The Third Wednesday in Advent
Rolling Meadows - 1977

Rev. Carl F. Thrun

IN NOMINE JESU

ISAIAH 35: 1-10

Those who will benefit by God's coming are the GRIEVING and the SORROWFUL. We still observe today that the reasons for PEOPLE'S GRIEVING are quite dufferent. There are "WEAK HANDS" that need strengthening -- "FEEBLE KNEES" that need firming up -- "FEARFULLY THROBBING HEARTS" that need to be spoken to: "BE STRONG, FEAR NOT! BEHOLD, YOUR GOD WILL COME WITH VENGEANCE, WITH THE RECOMPENSE OF GOD. HE WILL COME AND SAVE YOU." ..... Most of that kind of GRIEVING can be taken care of by some kind of HUMAN INTERVENTION. But then there are also AFFLICTIONS that are much more SERIOUS and BEYOND REPAIR as we see them. They include the "BLIND EYES" that have little hope of seeing -- the "PLUGGED EARS" that yearn hopelessly to be opened -- the "LAMED LIMBS" that would love to leap like a hart -- the "UNSPEAKING TONGUES" that long to sing for joy.

How do such GRIEVING brothers and sisters benefit by the LORD'S COMING. There was a time when they enjoyed REAL PHYSICAL RESTORATION. When JOHN THE BAPTIST sent word from prison, asking JESUS whether He was the PROPHET WHO WAS TO COME, the answer was very explicit: "DON'T YOU SEE THE BLIND RECEIVING THEIR SIGHT, THE LAME WALKING, AND THE DEAF HAVING THEIR EARS UNSTOPPED?" That is what ISAIAH said would happen -- and that is what JESUS was doing.

"But," you ask, "what about today?" We need not question the PHENOMENON OF HEALING BY FAITH in our own time. NUMERIOUS TESTIMONIES have been given to demonstrate the fact that the LORD is STILL FUNCTIONING as the GREAT HEALER today..... We also need to remember that the DIVINE HEALER makes use of SCIENTIFIC INVENTIONS and DISCOVERIES to perform His work of PHYSICAL RESTORATION. Many new advances in the use of BRAILLE and SEEING-EYE DOGS have helped to replace EYES that are non-repairable. TRANSISTORIZED HEARING AIDS have done wonders for the DEAF. NEW VOICE-PRODUCING INSTRUMENTS have restored the abilbity to SPEAK. MECHANICAL LIMBS have made it possible for the LAME to acquire greater mobility.

But there remain those whose HEALING is still NOT FORTHCOMING. How about them? They do have the ASSURANCE -- saved until the last two verses of our text -- that they are among the "REDEEMED" and "RANSOMED" of the Lord, for whom the "HOLY HIGHWAY HOMEWARD" has been laid out. "AND A HIGHWAY SHALL BE THERE, AND IT SHALL BE CALLED THE HOLY WAY; THE UNCLEAN SHALL NOT PASS OVER IT, AND FOOLS SHALL NOT ERR THEREIN. NO LION SHALL BE THERE, NOR SHALL ANY RAVENOUS BEAST COME UP ON IT; THEY SHALL NOT BE FOUND THERE, BUT THE REDEEMED SHALL WALK THERE. AND THE RANSOMED OF THE LORD SHALL RETURN, AND COME TO ZION WITH SINGING." Their HEADS need not be covered by some kind of CLOAKS as though they were MOURNERS. On the contrary, they have "EVERLASTING JOY ON THEIR HEADS" because they have been BOUGHT BACK and RESCUED by the Lord. They have learned with ST.

PAUL to be content with the GRACE AND MERCY OF GOD that no one can take from them. They know and are sure that "THEY SHALL OBTAIN JOY AND GLADNESS, AND SORROW AND SIGHING SHALL FLEE AWAY." They have FRIENDS who are truly FRIENDS -- who can show by their CARE AND CONCERN that such HANDICAPS can be BORNE and LIVED WITH.

But there is something more for those who GRIEVE until the LORD COMES. While they are ON THE WAY -- on that HOLY HIGHWAY that leads to the ETERNAL SANCTUARY -- even though they are STILL DESERT DWELLERS ----- THERE ARE EXCITING SYMBOLS OF JOY. The ARID WILDERNESS has been transformed into a WATERED AND WOODED LAND OF PROMISE. LUXURIOUS FIELDS OF LILIES, and CEDARS OF LEBANON, and CITRUS GROVES -- and SPRINGS, and BROOKS, and CREEKS, and RIVERS ----- these will all be there to supply the WAYFAYERS with the ABUNDANCE they need. Instead of the BURNING SAND and THIRSTY GROUND and HAUNTS OF JACKALS there are GRASSES, and REEDS, and RUSHES to make the WAY MORE PLEASANT to these SOJOURNERS AND PILGRIMS OF GOD. "THEY SHALL SEE THE GLORY OF THE LORD, THE MAJESTY OF OUR GOD." This is the ASSURANCE that SORROW AND SIGHING WILL STOP. This is what CHRISTMAS promises to the GRIEVING and the SORROWING. He was Himself "A MAN OF SORROWS AND ACQUAINTED WITH GRIEF" -- He has gone down the HIGHWAY OF HOLINESS "TO PREPARE A PLACE FOR US." And "HE WILL COME AGAIN AND RECEIVE US UNTO HIMSELF." Amen.