

Romans 8.18-25

Promise and Fulfillment – Christmas, Lord's Supper

There exists, for all who understand the nature of faith, of belief, and of the power it teaches us, a strange and beautiful fission in the act of waiting. It is a powerful Juxtaposition of hope and completion. The rising coming of the promise, that anticipation of its coming as it grows nearer and nearer, and finally the delight in the fulfillment that is the most wondrous experience possible. It requires focus and determination and usually involves a rehearsal of the promise, a recitation of the past evidences and a conscious application of our reasons for believing that many find wearisome, if not impossible. And built into our celebrations of this season there are ample opportunities for us to practice this art, this pattern of developing our spiritual muscle that grows when we actively choose to believe against all the powers that seek to destroy and undermine our hope. We have, in this season, reminders of the fact that all of God's promises come true in His time, we have evidence in the story; we have testimony of those who waited

millennia for the fulfillment of God's promise of Messiah's first coming; we are given accounts of their overflowing joy and awe that they were permitted the privilege of seeing the consummation of the promise in the coming of the child. The promise fulfilled, the anointed one of God, the Word made flesh... John puts this wonder into words with typical lyrical poetry:

John 1:14 (NKJV)

¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

It is this truth that is often forgotten in the chaos of the holiday, in our delightful rehearsals of our customs; customs that wear just enough of their source to alleviate, or at least deaden our guilty suspicions that we might be missing the point. We teach children to give, because God gave. We ourselves, give with joy as expressions of love, and those with self-control, or at least some restraint, are content to wait and see what others have given them with a sense of anticipation and delight in the revelation of the gift. We do these things and fail to see and understand that they are

given to teach us the story AND to help us learn to wait for the end, for the revelation of the mystery and its FULL purpose.

I. PROMISE AND PREPARATION

Genesis 3.14-24

- a. God promised at the beginning of man's sojourn in this fallen world that He would
 - i. Set the whole of creation on a path of misery and conflict
 - 1. That this path would not completely undo His eternal purpose, but rather serve that purpose.
 - 2. That even though difficulty and misery would attend man's labor in every area of his life, he would still accomplish his purpose and exercise dominion over the creation... it would be much, much harder
 - 3. That although man was banished from God's immediate presence, he was not to

be destroyed nor cast off forever, but rather God Himself would inexplicably provide a covering for sin while the whole of the promise was being prepared.

4. God's promise for the earth and for mankind was that He would
 - a. redeem it,
 - b. restore it and
 - c. make that which He was slowly unveiling so wonderful that all would confess
 - i. His perfect wisdom in how He accomplished His purpose
 - ii. and in that purpose itself.
- b. God promised that He would accomplish this Himself –

Isaiah 9.6-7

- i. That nothing could hinder Him
- ii. That nothing could aid Him

- iii. That every single word He promised would absolutely come to pass
- c. God promised that in the fullness of the time –

Ephesians 1.3-14

- i. He would show His power
 - ii. Honor His name
 - iii. Crush His enemies
 - iv. Deliver His people
- d. God gave smaller promises along the way that would be fulfilled

Isaiah 46.8-13

- e. To build faith in His word
 - i. To demonstrate His power
 - ii. To prepare His people for the promise
 - 1. To create longing
 - 2. To create trust

3. To purge sin
 4. To make them holy and spotless
- iii. To prepare the promise for His people
1. That all the needed circumstances would be fulfilled
 2. That all the preparations would be made
 3. That all the time needed would be spent so that everything would/could come out perfectly.

II. PROMISE AND FULFILLMENT

- a. God has made good on all of His past promises with the coming of Jesus Christ -

2Corinthians 1.20

- b. God has given to us the spirit as a guarantee of the promised redemption -

2Corinthians 1.22

2Corinthians 5.5

- c. God has given us the gift of participation in the ordinances of the church to remind us of his faithfulness.
- d. To show that He has indeed accepted Christ's death on our behalf, washed us clean and buried us with Christ in Baptism.
- e. To allow us to partake of the physical elements of the table to both bind and nourish our souls to Himself and our bodies to one another as we share in the table of the Lord with others who are themselves bound to Christ...
- f. The fulfillment is best and most honest when we pause to actually participate in the death and life of Jesus...
 - i. We take his death as nourishment, strengthening power for our hope
 - ii. We take His blood as nourishment for our soul, feeding our hope with the assurance of payment made on our behalf
 - iii. We take the truth of His resurrection as guarantee that God has indeed accepted that payment on our behalf