kids are the victims of a problem of their own making. Instead of being in the grand new city God is building, they're wandering lost in the dark; but that's only because they turned off the road God built specifically to get them directly from prison to Zion. In the end, though, it doesn't really matter whose fault it is. God has promised that the city will be full, and that they'll be in it. And when God says something, it happens:

so is my word that goes out from my mouth:  
It will not return to me empty,  
but will accomplish what I desire  
and achieve the purpose for which I sent it (55:11)

It's been several chapters now since God said the word, built the city, and paved the road. And, frankly, it's been a mess. The city is still empty. The road is abandoned. There have been wild animal attacks, finger pointing, betrayals, and diversions. There are roadblocks, and there's an impenetrable fog. It's time for this foolishness to stop. God is committed to the city being full, and no matter how difficult the rest of us make it, it will be.

Since no one else seems to be able to make it happen, God puts himself in the game.

### **Cinematic Moment of the Day**--*buckling on the armor*

I love that scene in action hero movies when the reluctant hero finally suits up. Fed up with the injustice they see and realizing that now is the time when they have to step up and do something about it, they strap on the six-shooter holster, grab the pommel of the sword, buckle on the utility belt, snap the visor in place, and with a flutter of their cape strut out in search of some bad guys. From the way he lovingly dwells on each piece of armor when God is roused, I get the impression Isaiah loves that scene as well.

Something exciting is about to happen.

### **Aside of the Day**--*God's word in our mouths*

Before striding off to deal with the wild animals, bandits, and traitors who are blocking the path, God pauses, turns to the side, and makes a vow. Maybe God is looking straight into the camera while saying this, breaking the fourth wall, as they say, and speaking straight to us. I prefer the idea, though, that God is talking to the Servant. You may recall from 50:4 that God gave the Servant 'the word that sustains the weary.' And in 53:10, God promises that, though it looks like he died without children, the Servant will have many progeny. I think God is reassuring the Servant here, 'I haven't forgotten about you.' All of the work the Servant has done to conquer sin will not be in vain. The Servant will live to see an ever-growing number of descendants who, just like him, bear God's sustaining words on their lips. The Servant, the Servant's family, and the picture of a refreshed life that the Servant represents will win. God is going to make sure of it.

## Taking it Home:

*For your six:* I talk and type way too quickly to really think about the fact that God's words (!)

are in MY mouth. Spend some time this morning asking for God's words for your six. Take a moment to think about each of your six. Ask God to show you how God sees them. If you get any sense from God, consider sharing it with your six. Either way, keep an eye out for how your words could be encouraging to your six.

## Friday, April 4th--Isaiah 60:1-9

**60** "Arise, shine, for your light has come,  
and the glory of the LORD rises upon you.

**2** See, darkness covers the earth  
and thick darkness is over the peoples,  
but the LORD rises upon you  
and his glory appears over you.

**3** Nations will come to your light,  
and kings to the brightness of your dawn.

**4** "Lift up your eyes and look about you:  
All assemble and come to you;  
your sons come from afar,  
and your daughters are carried on the hip.

**5** Then you will look and be radiant,  
your heart will throb and swell with joy;  
the wealth on the seas will be brought to you,  
to you the riches of the nations will come.

**6** Herds of camels will cover your land,  
young camels of Midian and Ephah.

And all from Sheba will come,  
bearing gold and incense  
and proclaiming the praise of the LORD.

**7** All Kedar's flocks will be gathered to you,  
the rams of Nebaioth will serve you;  
they will be accepted as offerings on my altar,  
and I will adorn my glorious temple.

8 “Who are these that fly along like clouds,  
like doves to their nests?

9 Surely the islands look to me;  
in the lead are the ships of Tarshish,  
bringing your children from afar,  
with their silver and gold,  
to the honor of the LORD your God,  
the Holy One of Israel,  
for he has endowed you with splendor.

## Points of Interest:

### **Bible Reference of the Day**--*Darkness covers the earth*

Isaiah is evoking the Bible’s story of the creation of the world here:

Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

3 And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light (Genesis 1:2-3).

What we have in store is nothing less than the re-creation of the world. The first creation had to do with the physical world; this one will be in the lives of people. The impenetrable and unexpectedly persistent dark world around which people have been stumbling is about to be flooded in light. God did it before--with a word--and is now doing it again.

### **Promise of the Day**--*Drawing like a magnet*

In this second creation, the source of light in the darkness will be the new, improved and expanded Zion. Zion rises like the sun, but in some ways it’s more like a nighttime campfire in the wilderness. People see it from a long way away, and are irresistibly drawn toward its warmth, light, and its promise of sociability. Once its light is turned on, what has been the empty city will soon become the place people can’t stay away from.

### **Image of the Day**--*Ships of Tarshish*

People start streaming to Zion from everywhere. Reasonably enough, I suppose--it’s as good a guess as any--Isaiah locates his new Zion in roughly the same geographical setting as the historical Jerusalem. The nations mentioned in this passage are to the north, south, east, and west of there. Some of them are nearby, familiar neighbors, others are faraway, practically legendary places; Tarshish, for instance, may be in Spain (which was quite a long way away, at the very bounds of imagination, for 8th Century BC Judah). Each of them contributes what they’re famous for: the Sabeans their spices and precious metals; the Kedaris their herds, and so on. What all of these nations have in common is that they’re located on major transportation routes. They’re famous

sailors, merchants, highway patrollers, toll booth operators, and other transportation experts. Midianite camels and Tarshishan ships are particularly known as the state of the art vehicles for land and sea travel, respectively. Traffic to Zion gets so heavy that the professionals need to be brought in to handle the sudden influx: roads are widened; canals are dug; runways are extended; and jumbo jets, bullet trains, and aircraft carriers are all commandeered into use.

## **Taking it Home:**

*For our church:* Light and re-creation: I want it all. I imagine it feels like the first days of spring, when suddenly everywhere every tree blooms and blossoms, all of the sudden, in the most magnificent way. It's like hope and joy burst as each little bud opens. Ask God for this re-creation and light for our church. Ask God for people in our church to see and hear from him during these 40 days. Ask God to re-create our church, that it would be vibrant, and light-filled, a place bustling with creativity and new life.

## **Saturday, April 5th--Isaiah 60:10-16**

**10** “Foreigners will rebuild your walls,  
and their kings will serve you.

Though in anger I struck you,  
in favor I will show you compassion.

**11** Your gates will always stand open,  
they will never be shut, day or night,  
so that people may bring you the wealth of the nations—  
their kings led in triumphal procession.

**12** For the nation or kingdom that will not serve you will perish;  
it will be utterly ruined.

**13** “The glory of Lebanon will come to you,  
the juniper, the fir and the cypress together,  
to adorn my sanctuary;  
and I will glorify the place for my feet.

**14** The children of your oppressors will come bowing before you;  
all who despise you will bow down at your feet  
and will call you the City of the LORD,  
Zion of the Holy One of Israel.

**15** “Although you have been forsaken and hated,  
with no one traveling through,  
I will make you the everlasting pride  
and the joy of all generations.

**16** You will drink the milk of nations  
and be nursed at royal breasts.  
Then you will know that I, the LORD, am your Savior,  
your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.

## Points of Interest:

### **Promise of the Day**--*Open 24/7*

An ordinary city's gates would spend a significant amount of time closed: during times of war, and every night after business hours. Not so with New Zion. They will have no one to be afraid of, and there will be so much going on that businesses will stay open around the clock. With nothing to fear and plenty to do, they keep the gates open.

### **Image of the Day**--*Parade of kings*

Another reason the gates never close is the constant influx of royalty. You can't shut the doors on a king, and just as one king and his retinue gets through the gates, another one comes around the corner. New Zion is the place to be. Everyone who is anyone is making their way there. People who wouldn't have been caught dead in Zion before are now begging to be let in.

With the constant stream of trumpets, and chariots, and finery coming into New Zion, it's like every day is the Rose Bowl Parade, or like the average city street is the Oscars' red carpet.

### **Ancient Near Eastern Fact of the Day**--*The glory of Lebanon*

It might be difficult for us in New England to fathom, but Lebanon's glory, the thing that made it rich and famous, was wood. Lebanon was (and is) one of the few places in Israel's neighborhood with trees of any size; the desert climate meant that most plants were small and scrubby. Wood was so rare that it was the material used for truly opulent buildings like grand palaces and temples. Here, the temple, God's footstool, is being redecorated with a variety of precious Lebanese woods.

### **New Name of the Day**--*City of the Lord*

The old Jerusalem was known as 'City of David,' which was pretty good; it's no shame to be named after a famous king who was a special friend of God's. Still, being named after a buddy of God's is not nearly good enough for New Zion; this new city is God's own.

## Taking it Home:

*For our city:* I love how much attention God pays to the city his people are in (or want to be in). God knows the city so well, and even sees it for what it could be on it's best day. Take sometime to reflect on the place where you live--not even just the city, but the actual neighborhood. What brought you there? What do you like about it? What's great about your neighborhood? Talk to God about your neighborhood. Thank God for the really great aspects of your neighborhood. During your day, pay attention to what happens in your neighborhood (everything from the streets and signals to the smells), and ask God to make your neighborhood a great one.

## **Sunday, April 6th--Isaiah 60:17-22**

**17** Instead of bronze I will bring you gold,  
and silver in place of iron.

Instead of wood I will bring you bronze,  
and iron in place of stones.

I will make peace your governor  
and well-being your ruler.

**18** No longer will violence be heard in your land,  
nor ruin or destruction within your borders,  
but you will call your walls Salvation  
and your gates Praise.

**19** The sun will no more be your light by day,  
nor will the brightness of the moon shine on you,  
for the LORD will be your everlasting light,  
and your God will be your glory.

**20** Your sun will never set again,  
and your moon will wane no more;  
the LORD will be your everlasting light,  
and your days of sorrow will end.

**21** Then all your people will be righteous  
and they will possess the land forever.

They are the shoot I have planted,  
the work of my hands,

for the display of my splendor.

**22** The least of you will become a thousand,  
the smallest a mighty nation.

I am the LORD;

in its time I will do this swiftly.”

## Points of Interest:

### **Character of the Day**--*Governor Peace*

No ordinary mayor is sufficient for this city. Corruption or incompetence are, of course, out of the question. But even a capable and peace-loving person doesn't quite make the cut. Only the very essence of Peace itself is qualified to oversee the administration of this city; Well-being serves as deputy mayor.

### **Promise of the Day**--*Free upgrades*

I once visited the Alhambra palace complex in Granada. It's probably the most beautiful, imaginative, pleasant, remarkable place I've ever been. And perhaps the most fascinating thing about it is that it's one giant trick of the eyes. These were the palaces of the last Arab kingdom in Spain, and with all of their money going toward defending themselves against Castile and Aragon, they couldn't really afford to build the grand palace they had in mind. So, they faked it. They molded plaster to make it look like marble. They substituted glass for gemstones. For gold, they used painted wood. And, like I said, they succeeded marvelously. Seven centuries later, it's still beautiful, and the illusion still works.

In New Zion, they use a similar trick, but in the opposite direction. While in Granada they used costume jewels to brighten up a palace, in New Zion they swap in the genuine articles for workaday purposes. Instead of saying, 'I can't believe that's just plaster,' people are exclaiming, 'I can't believe they used real gold!'

### **Abraham and Sarah Reference of the Day**--*The least of you a mighty nation*

Not only is the new Zion practically littered with precious metals, but it is also full of remarkable people.

'I will make you into a mighty nation,' was what God promised Abraham and Sarah when they made their covenant. Abraham and Sarah lived miraculous lives. They were famous for their trust in God. And they're the ones who got this whole thing started (if you recall, they were the actual Jacob's grandparents). Abraham and Sarah were one of a kind, or arguably in the very rare company of Noah, Moses, and David.

At least that's how it was in the old regime. In the new city, everyone is an Abraham or a Sarah.

### **Paradox of the Day**--*this will happen quickly, when it happens*

The change from old to new will happen quickly, but not necessarily right away. God gives no

indication of when it will start, but once it starts it will be accomplished suddenly. 'Who knows when?' and 'Right away' are a strange combination. Any second, it could happen in a blink of the eye. Or then again, 2700 odd years later we could still be waiting. It's hard to set your alarm for something like that.

In cross-cultural studies, they talk about two different cultural approaches to time: *time orientation*, in which you do things by the clock; and *event orientation* in which you give each experience its proper time, no matter how long or short that might be, before moving on to the next one. I am most decidedly time oriented. I think God is event oriented. God isn't slow or lazy. God is just waiting for the exact right moment to make a move; when the moment arrives, God is ready to pounce.

For those of us trying to follow, work with, or put our trust in God, I think what that requires is a patient readiness. We have to be prepared for something big to happen at any time, and also prepared to sit around the campfire and wait a little longer. Restlessness and complacency are both temptations to be avoided.

### **Taking it Home:**

*For your six:* Maybe this is a time-oriented approach (and I've already admitted that I'm a time oriented person), but ask God to act swiftly in the lives of your six. Take some time to think about your own time with your six. How long have you been praying for them? What's happened in their lives during that time? Ask God to bring all of dazzling, bejeweled, opulent construction that he brought to Zion to your six's lives (literally or figuratively, because let's be honest, who would turn down the gift of diamonds?)