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Sunday, November 28, 2010

Morning Psalms 24; 150

First Reading Isaiah 1:1-9

Second Reading 2 Peter 3:1-10

Gospel Matthew 25:1-13

Evening Psalms 25; 110

1The vision of Isaiah son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah. 2 Hear, O heavens, and listen, O earth; for the Lord has spoken: I reared children and brought them up, but they have rebelled against me. 3 The ox knows its owner, and the donkey its master's crib; but Israel does not know, my people do not understand. 4 Ah, sinful nation, people laden with iniquity, offspring who do evil, children who deal corruptly, who have forsaken the Lord, who have despised the Holy One of Israel, who are utterly estranged! 5 Why do you seek further beatings? Why do you continue to rebel? The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. 6 From the sole of the foot even to the head, there is no soundness in it, but bruises and sores and bleeding wounds; they have not been drained, or bound up, or softened with oil. 7 Your country lies desolate, your cities are burned with fire; in your very presence aliens devour your land; it is desolate, as overthrown by foreigners. 8 And daughter Zion is left like a booth in a vineyard, like a shelter in a cucumber field, like a besieged city. 9 If the Lord of hosts had not left us a few survivors, we would have been like Sodom, and become like Gomorrah.

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Isaiah, son of Amoz, describes a desolate scene: people rebelling with eyes that cannot see, forsaking and despising the Holy One of Israel. "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint" (v5).

Things haven't changed much, have they? Still we rebel; still we forsake the Holy One. It is the human condition, this being mired in a pit of sin. But the hope of salvation persists.

As the Israelites waited for the Messiah to descend, we eagerly anticipate the return of the Messiah who will deliver us from evil. Now we sing "Love came down at Christmas/ Love all lovely, Love Divine." But then we shall sing "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise" (Rev 5:12). The hope of salvation persists.

Living with one foot in heaven and one on earth is demanding. And frustrating. We pray for the "already" while living in the "not yet" of Christ's reign. But we persist because the hope of salvation, "Love Incarnate, Love Divine," came down at Christmas—and, we believe, will come again.

Prayer: Gracious God, strengthen us in our waiting so that our rebellion will cease. Hold always before us the hope of salvation as we await the day when Love will come down again. In Love's name we pray, Amen.