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*Come, Join the Flood Back to God! (Isaiah 2:1-5)*  
*11/27/2016 Sermon by Pastor Jason Liebenow*

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Theme: Come, Join the Flood Back to God!

Tim and Johnny were going outside to play catch. Johnny threw the ball to Tim before he was ready, but then through wild spasms of legs and arms and juggling, he ended up on the floor triumphantly clutching the ball! They laughed at the successful catch and pretty soon they were diving behind couches, jumping over tables, and rolling along the floor as they each tried to perform the most incredible catch.

Tim threw a high lob at Johnny over the couch. Johnny reached for it, but the ball bounced off his fingertips. Johnny stumbled forward desperate for the catch. When the ball came down, he grabbed it! He had done it!

Suddenly, his momentum was stopped short as he rammed into one of the tables, *the* table, the table that held Dad's prized vase. He was moving so fast that the table didn't stand a chance. It went down and so did the vase. With a loud crash, the beautiful vase was reduced to a pile of shattered pieces.

Johnny and Tim began to scream at each other. "Johnny! You should have stopped sooner!" "Tim, why did you throw the ball so high?"

Their arguing immediately stopped, when they heard the door to the garage open. Dad had heard. They quieted down. Any moment dad would come in and see what they had done. Their minds raced with all the previous times their dad had told them not to play catch in the house. They remembered being grounded for weeks, they remember spankings. They braced themselves at the thought of what punishment their dad would have for them this time.

With eyes wide open, they watched as their dad entered the room, as he took in the scene, saw the table knocked over, saw the vase destroyed. They saw anger in his eyes as tears began to fill their eyes.

Then, they heard something that they didn't expect. "That's it!" their father said, "Kids, get your shoes on! We're going out for ice cream!"

This was a story I heard from a father who wanted to deal with his disobedient

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children in the same way God, our Father, deals with us. He wanted to give them something they did not deserve. He wanted to give them something unexpected.

Today, as we focus on Christ's second coming, we will take a closer look at this unexpected promise our God gives to his people in Isaiah. Today, our God encourages us to Join the Flood Back to God.

The book of Isaiah opens with a harsh condemnation of Israel. Remember that Israel was God's chosen people. This nation was supposed to represent God to the world. But in Isaiah chapter 1, we hear about them going through the motions of worshipping God, while all the long living such evil lives that Isaiah calls them, "rulers of Sodom... people of Gomorrah!"

In Genesis, Sodom and Gomorrah were wicked and vile towns. They were so evil there that male visitors to those towns ran the risk of being forced to sleep with male residents there, young or old. And we complain about a sinful world today. Thank God it is not that bad where we live.

But Israel, God's people had been so rebellious that God considered them as bad as Sodom and Gomorrah. What were they actually doing that was so bad? If we look at Isaiah chapter 1, the greatest crime in God's eyes from Israel was their false worship. Israel was going through the motions of worshipping God. They made a show of loving God by coming to worship, by giving offerings, and by saying prayers. Don't get me wrong, God does want his people to come to worship. He does want us to give our offerings to him and to pray to him. But while the Israelites were doing those things, they were also doing wrong. In their daily lives, they did not seek justice for the weak. They did not defend the poor and the oppressed.

Is that what God's people are like today? Today, God has chosen his people, not in a single nation, but God chooses all different people from all different nations. God's chosen people are those to whom he has granted faith in his Son Jesus. That's Christians everywhere. And that's you and me.

Are we today as bad as Sodom and Gomorrah? Maybe you know some who call themselves Christians and yet who have committed horrible crimes. Maybe you remember some terrible things you have done.

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But even if we haven't done evils like those in Sodom and Gomorrah, are we that bad in God's sight? You see, it doesn't really matter how good we are compared to other people. The one reputation that really matters is our reputation before God.

Are we like the Israelites were? Do we go to church, but fail to do what is right? Do we give our offerings to God, but ignore the suffering of the poor and oppressed? Do we pray to our God, but ignore the injustice suffered by the weak?

Whether it be that sin that we hope no one finds out about, or whether it be hypocritical worship of God, we all deserve the fear that those kids felt when they broke that vase. We deserve the terror of God's wrath for doing what God has told us not to do. May we take God's wrath seriously and repent, because God has unexpected promises in store for us.

As we return to Isaiah, we see that God deals with his rebellious people in an unexpected way. Instead of making the Israelites a laughing stock before the world, instead of condemning the Israelites in the eyes of the world for their hypocrisy, God makes his people a beacon to which the whole world is drawn. Isaiah speaks about the mountain where God's temple was becoming the chief of all mountains. Isaiah speaks about the people of the entire world rushing like a river, not away from God's people, but flooding towards them.

Isaiah prophesied that the nations of the world would flood toward God's people, not because they were such great people, but because God had done such great things for them. Though the people of Israel had been hypocrites, though they had done what was wrong, and though they were as bad as Sodom and Gomorrah, God forgave their sins. And Isaiah prophesied that this forgiveness would bring the nations of the world flooding back to God.

And we see Isaiah's prophecy fulfilled in our world today! Christianity, though it started in the smallest little country of Israel, has exploded into one of the largest followed religions in the world! The Bible has been the highest selling book of all time. People of all nations are truly flooding back to God!

And so today, God has made us a beacon to which the world is flooding, not because we are such great people, but because our God has done such great things

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for us through Jesus. He has forgiven our hypocrisy. He has made the dark red stains of our sin as white as snow. He has freed us from our guilt and shame. And he has washed away all our failures to defend and help those in need.

Let us therefore join the flood back to God. It is in God's Word that we find forgiveness. It is in God's Word that we find true peace, which Isaiah foresaw, true peace between sinful people like us and our holy God, a peace that even reaches out to our relationships with other people.

Let us therefore walk in the light of the Lord. We do not need to live in hiding, ashamed of who we are or terrified that our secret sins will be discovered, because God has made us his people by washing away our sins. We therefore walk in the light by acknowledging our failures to follow God and by asking him to forgive us. We walk in the light by living in the peace God has given us by his forgiveness. We walk in the light by expressing the joy we have of knowing that whatever reputation we have with other people, we have a reputation before God that is washed white in the blood of Jesus.

This advent season, as we prepare not only to celebrate Christ's first coming, but as we also prepare for Christ's second coming, which will come at an unexpected time, let us walk in the light of the Lord. Let us prepare for Christ's second coming by remembering our God's promise that he will appear, not to judge us as our sins deserve, but to wipe our slates clean through our Savior's blood. Amen.