

Monday, April 14th--Isaiah 65:1-7

65 “I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me;

I was found by those who did not seek me.

To a nation that did not call on my name,

I said, ‘Here am I, here am I.’

2 All day long I have held out my hands

to an obstinate people,

who walk in ways not good,

pursuing their own imaginations—

3 a people who continually provoke me

to my very face,

offering sacrifices in gardens

and burning incense on altars of brick;

4 who sit among the graves

and spend their nights keeping secret vigil;

who eat the flesh of pigs,

and whose pots hold broth of impure meat;

5 who say, ‘Keep away; don’t come near me,

for I am too sacred for you!’

Such people are smoke in my nostrils,

a fire that keeps burning all day.

6 “See, it stands written before me:

I will not keep silent but will pay back in full;

I will pay it back into their laps—

7 both your sins and the sins of your ancestors,”

says the LORD.

“Because they burned sacrifices on the mountains

and defied me on the hills,

I will measure into their laps

the full payment for their former deeds.”

Points of Interest:**Image of the Day--*Smoke in the nostrils***

Dealing with these people is, for God, like being in a kitchen just after the toast burned: watery eyes; sneezing and coughing; that acrid burning sensation in the nostrils. It's unbearable. God has to open the windows, or--better yet--get out of the kitchen.

Ancient Near Eastern Religious Practices of the Day--*Eating the flesh of pigs*

What we have in this passage is a veritable tour of places to go and things to do if you are trying to make contact with some other god, any other god, besides this God. Gardens were where you went to worship fertility gods (Motyer, J. Alec. *Isaiah*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentary Series, IVP, 1999). Cemeteries were places to practice necromancy (*IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament*, 2000). Hilltops and mountaintops were common places for neighboring nations to locate shrines, but God prohibited shrines being built to him in these 'high places' (Deuteronomy 12:2). God expressed a strong distaste for pork, but pigs were a proper sacrifice to the Egyptian god Seth (*IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament*, 2000). The altars in this passage are made with brick, but God's altars are supposed to be made with undressed stones (Exodus 20:25).

I think the people in this passage are the same ones who are so mistakenly proud of their fasting and sabbath-keeping in chapter 58. Their religious appetite not being satisfied by their attentiveness to their twisted versions of the spiritual practices recommended by God, they are now heaping on any other religious ritual that they can find anywhere. When they're done, they say, 'I'm so holy now, no one can even touch me.' God says, 'I don't want to. You're intolerable.'

Theology of the Day--*Sins of your ancestors*

I'm tempted to feel like God is getting a bit carried away when God says that they'll be punished not only for their own sins, but for the sins of their ancestors as well. Shouldn't people be held responsible for their own actions? A judge wouldn't throw me in jail if my father robbed a bank. Maybe crimes aren't the right analogy for sin, though. Maybe sins are more like debts than crimes. They inherited a pile of debt from their parents, and instead of paying down that debt they've racked up new debts of their own. Or another way of looking at it is that their ancestors left them an unbroken string of sin, and when they took over, they kept it going. So, God is holding them to account, not just for their own actions, but for their commitment to keeping the streak alive. Their family are record-holders in sin, and to God it's not just the individual sins but also the record that matters.

Decision of the Day--*I'll go where I'm wanted*

Up until now, God has been working under the assumption that, sure, he and these people have their difficulties, but in the end God is still their God and they are still God's people. They're a couple, working on their relationship. But when God sees them slaughtering a pig, on a brick altar, in a hilltop garden--a collection of God's least favorite things-- it all of a sudden dawns on God: maybe they're just not into me. It's time to move on, to this new group of people in verse 1, people who actually seem interested in getting to know God better.

Taking it Home:

For you: I'll be quick to admit that for better or for worse I want everything I do to be returned with appreciation and gratitude. I mean I wouldn't turn down a parade in my honor, even if it happened everyday. I imagine God to be a bit more level-headed and less narcissistic than myself, but it still seems like God would appreciate some recognition for what he's done. Tell God today that you appreciate him; thank God for things he has done, tell God what you like about him. Maybe even tell God you're sorry, if you feel like you've been failing to notice him.

Tuesday, April 15th--Isaiah 65:8-16

8 This is what the LORD says:

“As when juice is still found in a cluster of grapes
and people say, ‘Don’t destroy it,
there is still a blessing in it,’
so will I do in behalf of my servants;
I will not destroy them all.

9 I will bring forth descendants from Jacob,
and from Judah those who will possess my mountains;
my chosen people will inherit them,
and there will my servants live.

10 Sharon will become a pasture for flocks,
and the Valley of Achor a resting place for herds,
for my people who seek me.

11 “But as for you who forsake the LORD
and forget my holy mountain,
who spread a table for Fortune
and fill bowls of mixed wine for Destiny,

12 I will destine you for the sword,
and all of you will fall in the slaughter;
for I called but you did not answer,
I spoke but you did not listen.

You did evil in my sight

and chose what displeases me.”

13 Therefore this is what the Sovereign LORD says:

“My servants will eat,
but you will go hungry;
my servants will drink,
but you will go thirsty;
my servants will rejoice,
but you will be put to shame.

14 My servants will sing
out of the joy of their hearts,
but you will cry out
from anguish of heart
and wail in brokenness of spirit.

15 You will leave your name
for my chosen ones to use in their curses;
the Sovereign LORD will put you to death,
but to his servants he will give another name.

16 Whoever invokes a blessing in the land
will do so by the one true God;
whoever takes an oath in the land
will swear by the one true God.

For the past troubles will be forgotten
and hidden from my eyes.

Points of Interest:

Theology of the Day--A remnant

In yesterday's passage, God had finally come around to the idea that it's time to part ways with the people with whom God has most closely been associated until now. I don't know whether it's the descendants of the forgetful Israelites wandering in the desert, or the super-religious citizens of Jerusalem, or maybe highly religious people in general that God has in mind. What is clear is that it's a group of people who is supremely confident that they have God in their pocket, and that

confidence has reached a peak at the same time that God's patience has reached a low point. God is moving on.

In today's passage, though, God takes a half-step back, to clarify that this rejection of the formerly special people isn't wholesale. God is building a new people, but God is not indiscriminately throwing 100% of God's old people out. God is willing, and in fact more than willing, to build from whatever can be salvaged from God's old people. God actually shows more than the usual care not to throw out the good with the bad; far from one bad apple spoiling the whole barrel in God's eyes, God makes his way through a whole barrel of bad apples to find one or two good apples worth saving.

Image of the Day--*Your name used only as a curse*

Ever wonder why no one names their child 'Adolf' anymore? Of course you don't; you know exactly why. Hitler thoroughly ruined the name for any possible future Adolfs--and for any possible future Hitlers, for that matter. In fact, I just read on Wikipedia that in the Netherlands people already named Adolf changed their names to Dolf after WWII. Very few people want to be associated with Adolf Hitler.

God says that the same will be true of these people who have forsaken God. Their name will be such bad luck that no one wants to use it anymore--at least as a name. Since the word is available, people will use it as an expletive instead.

Wordplay of the Day--*Destiny*

God's indulges in a moment of sarcastic humor again: Since you're such a fan of Destiny, we'll see how much you like the destiny coming your way.

Good News of the Day--*God's domain expands*

Much of the most recent two passages has been focused on God's painful breakup with God's people. But it's not all bad news. While only a remnant of God's old people stick together with God, that doesn't mean that God's people shrinks only to that remnant. As a whole, God's people are expanding. Over the course of our reading of Isaiah, we've talked a lot about the repopulating of one mountain, Zion. Now, we're spilling over to other mountains, and to a plain and a valley or two as well.

I think the key is that God is done looking at people categorically. God no longer considers God's old people categorically privileged, but they're not categorically cursed either. And God doesn't make some other people group into God's new special people. Instead, whoever is interested in God and God's way, wherever and whoever they are, those people become God's people.

Taking it Home:

For your six: God's fold seems inviting and expansive and safe. I would like to be a part of it, and I would like my six to be a part of it as well. I like that God is willing to take in anyone who is interested. Ask God to draw your six to himself. It sounds a little quirky, but try asking God to give your six a desire for God. I'm not entirely sure how it all works when someone starts to have

interest in God (is it their own decision? is it God at work? I hear theologians like to debate this); but either way I see no harm in asking God to spark some interest. Consider asking your six what their interest is (or has been) in connecting with God.

Wednesday April 16th--Isaiah 65:17-25

17 "See, I will create

new heavens and a new earth.

The former things will not be remembered,

nor will they come to mind.

18 But be glad and rejoice forever

in what I will create,

for I will create Jerusalem to be a delight

and its people a joy.

19 I will rejoice over Jerusalem

and take delight in my people;

the sound of weeping and of crying

will be heard in it no more.

20 "Never again will there be in it

an infant who lives but a few days,

or an old man who does not live out his years;

the one who dies at a hundred

will be thought a mere child;

the one who fails to reach a hundred

will be considered accursed.

21 They will build houses and dwell in them;

they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit.

22 No longer will they build houses and others live in them,

or plant and others eat.

For as the days of a tree,

so will be the days of my people;

my chosen ones will long enjoy
the work of their hands.

23 They will not labor in vain,
nor will they bear children doomed to misfortune;
for they will be a people blessed by the LORD,
they and their descendants with them.

24 Before they call I will answer;
while they are still speaking I will hear.

25 The wolf and the lamb will feed together,
and the lion will eat straw like the ox,
and dust will be the serpent's food.

They will neither harm nor destroy
on all my holy mountain,"
says the LORD.

Points of Interest:

Project of the Day--*New heaven and earth*

I mentioned yesterday that God seemed to be expanding the renovation project beyond the borders of Jerusalem. Here we see that God is not satisfied with a couple of local franchises in Achor and Sharon. God is going global. The whole world is being rebuilt into God's holy mountain.

Promise of the Day--*New and improved short memories*

In 63:7-14, Isaiah talks about how easy it has been in the past for God's people to forget the ways God has come through for them. In the new world God is bringing about, people will still have a tendency to forget, but what they'll forget is the hard times. Trouble and suffering are such vague and distant memories that they slip the mind, or feel like bad dreams.

Image of the Day--*Vegetarian lions*

I don't know whether these grass-fed lions are literal, metaphorical, or both. Maybe the overhaul of the way things work is so thorough in God's new world that it even affects the rules in the animal kingdom, or maybe God is metaphorically promising that there will be no more bullies, kidnappers, or tormentors. One way or another or both, in the new world there's no such thing as predator and prey. There's no longer any danger of a pack of wild animals attacking the caravan. And even if the shepherds were to get drunk on the job--which they won't--the sheep will be just fine, comfortably grazing with the wolves and the lions.

Bible Reference of the Day--*The serpent eats dust*

Like the lion and the wolf, the serpent is no longer dangerous. Unlike the wolf, though, the serpent ends up alone; and unlike the lion, the serpent eats dust, which sounds less delicious than greens. I think Isaiah is harkening back to the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:1), when Adam and Eve's tempter is a serpent. The one who started everyone out on the wrong trail in the first place doesn't get to join the celebration when God finally gets them back on track to where they really want to be.

Lifespan of the Day--*100 is the new 30*

God starts off by promising that no one will ever again experience the tragedy of a child dying in infancy, but that's far too small a goal. It's not just that people won't die in childhood; people won't even die in old age. When they hit 100, they're just getting started. Nothing gets cut short on the new holy mountain; everyone and everything will have the time and space to reach their full potential.

Another Promise of the Day-- *Quick ears*

Recently--for complicated reasons, it turns out--Jacob and his children have wondered whether God is a bit hard of hearing. They shout and shout, but God doesn't seem to be listening. In the new world, the connection between people's lips and God's ears is so fast that it seems like they haven't even finished speaking before God is hearing and acting.

Taking it Home:

For our church: I was hooked at nice homes and abundant vineyards to call my own, but a place where everyone gets along? I'm in. Let's be honest, if you were a sheep, would you ever, ever, ever conceive of trusting a wolf? Ask God to give our church that same remarkable sheep-wolf power in our relationships: reconciliation, trust, harmony, and the power to live (and graze) peacefully in the midst of differences. While maybe farfetched and utopian-sounding, ask God to make our church a place where everyone gets along. Ask God to protect the intricate web of relationships that comprise our church. If you have a relationship or situation at a church that has been hard, ask God to mend it the way he's done it with our four-legged friends.

Thursday, April 17th--Isaiah 66:1- 6

66 This is what the LORD says:

"Heaven is my throne,
and the earth is my footstool.

Where is the house you will build for me?

Where will my resting place be?

2 Has not my hand made all these things,

and so they came into being?"

declares the LORD.

“These are the ones I look on with favor:
those who are humble and contrite in spirit,
and who tremble at my word.

3 But whoever sacrifices a bull
is like one who kills a person,
and whoever offers a lamb
is like one who breaks a dog’s neck;
whoever makes a grain offering
is like one who presents pig’s blood,
and whoever burns memorial incense
is like one who worships an idol.

They have chosen their own ways,
and they delight in their abominations;

4 so I also will choose harsh treatment for them
and will bring on them what they dread.

For when I called, no one answered,
when I spoke, no one listened.

They did evil in my sight
and chose what displeases me.”

5 Hear the word of the LORD,
you who tremble at his word:
“Your own people who hate you,
and exclude you because of my name, have said,
‘Let the LORD be glorified,
that we may see your joy!’
Yet they will be put to shame.

6 Hear that uproar from the city,
hear that noise from the temple!
It is the sound of the LORD
repaying his enemies all they deserve.

Points of Interest:

Image of the Day--*A bigger footstool*

I mentioned way back in the introduction that the people of Jerusalem thought of Jerusalem's temple as God's footstool. They knew their temple was too small to be a true house for God, but still thought of it as the unique place on earth where God's feet touched down and made contact. God says here that even that thinking is too small.

God first of all reminds them that all of this is make-believe. God doesn't need a house, nor a footstool, in any literal way. Even if God did want or need either one, they wouldn't be able to make it, and God wouldn't need their help to build it. God is pretty handy; after having made everything in the world, a little bit of furniture would be no problem.

But, to repeat, God doesn't actually need a house or footstool at all. God has simply been playing house with the people of Jerusalem, as a way of symbolizing God's strong desire to be in genuine relationship with people: 'See, it's like I live right in your neighborhood.' At this point, even for these symbolic purposes, with the expansion project God is currently undergoing, Jerusalem and its temple are way too small. The entire earth is God's footstool.

Theology of the Day--*The new rules of abomination*

Verse 3 gives us four pairs of an actual ritual from the Jerusalem temple with what they would think of as a gross perversion of it: lamb's are holy sacrifices, dogs are not; grain is a good offering, pig's blood a very bad one; and so on. Under the new regime God is establishing, one of them is the same as the other, as far as God is concerned. I don't think it's so much that God all of a sudden has a complaint with the temple rituals in and of themselves; rather God rejects the spirit in which they are offered. These people are so busy performing the rituals that they can't hear God talking; and they put such a priority on the rituals that they think it justifies mistreatment of other people. God says that their attention to ritual doesn't replace, overcome, or excuse proper attention to the things God actually considers more important: humility, an open ear to God, and a readiness to treat others well. In absence of those things, ritual isn't just meaningless, it's insulting to God.

If it's not about the building for God (as I discussed above), it's certainly not about the rituals going on inside it. It's about good relationships with God and people. Take care of those things, and you can forget about everything else.

Project of the Day--*God cleans house*

God kicks the riff-raff out of the 'house'--even out of the whole city. The riff-raff is anyone who, in God's name, tries to prevent humble worshippers from drawing close to God.

Taking it Home:

For you: Listening. It's safe to say that it somewhat seems like a big deal to God. And fair enough. Having spent some time or two with a raucous group of children, I know the exasperation of "WILL YOU JUST QUIET DOWN AND LISTEN TO ME!?" Usually what helps with the kids is making it a game.

Let's try that on ourselves today: make a fun game of listening (or trying to listen) to God.

Here are a few ways to play the game throughout the day:

- a. Take a few minutes right now, whatever you're doing, to listen. Take a few deep breaths. Tell God hello, and say that you'd like to listen to anything he might have to say to you. Then just wait. See what comes to mind, and then chat with God about that. Oh! and try to follow what God said.
- b. Find a pen and paper. Write something to God or ask God a question. *Hello! How are you today, God?* Then, write down the first thing that you hear back. Keep writing/conversing with God like this for several minutes.
- c. Think of the best listener you know. What makes them such a good listener? What is it like when they listen to you? Try to emulate those qualities to God. This may look like being silent for a long time until God is ready to talk or maybe means asking a probing question.
- d. When you come to a part of your day when you have to make a decision, ask God what to do. I'd start with smaller decisions: Do I take the T or my bike? Should I start this new project or keep working on that old one? Do I fold the laundry or watch TV?. If God seems to give you an answer, try it and then see how it goes.

Friday, April 18th--Isaiah 66:7-11

7 "Before she goes into labor,
she gives birth;

before the pains come upon her,
she delivers a son.

8 Who has ever heard of such things?

Who has ever seen things like this?

Can a country be born in a day

or a nation be brought forth in a moment?

Yet no sooner is Zion in labor

than she gives birth to her children.

9 Do I bring to the moment of birth

and not give delivery?" says the LORD.

"Do I close up the womb

when I bring to delivery?" says your God.

10 "Rejoice with Jerusalem and be glad for her,

all you who love her;
rejoice greatly with her,
all you who mourn over her.
11 For you will nurse and be satisfied
at her comforting breasts;
you will drink deeply
and delight in her overflowing abundance.”

Points of Interest:

Image of the Day--*Quick labor*

The pregnancy might have seemed like it lasted forever, but now that the time has come things move quickly--so quickly that, delightfully, there's no time for any labor pains or for labor at all. We skip straight from pregnancy to birth. I think this is another reference to the Garden of Eden story, in which painful labor is one of the repercussions of Adam and Eve succumbing to the serpent's temptation (Genesis 3:16). So, the lack of labor pains is one more sign--like lions and lambs becoming friends, and people living to a 100--that we're moving toward a new and better world, one that's more like the world God always intended.

Mixed Metaphor of the Day--*Babies congratulating mom on their own birth*

Of course, it's not an actual baby who is being born here at all. It's twins: new heavens and a new earth. So, in a way, we're all being born into a new experience of life. That leads to a funny change of roles for us in the last two verses:

God: Congratulate Zion. You know she's had a rough time of it for a while. But the most exciting thing happened. She just had twins.

Us: Wow, already. It seems like that happened so fast. What are the baby's names?

God: You. You're the babies.

Taking it Home:

For our city: My guess is that you don't have to look very far or very hard in our city to find something that seems heartbreaking or unfair or just altogether not that great. I want this new heaven and new earth for our city, and gosh darnit I want it quickly. Ask God to make our city more like heaven. Ask God for all the joy, satisfaction, abundance, and healing that is characteristic of heaven to be characteristic of our city. I'm reminded of Jesus' most popular saying as we he walked around the Ancient Near East, which in modern day terms would probably read something like '@GreaterBoston get ready #heavenishere.' As you go through your day today, in whatever part of the city you are in, as frequently as you can look around you, soaking up the sights and smells, and ask God for heaven to be here more profoundly right in the midst of them.

Saturday, April 19th--Isaiah 66:12-17

12 For this is what the LORD says:

“I will extend peace to her like a river,
and the wealth of nations like a flooding stream;
you will nurse and be carried on her arm
and dandled on her knees.

13 As a mother comforts her child,
so will I comfort you;
and you will be comforted over Jerusalem.”

14 When you see this, your heart will rejoice
and you will flourish like grass;
the hand of the LORD will be made known to his servants,
but his fury will be shown to his foes.

15 See, the LORD is coming with fire,
and his chariots are like a whirlwind;
he will bring down his anger with fury,
and his rebuke with flames of fire.

16 For with fire and with his sword
the LORD will execute judgment on all people,
and many will be those slain by the LORD.

17 “Those who consecrate and purify themselves to go into the gardens, following one who is among those who eat the flesh of pigs, rats and other unclean things—they will meet their end together with the one they follow,” declares the LORD.

Points of Interest:

Choice of the Day--*Handshake or fist?*

We’re reaching the end, and it’s time for decisions to be made. One of God’s hands is extended for a handshake, and the other is balled in a fist. Everyone gets to, and has to, choose which hand they want. Oddly, it’s apparently a difficult choice for a surprising number of people.

Odd Pairing of the Day--*Pigs and rats*

Most of us wouldn’t necessarily put pigs and rats in the same category, but the associations people make with animals are very culturally bound. The example often used is that many cultures consider eating dog a delicacy, but for Westerners, who mostly think of dogs as dear family pets, the idea is revolting. It turns out that eating dog would also be revolting for ancient Near

Easterners, but so would having a dog as a pet. Dogs, along with pigs and rats, were scavenger animals, considered dirty and disease-ridden. So, these people eating pigs and rats are basically finding their food in the sewers, back alleys, and dumps.

Warning of the Day--*Don't go down the garden path*

Even at this late hour, some people are being enticed off of God's highway onto a garden path. God warns them, 'Don't go down there!' This time, it's not just because they won't like the destination. God has set a deadly trap for whomever keeps luring people down there, and anyone else who follows will get caught in the same trap.

Image of the Day--*Perky as grass*

I have one houseplant that's especially sensitive to watering. If I miss just one day, it droops so severely that I think it's going to die. But it's not really a big deal, because as soon as I water it, it even more quickly snaps back to life. God's listeners are the same way. Like dry grass in the desert that's gotten a little rain, they're going to perk right up when they hear what God has to say.

Taking it Home:

For your six: The Charles River, it's hands-down one of the best parts of Boston, and on a beautiful day it effortlessly draws everyone to stop and gawk at it. Imagine if the Charles was in fact entirely made of peace? (Everyone would finally feel safe to swim). Ask God to give each of your six peace. If you like, take the first verse of this passage and pray it for each of your six:

"I will extend peace to _____ like a river,
and the wealth of nations like a flooding stream;"

Sunday, April 20th--Isaiah 66:18-24

18 "And I, because of what they have planned and done, am about to come and gather the people of all nations and languages, and they will come and see my glory.

19 "I will set a sign among them, and I will send some of those who survive to the nations—to Tarshish, to the Libyans and Lydians (famous as archers), to Tubal and Greece, and to the distant islands that have not heard of my fame or seen my glory. They will proclaim my glory among the nations. **20** And they will bring all your people, from all the nations, to my holy mountain in Jerusalem as an offering to the LORD—on horses, in chariots and wagons, and on mules and camels," says the LORD. "They will bring them, as the Israelites bring their grain offerings, to the temple of the LORD in ceremonially clean vessels. **21** And I will select some of them also to be priests and Levites," says the LORD.

22 "As the new heavens and the new earth that I make will endure before me," declares the LORD, "so will your name and descendants endure. **23** From one New Moon to another and from one Sabbath to another, all mankind will come and bow down before me," says the LORD. **24** "And they will go out and look on the dead bodies of those who rebelled against me; the worms that eat them will not die, the fire that burns them will not be quenched, and they will be loathsome to all mankind."

Points of Interest:**Image of the Day**--*The parade finally reaches its destination*

The Parade of Nations that started in 60:9 resumes right where it broke off, with the people of Tarshish. A whole new set of nations follows behind. Like the first half of the parade, the second half is full of semi-legendary, faraway nations. It's taken a longer than expected time for this grand parade to finally arrive at its destination, but it's worth the wait; the city they set out for has become a whole new heaven and earth in the meantime.

Promise of the Day--*Round-the-clock party*

The new world is perfect, it's finished, and it's ready for occupancy. All the nations have moved in, the eunuch from 56:4 has finally taken up his new priestly position, and his friend the foreigner has begun his temple service duties. Everything is working out just as planned.

Now it's time to celebrate. Parties start on the 1st of the month and keep going strong all the way until the 31st ... and then a new one starts up again the next day. From Saturday to Friday, it's party time.

Question of the Day--*Why end on destruction?*

I was really expecting things to end with, 'and they all lived happily ever after.' But instead we get, 'and they will be loathsome to all mankind.' Why have the final camera shot linger on the enemies and their gruesome end, just when everyone is finally having such a good time?

I'm reminded of the end of a slasher film. I think you know the kind I'm thinking about: again and again, it seems like the killer has been defeated and it's safe to relax, only for him to somehow, improbably, come back again. That's kind of what our section of Isaiah has been like. How many times has God declared, 'The city has been rebuilt!', only for something to get in the way of us fully enjoying it? People wandering off the path, wild animals attacking, drunken accidents, marauders in the temple, impenetrable darkness. How do we know that the new world is finally and permanently established and we can truly enjoy the party?

Just like the slasher movie ends with a particularly thorough, inescapable death for the killer, with a clear shot of the body so that we know he didn't somehow escape, proving that he is totally, completely, unquestionably dead, Isaiah ends with a thorough inspection of the enemies' bodies: dead, burned, worm-eaten, and cast out.

No one will ever disturb the peace of the citizens of this new world again.

Taking it Home:

For you: Even if I would have preferred a rosy final image, this image is a fitting one for Easter Sunday; We flash forward a few hundred years to the image of Jesus, risen and radiant, having overcome death and pain. I picture Jesus walking to Isaiah's final chapter to say hello and join the never-ending new world party. My guess, though, is that even if you fully buy that God has brought about this new heaven and new earth and has pushed all the misery and pain and death permanently to the wayside, that there is still some tragedy, heartache, or unanswered question

in your own life. Ask God today to help you see and help you believe--for a clearer picture of this new heaven and new earth and increased confidence that one day God will really take away all this pain. Ask God today for the faith to celebrate this new city that he has. Even if only for today, believe entirely and with certainty and in celebration that it's true! There's a party, and a great city, and God has guaranteed that no one can ruin it.