

## Beyond Our Understanding

Isaiah 64:4

Sunday, November 29, 2020 at The First Congregational Church of Marshalltown, Iowa

Introduction: The once and future king

Today marks the first day of the Season of Advent, recalling the events preceding the birth of Jesus of Nazareth. It has an ancient history and marks a wondrous theological truth; that in His birth Jesus, the eternal Son of God who is Creator of all things is Himself now part of Creation. He has joined the human race, and when He resurrected and ascended to heaven, He retained His humanity. So a human sits at the right hand of God, having experienced all of human life, and death, and as a resurrected human promises to return.

T.H. White wrote The Once and Future King, a book loosely based the 15th century novel The Death of Arthur. White got his title from an alleged inscription on the grave of Arthur the King. It fits our understanding of Christ the King, and it all started with His birth as a baby in a poor village in Israel. We have a God who does things that we cannot imagine and reveals things we could never discover on our own. That is the point of the sermon for today.

Isaiah 64:4 Who acts for the one who waits for Him

The key verse in Isaiah's ancient text emphasized that the God of Israel was a God that was not only the true God, but one who would act on behalf of those who seek Him a way that no false god would do. Keep in mind that the very definition of faith is the conviction not only that He exists, but that He rewards those who diligently seek Him (Hebrews 11:6).

1 Corinthians 2:9-10 Who does for us what we cannot imagine

When the Apostle Paul quoted this verse in 1 Corinthians (2:9-10), further meaning of the verse unfolds. He wrote of a wisdom that the rulers of this age cannot understand, because if they did they never would have crucified Christ, but that insight is revealed to the church by the Spirit, who searches the deep things of God. In the middle of this he quotes Isaiah 64:4 like this; "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him." So now it is not only that God acts and rewards those who seek Him, but that He will do things that we've never before imagined. There is something to that that speaks to the depths of a person's soul. The great scientist Pascal wrote this: *"What else does this craving, and this helplessness, proclaim but that there was once in man a true happiness, of which all that now remains is the*

*empty print and trace? This he tries in vain to fill with everything around him, seeking in things that are not there the help he cannot find in those that are, though none can help, since this infinite abyss can be filled only with an infinite and immutable object; in other words by God himself."*

*- Blaise Pascal, Pensées VII(425)*

They are called "mysteries" in the Bible.

The Bible speaks of "mysteries", but the word has a different meaning from what we commonly understand. Normally, we think of a mystery as something to be solved or uncovered. In the Bible a mystery is something we would never discover until God revealed it to us. Here's an example. Back in Isaiah, at the very end of the book, (65:17), we read, "For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered or come to mind." Somehow, I find that very touching, that this world, which demands so much attention so much of the time, will become a distant and fading memory. Such is what waits before us.

Application: Isaiah 64:5 Him who rejoices and does righteousness

I can mention a couple of applications. The first one is in the very next verse of our text. Isaiah 64:5 tells us that we are to rejoice and do righteousness. We don't need thanks when we have a vision of grace. And the second application is to increase that vision of grace. James 1 tells us that we are welcome to ask for wisdom regarding anything. I say, ask for wisdom about the value of your own life, the pleasure God has in you, the value of your obedience to Christ, and the riches of your inheritance. Even the presence of the Holy Spirit is but a down payment of what is to come.

Conclusion

So much today is beyond our understanding, but we serve a God who blesses His people in a better way than other gods. But the New Testament understanding of the same verse talks about a God who has plans beyond our conception. Things change perspective when we realize that there is so much more to the plan of our Lord than we understand, and so much more for His plans for us than we know.