

PROVIDENCE REFORMED CHURCH

July 3, 2022; All this the Lord willing

Today AM: Rev. Vanden Belt
PM: Dr. Kranendonk

Tues.-Sat., July 5-9: Youth Group Summer Mission Trip

Tuesday, July 12: Consistory Meeting, 7:00

Sunday, July 17 AM: Dr. Bilkes
PM: Dr. Kranendonk

Wednesday, July 20: Titus 2, 7:00

Sunday, July 24 AM: Dr. Bilkes
PM: Dr. Kranendonk

Wednesday, July 27: Prayer Service, 7:00 *Jim Bazen*

Sunday, July 31 AM: Dr. Kranendonk
PM: Dr. Bilkes

Sunday, August 7 AM: Preparatory Service

Sunday, August 14 AM: Lord's Supper

Collection Schedule

Today: General Benvolent
July 10: General CEF

Nursery Schedule

Today: AM Maria VerBeek, Gloria Vander Boon
PM Kim Boerkoel, Mairi Heikoop, Hosanna Bazen
July 10: AM Janelle Walma, Lauren Boerkoel
PM Laura Kersten, Kristen Boerkoel, Leah Boerkoel

Youth Group

July 5-9: Summer Mission Trip

Announcements

- The annual HRC Youth Camp is planned for July 12-15 at camp Michawanna. Brochures are in the narthex or at youthcamp@hrcgr.org
- There will be no July Lay Preaching meeting.
- Family Camp is September 2, 3 this year at Michawanna. See Coral Hoffmann for details.
- Sumba fundraiser is September 10 at the Meeuwse's.

Meditation

Isaiah 49:16b: *'thy walls are continually before me.'*

When Isaiah is allowed to pass on these words of the LORD to the people of Israel, they are in exile. God gave rich promises through the mouth of Isaiah that were grounded in His power and strength. But the question for the people was not so much whether the LORD could deliver, but whether He wanted and would do so. And so, the LORD comes to unequivocally declare His one-sided love for the people in Isaiah 49:15 and 16 in a very rich way! His response to the people's struggle is that He can and does redeem them.

But while this message sounds, the people of Israel see only misery. They hear of God's power and love for them but wonder about their misery now. Does God see their misery?

And then we hear God speak: *'thy walls are continually before me.'* Here the people are addressed collectively. Those walls are the walls of Zion, of Jerusalem.

And those walls are in ruins. They had been destroyed by the Babylonians. The city of Jerusalem lay unprotected, open, people who meant evil could go about their business. Well, that's exactly the feeling of the people of Israel too. Just as Jerusalem has no walls and lies unprotected, so they feel powerless and helpless under the violence of enemies and are weighed down by misery.

And so, the LORD speaks, *'thy walls,'* thus lying in ruins, *'are continually before Me.'* In other words, I know about your misery and distress, and I think about it constantly. What a comfort it is to know this! God keeps the misery of His people constantly in mind. He knows about it!

But an even deeper thought then arises. After all, why had the walls fallen and been destroyed? Because of the sin of the people! Israel had forgotten the LORD days without number, they had worshipped idols, broken God's laws. They had not loved Him above all else nor their neighbor as themselves. And when God speaks here of His love and His knowledge of the misery, God implicitly also expresses that He knows of their sins! And yet we hear Him unequivocally express His great love for His people.

But when the images of the fallen walls rise, a third image emerges. It is true that the LORD also speaks of "walls around Jerusalem. The LORD here implicitly promises that He will rebuild Jerusalem and her walls. And Jerusalem is an image for God's people; He is going to lead His people out of misery again and give them peace.

In all this we think of Israel first and foremost, but since the New Testament we know about one people, consisting of Jew and Gentile. And so, in our day the LORD is rebuilding the spiritual Jerusalem. God's kingdom is being expanded. The LORD is a fiery wall around His people, and no enemy will be able to attack her. Even though we still experience the struggle against sin and the brokenness of life because of sin, the city is being rebuilt and the LORD is a fiery wall around it. He is bracing an unconquerable army of angels around her. And it moves toward that time when there is no more sin and no more brokenness, the time when there are no more breaches in the walls. Then there will be rest from the struggle on earth. That is what we read in Revelation 21:17-20.

What a wonderful comfort and promise the LORD thus bestows in Isaiah 49:16b. And He makes all that come true through the work of His Son, who gave Himself away in great love to reconcile enemies. And this Son of God reigns in heaven. He knows His sheep and thinks of them. His intercession is filled with them and His reign serves to edify them. *'thy walls are continually before me.'* Rev. J. Th. Pronk