

Title: “I am. I have. I will.”

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Ezekiel 17:22-24

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Service Readings: Ezekiel 17:22-24; 2 Corinthians 5:1-10 (11-17); Mark 4:26-34

Lesson: There is no ambiguity in his words. And there is no uncertainty in his declaration. God has spoken and it will come to pass. This we can be assured of.

Message:

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

The passage that we read from Ezekiel is just part of a vision that God brings to him. But in this small portion, God uses an image of a tree, a sprig, to declare the coming of the Messiah. He tells Ezekiel that the Christ will come and rebuild his kingdom that he brought to judgement. He will come from Israel and start small, but his kingdom will grow and cover all the earth.

And what is striking is how the bookends of this passage declare the power and might of our God. “Thus says the Lord God,” it begins. Like lightening in a storm, it prepares the earth for the force of this impending thunderous voice. All creation trembles because it knows the voice of God. And the voice speaks. It says:

“I myself will take a sprig from the lofty top of the cedar and will set it out. I will break off from the topmost of its young twigs a tender one, and I myself will plant it on a high and lofty mountain. ²³ On the mountain height of Israel will I plant it, that it may bear branches and produce fruit and become a noble cedar. And under it will dwell every kind of bird; in the shade of its branches birds of every sort will nest. ²⁴ And all the trees of the field shall know that I am the LORD; I bring low the high tree, and make high the low tree, dry up the green tree, and make the dry tree flourish.

And there is no ambiguity in his words. And there is no uncertainty in his declaration. He has spoken and it will come to pass. This we can be assured of. And as if there was doubt across all of creation, as if there were any who could question the abilities of God, who could dismiss the power and might of his voice, his last sentence strikes like lightening: “I am the Lord; I have spoken, and I will do it.”

To those who deny the existence of God, these words bring fear and anxiety. For whom they have dismissed as imaginary has been made known. And his power has been made known. And his judgement has been proclaimed. To those who deny the existence of God, they tremble at his voice. But for those who know God, for those who place their trust in him, his promises provide comfort, and his thunderous voice provides peace.

“I am the Lord,” he says at the end of the passage. How does this comfort us?

It says that he is not just the Creator God but is the Active God throughout all of his creation. It means that there is connection between heaven and earth, between him and everything that he has created. It means that he personally sustains all things. He calls himself Lord because he actively exercises his power and authority over everything. "I myself will take a sprig from the lofty top of the cedar and will set it out," he says in verse 22. That is an active statement from an active God. And while the world may tremble at the thought of an active God, his church finds comfort and peace. The *people* of his church find comfort and peace. Are you burdened with sin? Are you the tree that grows high, knowing you should instead make yourself low? Come to the altar of the Lord and receive the forgiveness that he offers. He can do that because he is the Lord.

But he doesn't just say "I am the Lord." He also says, "And I have spoken."

His words create. But his words do more. For those who continue to rebel against God, his words bring about destruction. Jerimiah tells us:

"You who have forsaken Me," declares the Lord,
"You keep going backward.
So, I will stretch out My hand against you and destroy you;
I am tired of relenting!"

Woe to those who stand against the Lord. But to those who worship him, his words are like honey upon our lips. The tree that Ezekiel speaks about is planted in a world that is corrupted by sin. It is a land where trees grow high in an attempt to overshadow the tree of God. A land where the words written on the hearts of every human creature are rejected and where the will of man is in active conflict with the will of God. But it is also a land where God's people live, in constant battle with the forces of evil. And God's people call out to him for even more than just the creative and destructive power of his words. They call out to him for assurance and strength. They call out for protection from all that assails them. And in the pages of Scripture, he answers. The Psalmist writes

Truly my soul finds rest in God; my salvation comes from him. Truly he is my rock and my salvation; he is my fortress, I will never be shaken.

And for his people who are wounded by the attacks of doubt and uncertainty he speaks to them. Through the pages of Scripture he whispers into our hearts: "You have my words of assurance. You are loved by me, protected from me. Even when the world despises and rejects you, I will always love you." He says "I have sent my son to take upon himself your sins. He has carried them to the cross and has paid the price. He has done it all for you. You are my child, adopted into my family. Come to me and you will find rest. You will find love. For I am the Lord; I have spoken."

Are these words not enough for us? "For I am the Lord; I have spoken." What more could we want from him? What more could we think we lack? But in our sinful condition, we do. We look across all his creation and still wonder if he has the power and the will to answer our prayers. And he knows this and so speaks "and I will do it." What sweet words, what comfort they bring. In our prayers we ask, and he answers. He hears every word we speak to him, listens to every petition. And he discards not a single one but instead replies. Every ask he answers, by bringing wisdom to our thoughts, or people into our lives. And though it may not be the answer we wanted, we know that he is our God, our Lord. He is active in our lives and he has spoken. And we can trust that what he

speaks, he speaks out of love and compassion for us. And so, we accept what he offers and know that it is for our own good.

And so, this morning we hear him speak. From this passage of scripture we hear his voice and we find power, and authority, and might. But we also find comfort and peace. Where do you need to hear his voice in your own lives? Where do you need him to say “For I am the Lord; I have spoken, and I will do it?”

Please pray with me.

I will praise the LORD, who counsels me;
even at night my heart instructs me.

⁸ I keep my eyes always on the LORD.
With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken.

⁹ Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices;
my body also will rest secure,

¹⁰ because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead,
nor will you let your faithful⁽¹⁾ one see decay.

¹¹ You make known to me the path of life;
you will fill me with joy in your presence,
with eternal pleasures at your right hand.