

The Rev. Chris Brown '08
Pastor, The Upper Room

Thursday, December 9, 2010

Morning Psalms 18:1-20; 147:12-20

First Reading Isaiah 7:1-9

Second Reading 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12

Gospel Luke 22:1-13

Evening Psalms 126; 62

7 In the days of Ahaz son of Jotham son of Uzziah, king of Judah, King Rezin of Aram and King Pekah son of Remaliah of Israel went up to attack Jerusalem, but could not mount an attack against it. 2 When the house of David heard that Aram had allied itself with Ephraim, the heart of Ahaz and the heart of his people shook as the trees of the forest shake before the wind. 3 Then the Lord said to Isaiah, Go out to meet Ahaz, you and your son Shear-jashub, at the end of the conduit of the upper pool on the highway to the Fuller's Field, 4 and say to him, Take heed, be quiet, do not fear, and do not let your heart be faint because of these two smoldering stumps of firebrands, because of the fierce anger of Rezin and Aram and the son of Remaliah. 5 Because Aram—with Ephraim and the son of Remaliah—has plotted evil against you, saying, 6 Let us go up against Judah and cut off Jerusalem and conquer it for ourselves and make the son of Tabeel king in it; 7 therefore thus says the Lord God: It shall not stand, and it shall not come to pass. 8 For the head of Aram is Damascus, and the head of Damascus is Rezin. (Within sixty-five years Ephraim will be shattered, no longer a people.) 9 The head of Ephraim is Samaria, and the head of Samaria is the son of Remaliah. If you do not stand firm in faith, you shall not stand at all.

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The king of Judah was anxious. He had just survived an attack on Jerusalem, but the threat was not gone. The enemy had merely changed tactics. Knowing these things, the “heart of Ahaz and the heart of his people shook as the trees of the forest shake before the wind.” And to this fearful king, the Lord sent the prophet with an exhortation to have faith: “If you do not stand firm in faith, you shall not stand at all.”

Faith. It seems that like Ahaz and all of God's people, we are deficient in faith. But we are in good company. In Luke 17:5, we read, “The apostles said to the Lord, ‘Increase our faith!’” The original apostles acknowledged to Jesus their own lack of faith. But they did so with a request made in faith to the only One who can increase our faith.

Ahaz placed his faith elsewhere, calling for help from the king of Assyria (2 Kings 16:7). This season, despite its joy and celebration, many are in the position of Ahaz. We do not face literal war, but the holidays can create feelings of anxiety, insecurity, and stress. Contrary to the lies of the world, consumerism and gluttony do not relieve such feelings. The enemy uses different tactics against us now, but the temptation is still the same: to seek peace and security through

worldly means, rather than trusting in the Lord. This Advent, will we respond as Ahaz did, or as the apostles?

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Prayer: Lord, increase our faith! Amen.