

God Comes Down
Isaiah 64:1-9

Jesus talks about a fig tree. It sends out little green leaves, and they are a sign of life and hope and good things to come.

Isaiah paints a different picture with these words: *We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.*

It wasn't wind Tuesday morning, but the snow we got, that brought the leaves down into our yard. They weren't my leaves. They were my neighbor Ed's leaves. He has some kind of oak tree that likes to hang on to its leaves. Sometimes it is January before all of them have fallen. So now I have more leaves to deal with. I had all of mine raked up and hauled to the compost site. Now I have another mess to deal with.

Isn't that how it is in life? Life is full of messes. A lot of them are our own doing. Instead of loving the Lord our God with all our heart, soul and mind, and loving our neighbor as ourselves, we take a different path. We put ourselves first and pursue our own pleasures and desires. And even our righteous deeds are tainted by impure motives. God's words through Isaiah ring true. *We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a*

polluted garment. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.

But not all the messes in life are our fault. Sometimes it is the sins of others that cause problems in our lives. This turns out to be only a small consolation because the mess spills out into our lives and we have to deal with it.

We have come to expect to have to deal with problems of our own making, and with those that other people cause.

What we might not expect is for God to be the source of the storms in our lives. But that seems to be exactly what Isaiah prays: *Oh that you would rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains might quake at your presence – as when fire kindles brushwood and the fire causes water to boil... It seems that Isaiah is praying that God would come down in all His might and power.*

Is that what we want? I'm not so sure, because more of Isaiah's words from our text come to mind: *Behold, you were angry, and we sinned; in our sins we have been a long time, and shall we be saved?*

That is the question, isn't it? When, not if, God comes down, shall we be saved?

Yes, because of Jesus, and only because of Jesus.

Without Jesus, God coming down is a terrifying thing because we know our sin. But that is why Jesus came down. Today is the First Sunday in Advent. We begin to look forward to God coming down and being born in Bethlehem. It is only in this context that God coming down is not something for us to fear.

Earlier, in the Collect of the Day we prayed, “Stir up your power, O Lord, and come...” And it is only through Jesus that the result of God coming down can be a good thing: “that by Your protection we may be rescued from the threatening perils of our sins and saved by Your mighty deliverance...”

In those few words we have the story of salvation. Jesus did come down to rescue us, not condemn us. He rescued us by being condemned Himself. The sins that would threaten our salvation He took upon Himself on His cross and died to pay their price.

We begin each worship service with the Invocation, asking God to come and be present among us. It is only through Jesus that this is a good thing. The forgiveness of sins Jesus earned for us on His cross was delivered to us in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit in our baptism. The little green leaves of life and hope sprouted in us. We received the gifts of the Holy Spirit, faith, the forgiveness of sins, and the promise of life

everlasting. God has come into our lives, and through Jesus, it is a good thing.

Many of us pray an Advent themed prayer at the beginning of our meals: “Come, Lord Jesus...” Because we have the gift of faith, we want Jesus to come, to be our guest, and to bring into our lives every physical and spiritual blessing.

And that is just what He does, from the time of our baptism until we take our last earthly breath. We don’t like to think about it, but that time will come. Even then, and maybe especially then we pray, “Come, Lord Jesus...” and He does. He comes to take all of His beloved children to be with Him forever. That was the message I got to share with Herb Zumbach’s family yesterday in the cemetery.

It may be that as we stare into the face of our enemy, death, it is then that the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus are the most meaningful to us. Jesus, and what He has done for us, is certainly our joy and hope now. We live knowing that we are in a right relationship with our heavenly Father. He will not hold our sins against us. He has forgiven them and forgotten them because of Jesus. But when everything else in life has been stripped away, all we have is Jesus. And that is enough!

Come, Lord Jesus. Come, Lord Jesus. Amen.