

“I Will Trust and Will Not Be Afraid”

Isaiah 12

July 6, 2025

The Biblical text for today needs some explanation of its context. The text is Chapter 12 of the Biblical book of Isaiah, from the Old Testament. Isaiah was a prophet called by God to speak God’s judgment to his people for their failure to trust in Him. Isaiah was then told to speak of God’s comfort of his people after they had served their time of punishment.

In the earlier chapters of Isaiah, God has spoken of his love for his people using a metaphor of a vineyard. God expected this vineyard to yield grapes, yet it yielded wild grapes. So, God allowed the vineyard to be without protection from him. In the earlier chapters, too, Isaiah has spoken of his vision of the Lord and his call. Then the book moves to historical narrative, writing of Isaiah’s warning to King Ahaz not to rely on outside military alliances, but to rely on God. If not, punishment will come.

Yet despite this, the prophet has a word of grace for God’s people. A time will come for a remnant of God’s people to be saved, and a peaceful kingdom to be established.

Within this context comes the Biblical text for today, Isaiah 12. It is a hymn, almost a psalm. It is praise and thanksgiving in response to what God will do after judgment.

The hymn calls first to an individual to give thanks. The speaker says, in verse 1, to an individual, “You will say in that day Surely God is my salvation, I

will trust and will not be afraid, for the Lord God is my strength and my might, he has become my salvation.”

Then the speaker says, in verse 3, to a group, “You will say in that day, Give thanks to the Lord, call on his name; make known his deeds among the nations; proclaim that his name is exalted.”

The people of God will learn that their salvation is not in outside military alliances. The people of God will learn that salvation is not in anyone other than God. The people of God will learn to say, “I will trust and not be afraid.”

Were you ever as a child afraid of the dark? It is a common enough fear. When I was a child, I was afraid of the dark and all it might contain. I relied on a night light to partially illuminate the dark so I could go to sleep each night. Now, I rely on a night light to illuminate the dark so I won’t fall when I get out of bed to go to the bathroom. How things change!

Fear of the dark was not something God’s people would have feared in the context of Isaiah, of course. Their fear would be continued punishment from God, so God gave them hope here. As one Biblical commentator¹ puts it:

“In that day” the people of Judah will come to their senses and recognize that it is Yahweh rather than external alliances that constitutes her real strength. Once their faith in Yahweh is renewed, they will no longer be afraid—their faith will deliver them from fear.

There would come a time when God would save them from this necessary punishment. The punishment would be something like a burden, making it difficult

¹ Richard Donovan, “Biblical Commentary Isaiah 12:1-6.”

to breathe, and the comfort would be something like a release of pressure, a new ability to breathe again.²

That same Biblical commentator goes on to say something else related to fear abating:

***“Therefore with joy you will draw water out of the wells of salvation”.** These people are accustomed to living in a land that is perennially short of water. Unlike Assyria, watered by the Tigris and Euphrates, or Egypt, watered by the Nile, their water comes from rainfall. They suffer when rainfall fails to live up to expectations. The Old Testament reflects this concern for life-giving water. The creation story tells of “a mist (that) went up from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground” . The shepherd-king David’s psalm tells of God leading him “beside still waters.”. Jeremiah speaks of the Lord as “the spring of living waters” which the people forsook for cracked cisterns.*

A village well would be highly prized as a reliable source of water, and a good well could be the difference between life and death in a bad year. It is no wonder, then, that they would use water as a metaphor for salvation.

Preacher Scott Hoezee adds to this, writing:

But this image is doubly foreign to us because it’s not just the literal lack of wells in our lives but also the fact that we probably cannot appreciate how precious water was for people who lived in hot, arid climates. We open our faucets thoughtlessly. We waste no small amount of water, letting the shower run for a few minutes so the water is nice and hot even before we get in, flush the toilet just to get rid of a single Kleenex, and so forth. Most of us have never known a truly

² See discussion of this in Richard Donovan’s article.

thirsty day in our lives. True, sometimes we have a medical procedure coming up at 10:30 one morning and so the doctor orders us to be “NPO after midnight,” meaning no food or water until the test is finished. In the grand scheme of things, those few waterless hours are nothing and there is not even a remote chance we will become dehydrated. Yet even so we can complain loudly about how thirsty we are and oh won’t it be great to get a glass of ice water once that ultrasound is finished!

But the people in Isaiah’s world did know what real thirst was like. They didn’t buy bottled water, couldn’t open any taps, didn’t have an icebox with a pitcher of nice cold water in it. They had wells, and if the wells went dry, the danger was real. So, in that era if you could find a reliable well from which you could draw good drinking water, that was potentially a source of joy indeed.

But in this chapter, the wells are not just sources of water but are the very “wells of salvation.” This was living water. This was saving water. This was the fountain of life. But even so, we may still have a hard time accessing the full joy of this because perhaps we’ve never been thirsty enough for salvation, either.

Not only have we rarely, if ever, experienced truly life-threatening physical thirst, we’ve also maybe never experienced genuine spiritual thirst, either. How many of us can honestly say that the lyrics of a hymn like “Amazing Grace” really describe our past? Have any of us ever felt genuinely lost only to discover the joy of being found? Have any of us really felt spiritually blind only to discover the joy of being given our sight back? And how many of us have felt so parched, so bone dry in our souls, that the sudden upwelling of salvation’s waters revived us into a rapturous joy we didn’t even think was possible?

Some of us maybe can answer those questions by saying, “Yes, that was me once upon a time. Been there, done that.” But for a goodly number of us, we have been raised with access to the waters of salvation just as surely as we were raised with access to water from the tap. So is there any way we can appropriate the joy of Isaiah 12 for ourselves?

We should surely hope that we can gain access to this joy, if not fully now then most certainly when the kingdom fully comes. In the meanwhile, perhaps we would do well to think long and hard about the great gift of salvation, find real comfort and joy in it, and then celebrate that with the kind of exuberance we find in Isaiah 12. Somehow we can and must find a way to tell the nations, tell all peoples, that in Christ Jesus all of Yahweh’s plans have marched forward decisively. God really is our strength, our salvation, and our very song.

Of what are you afraid? I looked up on my computer the ten most common fears we have now. Lists vary of course, and your experiences may inform your fears, but many include fear of public speaking, heights, snakes, spiders, bats, dogs, and thunder and lightning. Other fears in this day³ include:

Corrupt Government Officials

People I Love Becoming Seriously Ill

Cyberterrorism

People I Love Dying

Russia Using Nuclear Weapons

Not Having Enough Money for the Future

³ Chapman University, Chapman News.

U.S. Becoming Involved in Another World War

North Korea Using Nuclear Weapons

Terrorist Attack

Biological Warfare

This is all very interesting. Do any of these fears apply to you? I can't promise you that none of these will happen, however. The point is not to focus on the fear, but to focus on faith.

I CAN promise you that your faith in God will be rewarded As preacher Howard Wallace writes:

The trust that the writer speaks about here is not some disembodied entity. This chapter is also the thanksgiving at the end of the section Isaiah 5-12. At the heart of these chapters is a difficult political decision to be made by king Ahaz. In political terms he needed to decide whether he would form an alliance with other smaller states seeking to rebel against the superpower Assyria, or whether he should side with the latter against the rebels. Isaiah, however, had reminded Ahaz of another option: 'If you do not stand firm in faith, you shall not stand at all'. The option of trust in God is not an empty pious response to the hard issues in the world. Rather it is our only hope and only real joy according to the book of Isaiah. In a world where faith is often questioned or considered ineffectual in the face of injustice, violence, or self-satisfaction, [this text] calls us to reevaluate where our trust lies.

Where does your trust lie in this time in the world and in your life? Do you choose faith over fear?

Amen.