

Isaiah 48:22 - 49:7 ²² "There is no peace," says the LORD, "for the wicked."^{NKJ} **Isaiah 49:1** "Listen, O coastlands, to Me, And take heed, you peoples from afar! The LORD has called Me from the womb; From the matrix of My mother He has made mention of My name. ² And He has made My mouth like a sharp sword; In the shadow of His hand He has hidden Me, And made Me a polished shaft; In His quiver He has hidden Me." ³ "And He said to me, 'You are My servant, O Israel, In whom I will be glorified.' ⁴ Then I said, 'I have labored in vain, I have spent my strength for nothing and in vain; Yet surely my just reward is with the LORD, And my work with my God.' " ⁵ " And now the LORD says, Who formed Me from the womb to be His Servant, To bring Jacob back to Him, So that Israel is gathered to Him (For I shall be glorious in the eyes of the LORD, And My God shall be My strength), ⁶ Indeed He says, 'It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant To raise up the tribes of Jacob, And to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also give You as a light to the Gentiles, That You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth.' " ⁷ Thus says the LORD, The Redeemer of Israel, their Holy One, To Him whom man despises, To Him whom the nation abhors, To the Servant of rulers: "Kings shall see and arise, Princes also shall worship, Because of the LORD who is faithful, The Holy One of Israel; And He has chosen You."

There is peace for the wicked, but only when He is slain

You may have noticed I am a Tolkien fan. I must have read the Hobbit 4 times before I was 12. One of my favorite parts that I could recite from heart was when Bard of Laketown stood alone with his village burning behind him and said "*Arrow, Black Arrow! I have saved you to the last. You have never failed me and always I have recovered you. I had you from my father and he from of old. If ever you came from the forges of the true king under the mountain , go now and speed well.*" Others of you have read or watched the Hobbit will know that the arrow flew true and struck the one chink in

Smaug's impenetrable armor and the arrow enter into his belly and Smaug fell into the lake and his fire and life was extinguished.

What does that have to do with our text? In our text, Isaiah is talking about slaying creatures, creatures with very hardened armor. This is how God describes them earlier in Isaiah **Isaiah 48:4** ⁴ *Because I knew that you were obstinate, And your neck was an iron sinew, And your brow bronze* . The creatures that God sent Isaiah to slay were not dragons but people, the people of Israel. From his mother's womb God had called Isaiah to this task. Isaiah was to be a sword in the palm of God's hand, an arrow shoot from God's quiver to slay these wicked people. How can a person be an arrow, a sword? Our text tells us. By his words! Isaiah talks about his mouth. His message of their sin and Gods wrath on their sin were to be an arrow, a sword sticking into their hearts slaying their arrogance. He was to them that there is no peace, there is no heaven for the wicked and they were wicked and God would allow them to be conquered by the Chaldeans for their sins.

Why? Why did God want their arrogance slain? Why did He want them to see how great their sin was? Why would God allow

them to be destroyed as a nation by the Chaldeans? Verse 5 tells us - so that Jacob might be brought back to Him, so that Israel might be gathered to Him. In their obstinacy, they would not admit their sin. In their stubbornness, they would not change their sinful ways. In their arrogance, they assumed God was with them and that they were deserving of heaven. Over the years their arrogance had build them a hide that like Smaugs, was nearly impenetrable. They would not bow their necks to God. They denied, tried to excuse every sin. They refused to change. So God sent them Isaiah, a prophet with very sharp words about the evilness of their ways, sharply pointing out their evil and harshly declaring that God would give them into the hands of the Chaldeans. And God did this all in the hope that some of the words might find a kink in the armor and their arrogance and impenitence might be destroyed. God's desire was that their impenitence and arrogance might be slain beneath the law, slain beneath the knowledge of their great sin. Once their impenitence was slain and they in contrition turned to God, then God could then heal them. ***This is exactly what God said in Deuteronomy 32:39 'Now see that I, even I, am He, And there is no God besides Me; I kill and I make alive; I***

wound and I heal; Nor is there any who can deliver from My hand. And Hosea 6:1 where the prophets says "Come, and let us return to the LORD; For He has torn, but He will heal us; He has stricken, but He will bind us up." Yes our God slays so that He might heal. His fervent desire for Israel was that their arrogance and unbelief and impenitence might be slain by the law and then God could point them to the coming savior and forgive.

But you know God didn't just want this for the Jews. ⁶ *Indeed He says, 'It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant To raise up the tribes of Jacob, And to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also give You as a light to the Gentiles,'* It is not just the Jews who build armor of arrogance that sees our actions as justified because of what others have done and refuses to admit the iniquity of our sin. Such arrogance has been found in every culture and every person and it is found in our sinful nature. Isaiah's message was not just for the Jews. His words, 66 chapters worth, are a light to every person of every culture that yes indeed there is not peace for the wicked. These words are arrows shot toward our sinful arrogant hearts attempting to find a chink to slay our arrogance and

impenitence, make us see the wickedness of our sin. It is one thing to say “I am wicked” and know it academically but it is another thing when that arrow pierces all the way to the soul and we realize the depth of our sin.

As I kid often played out that scene from the Hobbit. I was Bard of Laketown shooting the black arrow at Smaug and then watching as it hit its mark and Smaug was slain and people cheered. The irony of the situation is how it is accurate except for a few key differences. We are the arrow. We are arrows in the quiver of God, shot at a dragon, a dragon which devours men whole and sends them to hell. The well armored dragon of arrogance that refuses to acknowledge sin and refuses to turn from it and in refusing to turn from sin is refusing Jesus and refusing to turn to Jesus and be healed. Yes we are arrows in the quiver of God, you are an arrow whom God uses or at least wants to use to slay the arrogance of unbelief and impenitence. Have you not heard James 5. *He who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.*

James is not talking about the things that annoy us. Or

rubbing someone’s sin in their face. Or putting hard burdens on already sorrowful hearts. I am talking about hearts that aren’t sorry for their sins or hearts that are sorry but who still refuse to give up sin. Those are the hearts that God wants slain and wants to use you as arrows to pierce, pierce not in anger but in love.

The other big difference between my childhood imaginings and our service to Christ is that Bard received much glory for what he did. How much glory will you get by telling people of their sin, that the wages of sin is death, that there is no peace for the wicked? Pretty much zero. Verse 7 talks about how Israel despised and abhorred Isaiah for trying to slay their arrogance, for trying to bring them to the knowledge of their sin and repentance over it. The world will always resent and hate having its sin and punishment for sin pointed out.

Why then would we do it? Because there is peace for the wicked, but only when He is slain. If your arrow hits home and they turn to Christ, you have gained a brother, a sister. Being glad to be an arrow in God’s quiver all starts with that. I am wicked. I have sinned against God and man. There should be no peace for me in this life and none in the life to come . The only thing there should be for me is to

be thrown in the outer darkness to the place prepared for Satan and his evil angels where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. But there is peace for me and for you. Because He, Jesus, was slain. These chapters of Isaiah aren't just about Isaiah. They are a prophesy of Jesus the redeemer of Israel, their holy one who would bring salvation to the ends of the earth for He was slain in the place of every sinner, in place of us the wicked. And so there is peace for the wicked. There is peace for us in Him, Jesus, who was slain in our place.

Notice the sermon theme, When is there peace for the wicked? There is peace for the wicked, but only when He is slain. Jesus has been slain to provide us with forgiveness and peace in this life and in the next from our sin. But before we received the peace of knowing that, God first slew the arrogance and impenitence of our heart by the arrows of His law. And God continues to do so. How many times in our lives has the Holy Spirit slain arrogant impenitence in your heart that threatened to lose for you, your peace in Christ. The Holy Spirit wants on occasion to use you to do the same for others that they might either gain peace in Christ or not lose it.

You are an arrow in the quiver of God. In our weakness, we

tend to shy away from the job. We don't want people to be angry with us. We don't want to be shouted at. Would you rather let them be swallowed whole by the dragon Satan in their arrogant refusal to turn from sin and be healed. You are an arrow forged by the king of heaven. Forged in the coals of the sacrifice of the Holy one of Israel. Jesus, our Redeemer, has washed away your sin and brought us, the wicked, peace. Having been slain and made alive to life and peace - go now and speed well when God calls you to be an arrow. Aim for the heart of impenitence. God shoots to kill that He might heal and make alive. And you, like Isaiah, bearing God's law on your lips can reach the heart and kill. Kill arrogant denial of sin. Kill stubborn refusal to turn from sin. Kill impenitence that they might turn to Jesus and be healed and have peace in this life not by denying their sin but washing it away in Jesus and kill them that they might turn to Jesus and be healed. In Jesus, we have and they will have peace after this life for there is peace for the wicked in Jesus for Jesus was slain for us the wicked.

Good Shepherd Lutheran Church

Pastor Aaron Ude