Lent 3 Isaiah 42:14-21
March 15, 2020 771*-343-385/393-345
*CW-S – "I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light"

God Opens Our Eyes
I. To see His great patience.
II. To see His amazing grace.
III. To see His just judgments.

Dear Christian friends,

God's Word can be so clear but many just DON'T SEE or GET it. Take creation **for example** – or who Jesus is – how anyone is **saved** – what Communion or the **Bible** are. The Bible is so clear yet those truths are SO CONTROVERSIAL. **Sometimes** you want to ask people, "Are you BLIND? How can you NOT SEE it?"

In the gospel reading Jesus said, ***"For judgment I came into this world, in order that those who do not see will see, and those who do see will become blind."*** With these verses GOD OPENS OUR EYES. God opens our eyes to see 1)His **great** patience, 2)His **amazing** grace and 3)His **just** judgments.

I. To see His great patience.

God opens our eyes TO SEE HIM – **see** Him active in our world – deeply concerned about us. A **lot of times** we DON'T SEE that – or we lose sight of it. We can feel ALL ALONE. It can look **as if** God DOESN'T CARE about us. We aren't the only ones who **have felt** that way. Read the psalms. ***"Awake, O LORD! Why do You sleep? Rouse Yourself!"*** Or how about this one, ***"Then the LORD awoke as a man wakes from the stupor of wine."*** That's PRETTY STRONG LANGUAGE to use about God! Later on Isaiah pleads, ***"Oh, that You would rend the heavens and come down!"***

TO US it can look **as if** God DOESN'T CARE. But now God shows us HIS VIEW of the **situation**. God OPENS our eyes to see His great patience. ***"I have been silent for a long time. I have kept still. I have restrained Myself."*** Did you catch the BUILD UP? God keeping quiet – HOLDING back – RESTRAINING Himself – biting His tongue, so to speak. But finally ENOUGH is enough! No more **holding back**!

"Like a woman giving birth, I will scream. I will gasp and pant." Ask a **pregnant woman** and there are days it SEEMS AS IF the baby will **never be born**. She just keeps getting bigger and bigger. There's some false labor – but **not yet**. Then BAM! – there's NO TURNING BACK – no stopping. The baby is coming READY OR NOT!

God has GREAT PATIENCE but is also a DEFINITE LIMIT to His patience. God can be pushed TOO FAR and then WATCH OUT! You **really** don't want to get into a SHOVING MATCH with God. There's no way you'll **win** that one.

How long will **God continue** to PUT UP with the garbage He takes from our country? God HELD OFF destroying the world with the flood for **120 years** but then came the day God shut Noah up in the ark and ***"the floodgates of heaven were opened."*** When God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah it wasn't ON A WHIM. God told Abraham, ***"The outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is so great and their sin so grievous."*** TEMPORALLY America may be a FIRST WORLD country but not spiritually or **morally**. God warns that He ***"will not be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. Those who sow to please their sinful natures from that nature will reap destruction."*** God has already sent plenty of WARNING SIGNS and WAKE-UP calls.

God's great patience has a PURPOSE. Peter tells us, ***"The Lord is not slow in keeping His promises. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance."***

God is not just patient with the **world** but also with us **Christians**. Our daily Christians lives LEAVE A LOT to be desired. OPEN your eyes! Compare your everyday life to God's call to ***"be holy"*** IN EVERY AREA of our lives. AS MUCH AS we complain about **how horrible** the world has become, can't we see **how much** the world is TAKING A TOLL on **us Christians** and our **values**? We didn't come to church today to get a GOLD STAR from God **for our good behavior**. We came pleading God's AMAZING GRACE. God OPENS our eyes…

II. To see His amazing grace.

Listen to God describe His grace here. ***"I will lead the blind on a way they do not know. Along paths they do not know I will direct them. Ahead of them I will turn darkness into light and rough places into level ground. These are the things I will accomplish for them. I will not abandon them."***

These blind include you and me. **Like everyone else** we were once IN THE DARK and blind to the **truth**. We **once** didn't see OURSELVES **clearly** – we once thought we were pretty decent people – NOT ALL that **bad** – PRETTY GOOD if I must say so myself. We **once** didn't see GOD **clearly** – we didn't understand God's HOLINESS and **justice** – once thought God was a PUSHOVER who would let us get away with just about anything but murder. We **once** didn't see SIN clearly – **once thought** ignoring God was NO BIG DEAL – **thought** breaking God's commandments may BE STUPID but not enough to **send us** to hell forever.

Then GOD OPENED our **eyes**. God made us take a HARD LOOK at ourselves in the mirror of His 10 Commandments. God asked each one of us, "Can you honestly say **this is the way** you've lived your life? I wasn't joking when I said, ***'the soul that sins, it shall die."***"

But then God led us ***"by ways we had not known."*** AT THE TIME it was an ***"unfamiliar path"*** to us. Until God brings a **person to faith** in Jesus the gospel is TOTAL FOOLISHNESS and nonsense. Paul wrote, ***"No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived, what God has prepared for those who love Him – but God has revealed it to us by His Spirit."***

With the gospel God takes us on the PATH LEADING to **Bethlehem** and shows us a little Baby. God OPENS our **eyes** to see and believe that the Baby Jesus is NONE OTHER than the eternal Son of God Himself born one of us. God shows us Jesus' **life** – Jesus always putting His heavenly Father FIRST in **all** things – Jesus always and lovingly obeying Mary and Joseph – Jesus never picking on anyone -Jesus respectful to His **teachers** – always being honest and sincere – Jesus PURE AND DECENT in all His thoughts, words and the jokes He told. God OPENS our **eyes** to see that Jesus lived that sinless life for us.

God TAKES US along that path leading to **Calvary** and the cross. What amazing grace we see as God forsakes His ***"beloved Son"*** so that we might be forgiven. **What grace** that Jesus would TAKE THE PUNISHMENT for the sins of all people and willingly suffer and die in our place. **What grace** that God ***"did not spare His own Son but gave Him up for us all – as the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the whole world."***

From there God takes us to a CEMETERY just outside Jerusalem. God tells us to TAKE A GOOD LOOK and see that Jesus' grave is **open** and **empty**. Then God OPENS our **eyes** to see Jesus risen from the dead. **What grace** to hear Jesus promise, ***"Because I live, you shall live also. Whoever believes in Me shall not perish but have everlasting life."*** WHAT GRACE to have God's Son as

our **perfect Savior** – to **have in Jesus** God's forgiveness of all our sins and His sure promise of eternal life in heaven when we die.

Those sights and truths are now SO FAMILIAR to us. We been to the cross and **empty grave** SO MANY TIMES before – but that doesn't stop us from **coming** to church and **going** there again. We've come so often to our Lord's Supper but how can we PASS UP another opportunity to ***"remember"*** Jesus and receive His true body and blood and so be strengthened in our Christian FAITH and LIFE?

Yet that joy ISN'T THERE for many people. Yes, even for some who **used to sit** in these pews with us – who once stood with us at this altar and publicly promised to **be faithful** to God and His Word **even unto death**. God OPENS our **eyes** to see that unfortunately there's NOTHING NEW about that either. The same thing happened **when Jesus** was here on earth. It happened to God's **OT people** – the Jews. God OPENS our **eyes**…

III. To see His just judgments.

God has us take a GOOD LOOK at His OT people. ***"Who is so blind as My servant or so deaf as My messenger whom I sent? Who is …as blind as the servant of the LORD? You, Israel, see many things, but you do not observe. Israel opens his ears, but he does not hear."***

God had shown AMAZING GRACE to the Jews. At Mt. Sinai God had told them, ***"Although the whole world is Mine, you will be for Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation."*** God saved them from the **Egyptians** – gave them the **land of Canaan** – gave them His WORD and the promise of the Savior. SO RICHLY BLESSED by God they were to joyfully serve Him **with their daily lives** and boldly share His Word with the world.

Yet look what happened. Israel turned a DEAF EAR to God and became BLIND to God's **grace** and **goodness**. They had God's WORD. **They had** the temple and the sacrifices. They had a history filled with God's **mighty deeds**. God sent them prophet after prophet. Yet they ***"paid no attention, heard nothing."*** WHAT MORE could God have done for them? It was Isaiah's sad duty to ANNOUNCE GOD'S JUDGMENT on His **stubborn, impenitent** people. The Israelites lost their HIGH CALLING and **privileges** because of their IMPENITENCE and UNBELIEF. They just wouldn't listen to God.

Do **we really** need to ask why GOD SHOWS US this? ***"Let him who thinks he's standing take heed lest he fall!"*** Or as Jesus said in the Garden of Gethsemane, ***"Watch and pray that you enter not into temptation. The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak."*** WE are God's servants and messengers to the world today.

Today's readings all call on us to SEE HOW RICHLY God has blessed us **in Jesus**. They **call on us** not to take the gospel FOR GRANTED and end up losing it THROUGH INDIFFERENCE and **unbelief**. Today **once more** God calls each one of us to BE PEOPLE IN His Word – at church – in Bible class – at home. Through His Word God OPENS our eyes to see Jesus as our Savior. **Through His Word** God keeps our EYES FIXED on and our LIVES FOCUSED on Jesus. God has spared us His JUST JUDGMENTS and shown us GREAT PATIENCE and AMAZING GRACE. Amen.

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