

The Fourth Sunday of Lent

March 6, 2016

Prayer of the Day: Almighty God, we confess that we deserve to be punished for our evil deeds. But we ask you graciously to cleanse us from all sin and to comfort us with your salvation; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Verse of the Day: For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life (John 3:16)

Sermon Text: Isaiah 12:1-6

Imagine a world where you never have to buy laundry detergent ever again. No more staring at a wall of Tide, Gain, Arm and Hammer, and then trying to figure out which brand does the most work for the least amount of money. No more measuring the exact amount for different size loads. No more starting the laundry only to realize that you ran out of soap. That is right! For a one-time payment of \$75 you will never have to buy detergent ever again!

The ABI Laundry Ball emits a charge into the water which breaks the bonds between molecules, enabling the individual water molecules to penetrate the fabric. The water is also highly charged with negative ions. The dirt, which is highly positive in charge, is attracted to the individual water molecules and it [sic] flushed out with the water during the rinse cycle. The rinse cycle actually acts like a second wash cycle, since there is NO SOAP to rinse out. Clothes are clean at a cost of approximately 5 cents per load. (<http://www.skepdic.com/refuge/laundry.html>)

Not buying it? Well, what if I tell you that I can cut your trips to the gas station in half? No more worrying about the ever-changing price of gas. No more spending hundreds of dollars per month on gas! For \$150 per year, the Fuel Atomizer 2000 will double your car's gas mileage! Here's how it works:

Isaiah 12:1-6

- ¹ In that day you will say:
"I will praise you, O LORD.
Although you were angry with me,
your anger has turned away
and you have comforted me.
- ² Surely God is my salvation;
I will trust and not be afraid.
The LORD, the LORD, is my strength
and my song;
he has become my salvation."
- ³ With joy you will draw water
from the wells of salvation.
- ⁴ In that day you will say:
"Give thanks to the LORD, call on his
name;
make known among the nations
what he has done,
and proclaim that his name is
exalted.
- ⁵ Sing to the LORD, for he has done
glorious things;
let this be known to all the world.
- ⁶ Shout aloud and sing for joy, people of
Zion,
for great is the Holy One of Israel
among you."

...gasoline engines can only run when the fuel is atomized (vaporized) because liquid gasoline will flood the engine. Your present vehicle can only atomize 10 to 20% of each gallon of fuel. The Fuel Atomizer 2000 can, in most cases, double the atomizing process thereby giving you a substantial increase in mileage. (https://web.archive.org/web/20060113204933/http://www.wyominginstruments.com/gas_home.htm)

Not buying that one either? They sound a little too good to be true, do they not? These contraptions make incredible guarantees, but the results promised are impossible to achieve. It sounds like these marketers are just trying to get your money instead of actually making your life a little easier. It sounds just too good to be true.

Like hearing that God has turned his anger away from you? Is that too good to be true? That only Jesus has removed all guilt and fear? Does God actually give you eternal life without asking you to contribute in some way? Or is it too good to be true?

Hear the truly good song of Isaiah: **GOD'S ANGER HAS TURNED AWAY!** This is *the reason for your trust* and *the reason to share*.

To be honest, Isaiah's words this morning do sound too good to be true. How could God ever forgive such wicked people like the nation of Judah? They ended their relationship with God! ([1:4](#)). Many paid psychics to discover secrets by using things similar to our present-day Ouija boards. Life's purpose and fulfillment was found in how much silver and gold they had. Others rejected any need for any G/god; they thumped their chests bragging about their human strength and willpower ([2:6-8](#)).

Then they did something even more to prove just how little they cared for God—they worshipped in the temple. Their hearts did not want to worship; they came Saturday evenings out of obligation. They brought sick, diseased, dying animals from their pastures and called them their best offerings. Religious holidays were celebrations of empty actions ([1:12-14](#)). Judah left God. All they could expect was to see **GOD'S ANGER TURN AGAINST THEM!**

You do not see that. Instead, you see Isaiah pointing ahead to the future. **“In that day you will say: ‘I will praise you, O LORD. Although you were angry with me, your anger has turned away and you have comforted me.’”** Understand, God did punish Judah. So many rejected God—and he let them wallow in the consequences of their choices. He took away their leaders, their nation, their homes and possessions. For 70 years they lived in the nation of Babylon.

That is not all he did; **GOD TURNED HIS ANGER AWAY.** He forgave their godlessness and allowed them to go back home. He reignited his promise of sending a Savior for life in heaven. Why did he do that? Not because they had suffered enough. Not because the next generation was more moral and sincere than their parents. Not because the people made God happy by apologizing. Because God turned his anger away—fully, freely.

Does that sound too good to be true? How could God give away something so good for so free? Even in our present-day world no one gives away things for free. If something says “Free” on it, you grow suspicious. If you hurt your friend on the playground, you act

nice to them for the rest of the day— in some attempt to repay them with good for the bad you did. Many things in our world require that you contribute something in order to get something good. So, it just seems fair, it feels right that if you want God to forgive you, then you must contribute some behavior or some good action to receive his forgiveness.

Now, you would most likely never say something like that, nor would you want to even think it. You know that Jesus died on the cross for your sins; you know that you are saved by his grace alone ([Ephesians 2:8-9](#)). So then, how easy is it to feel forgiven? Your secret shame which no one else knows, it may set your conscience on fire. You bury your face in your hands because your mind remembers the repulsive pain you brought on someone else. Maybe life feels unpleasant— and it feels like God is angry with you.

Do you try to find rest by looking inside? Do you think that God will forgive you only if you try to obey his Ten Commandments? Or if you worship every Sunday, maybe you will make God happy with you? Or if you give money to the church or try to help others or work hard to prove that you are a genuinely good person, that you might be forgiven? It just seems too good to be true that God could and would actually forgive someone (like you and me) who disappoints and fails so often!

Is it too good to be true? Do you think God is actually lying to you when he says that his anger is turned away? Are you going to become your own savior from sin?

Does the Bible say that? Listen again to Isaiah: **Although you were angry with me, your anger has turned away... Who** made God's anger turn away? Isaiah does not say that you turned God's anger away. You did not bribe God to forget your sins. You did not offer your actions as payment for your wrongs. God has every right to damn us to hell for our disobedience. Yet, God chooses to deal with us in love.

The "LORD" in all capital letters tell you a special thing about your God. God himself says that he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, and rich in love ([Exodus 34:6-7](#)). In that rich love, **GOD TURNED HIS ANGER AWAY** from you and poured out his wrath against Jesus. Jesus is treated as if he held shameful secrets in his heart. His Father punishes him as if he hurts so many. Jesus' life is unpleasant because God punishes him for your sins. In his loving compassion, the Father covers over all your wrongs with the perfect life of Jesus.

That is why Jesus serves as the unshakable rock in whom you trust. **Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid. The LORD, the LORD, is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation.** You will feel constantly tempted to dig into your heart and feel if you are saved. If you feel saved, then heaven must be yours. If you do not feel saved, then... you have some work to do. Yet, does Isaiah say: "*I have become my own strength, my song, my object for salvation?*" No!

When guilt crushes, **draw from the waters of salvation.** Run to the cross again and again— and be refreshed in the very fact that Jesus died for you. Hear God's unchangeable, unbreakable Word: "It is finished!" If Jesus died— and if died for you, then it means that you are forgiven because it relies all on Jesus! **GOD'S ANGER HAS TURNED AWAY!** and this is *the reason for your trust.*

No wonder Isaiah says: **In that day you will say: “Give thanks to the LORD, call on his name; make known among the nations what he has done, and proclaim that his name is exalted. Sing to the LORD, for he has done glorious things; let this be known to all the world. Shout aloud and sing for joy, people of Zion, for great is the Holy One of Israel among you.”** **GOD’S ANGER HAS TURNED AWAY!** and this is *the reason to share*.

You know how God has dealt with guilty consciences; he has removed your guilt in Christ! Not everyone knows this. To many, it sounds too good to be true. In fact, hear what two religious leaders (who reject forgiveness in Jesus) have said. One religious man wrote in his will: *“If I am to be killed, pray for me a lot and give continuous charities in my name, as I will be in great need for support to reach the permanent home.”* Another religious leader wrote: *“You ask me if the God of the Christians forgives those who don’t believe and who don’t seek the faith... The issue for those who do not believe in God is to obey their conscience.”* Without hearing that **GOD’S ANGER HAS TURNED AWAY**, people will always try to contribute something to earn heaven. In the end, they are actually rejecting their only Savior from sin.

You believe, know, and trust that **GOD’S ANGER HAS TURNED AWAY!** and this is *the reason to share*. You yourself have seen firsthand what God has done in your life. You can share it! You do not need a theology degree or write a 20-minute long sermon. Simply share what God has done for you. God turned his anger against Jesus and now turns to you in forgiveness.

In just three weeks you will celebrate Easter. Do your friends only know Easter as a day filled with candy, eggs, and a rabbit? Do they know that because Jesus lives, they too will have eternal life through him? Does Easter’s solid resurrection-tune play at funerals—or the scene filled with uncertainty and a lot about how good the deceased tried to be? Can you share the truth about Easter? Invite your friends to “come and see” the promise God has made to the world.

Treat this wonderful truth as the wonderful truth God treats it. Gently work on your spouse to come and hear the same things you do. Tell them why you even come here. Show them the need Jesus satisfies. Invite them to come with you. Keep your children from sleeping in Sunday mornings; do not feel ashamed to do all you can to bring them to worship. This wonderful message comes through the Word of God—and so it is important to continue hearing the Word of God (lest they forget it)! **GOD’S ANGER HAS TURNED AWAY!** and this is *the reason to share*.

Because by nature God’s unconditional love sounds foolish. Why would he welcome a runaway child back home? Why give heaven away for free? Does God actually give you eternal life without asking you to contribute in some way? Or is it too good to be true?

Hear what God promises you through Isaiah. In his mercy, God has turned his anger away from you. You see it on Calvary. Jesus tells you this wonderful truth. There is no doubt about it. What God has done and has promised stands forever true.

So, go and share it. In a world lost and unsure about the life to come, you now carry words of comfort. Make known the great things God has done! Live and tell how **GOD’S ANGER HAS TURNED AWAY!** *the reason for your trust, the reason to share*.