**Repairers of the Breach**

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Prophet Isaiah lived in uncertain times.

The old promises that folks relied on. The old truths they had taken for granted, were being upended and challenged by a new reality.

The temple, where people believe that God’s very presence dwelt, was destroyed.

Jerusalem, which people believed God would protect and which would never come to harm, was destroyed.

God’s people, the heirs of a promise to become as numerous as the stars of the sky, were now a shadow of themselves, being carried off into exile.

The familiar songs fell flat.

The well-worn prayers became unreliable.

And hope seemed all but lost.

Now in the aftermath of the destruction of Jerusalem. As the people sat in exile. They began to argue about what had gone wrong. What failed, that this came to pass? What did we miss? Did God abandon us? Were we ourselves faithless? Were the rituals too imprecise.

Now the story of scripture is one where the voices of outsiders are elevated time and time again, where those who view life from the margins of power, speak with authority.

That is the tradition of the prophets.

The people who were not sitting inside the halls of power, but rather lifted up their voices in the wilderness, and in the streets. Who lived among the brokenhearted, and spoke challenging words for God in the midst of despair and confusion.

So it was, in the midst of the most upending moment in his people’s history, that Isaiah proclaimed this passage that we had read today. To tell the religious people what God needed from them in a time like this.

And he told them, to be repairers of the breach.

To stand with their very lives in the midst of what had been torn open. Not to merely think about it, or pray about it, or hope and long, our lament and grieve. But to stand in the breach and begin to repair it. Brick by brick. With their very lives.

In short, Isaiah called on the people to live a life of faith with its selves rolled up. Eschewing polished piety, for the work of justice, and healing, and reconciliation.

Isaiah says:

“Is not the fast I chose that you set people free? Feed the hungry? Bring the homeless to your home? Clothe the naked?”

Jesus had read this. He learned it from a young age. And so when he was teaching the crowds he told them:

 ‘When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. And he will say to those at his right hand, “Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me. Because truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of my children you did it to me.”

A life of faith with it’s sleeves rolled up. Repairing the breach. Restoring the world.

And I don’t think any of us need to stretch our imaginations too wide, or cast our gaze too far, to know that their are breaches broken open in our communities, in our lives, and in our world, that cry out to us.

Our lives our breached by:

The shattered loss of a hoped for future.

The pain of grief.

The challenging relative or the loved one whose choices make us fearful.

The future that is uncertain. Or the lost job. Or the breaking relationship.

And their is a breach in our nation:

Between people who have two very different experiences of the world and two very different sets of priorities and hopes. There is a breach of communication, of trust.

There is a breach of safety. As many worry that they are no longer at home or welcome in the county where they built their life.

And there is the long and overwhelming list of things that have long torn at us. A legacy of racism, the threat of terror, the seemingly unsolvable crisis of refugees, the seemingly unending violence, the seemingly hopeless pace of a changing climate, … and we could go on, and on…

And I don’t think any of us need to stretch our imaginations too wide, or cast our gaze too far, to know that their are breaches broken open in our communities, in our lives, and in our world, that cry out to us.

So what should we do.

Well, I hear the prophet’s voice calling for us to be repairers of the breach.

The prophets voice reminds us of is that we as the church are called to stand in these breaches for one another, and with one another, to rebuild them, stronger, with love.

Not with a polished and practiced piety, not with easy answers to impossible questions. Not with abstract beliefs. Not with pollyannaish hope. Or a blind eye to pain.

But with faith that has it’s sleeves rolled up.

Feeding the hungry. Clothing the naked. Comforting those who are sorrowing. Breaking the chains off the oppressed.

Not quiet faith, but loud faith. Singing our hope for all to hear. Raising our voice for justice. Standing on the side of love.

What I want to tell you this morning is that everything we do here, every thing, has its place in that hard, holy work.

Every thing we do is an act of repairing something that has been broken open, with our unending insistence on love.

I have heard people say that the world is ugly, but we have the most beautiful music

I have heard people say that say the shadows are creeping, we light candles, and hold them up, and say that the darkness will never overcome the light.

I have heard people say that there is nothing to be done, we knit dolls, and fill bags with food, and pack donations, and sort coats.

I have heard people say that the world is cold, we wrap our arms around someone whose heart is broken.

I have heard people say that people who believe differently can’t be civil, we have coffee hour.

I have heard people say that diverse people cannot be united. We have this table, where we become one body.

I have heard people say that that the kid’s don’t believe anymore, our youth talk about their faith for hours.

I have heard people say that that resources are scarce. We live generously.

I have heard people say that hope is gone, we pray all the same.

Every thing we do is an act of repairing something that has been broken open, with our unending insistence on love.

We do these things because each one is like putting one brick into the breach. Building something together that none of us could do alone. A community that gives love a chance to come to life in a big, bold way.

And God is with us as a promise. A promise, in the words of the prophet, that if we have a faith with its sleeves rolled up. If we set our hearts to the task of love. Our hands to the task of service. Our voices to the work of beauty. And our feet planted firm on the foundation of our faith.

Then God’s promise is is, in the words of the prophet:

your light shall rise in the darkness

and your gloom be like the noonday.

The Lord will guide you continually,

and satisfy your needs in parched places,

and make your bones strong;

and you shall be like a watered garden,

like a spring of water,

whose waters never fail.

Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt;

you shall raise up the foundations of many generations;

and you will be called the repairer of the breach.