

The King and Rest

Isaiah 30.1–33

Sermon

In the 7th & final book in JK Rowling’s series *Harry Potter*, we find the title character & his two best friends, Ron W & Hermione G, on a mission given to them by their mentor, Prof Albus Dumbledore. Their fate & the fate of everyone they love & the world in which they live rests on their work. They understand the big picture—what the endgame is—but for much of the book the three friends are left trying to figure out not only what precisely they are to do but then how they are to accomplish it. You can imagine their frustration. Ergo not a surprise when one of them finally cracks. Harry & Hermione have just figured out a key component of their mission, when Ron snorts his displeasure. Harry: “What’s the prob?” Ron: “Don’t expect me to skip up & down around the [room] bc there’s some other... thing we’ve got to find. Just add that to the list of things you don’t know.” Harry: “I don’t know?” Ron: “It’s not like I’m having the time of my life here, you know, w my arm mangled & nothing to eat & freezing my backside off every night. I just hoped, you know, after running round a few wks, we’d have achieved something.” Harry: “I thought you knew what you’d signed up for?” Ron: “Yeah, I thought I did too.” Harry: “So what part of it isn’t living up to your expectations? Did you think we’d be staying in five-star hotels? Finding [something significant] every other day? Did you think you’d be back to Mummy by Xmas?” Ron: “[I] thought you knew what you were doing!” & after a few more angry words, Ron leaves.

If you were a character in HP, what would you say to Ron? Congratulate him for pointing out Harry’s ignorance? empathize w him since the mission is hopeless? confront him for being too stubborn? Text today gives similar sit: Isa 30 (p. 493). Peo of Jeru in a very similar sit to Ron, as we’ll see. I don’t know what you’d say to Ron, but don’t have to wonder what G would say to Judah: it’s recorded right here. [Read.]

I've mentioned over past few wks what historical **context** of these chs is. World's 1st empire, Assyria, has swept across lands north of Judah, Damascus/Aram, Samaria/Isr. Now on Jeru's doorstep. What would peo do? A generation earlier, Judah's King Ahaz sought to protect himself from Aram & Isr by aligning himself w Assyria, but now w his son Hezk on the throne Assyria itself has become the threat. Since they were a small nation, poli leaders thought there was really only one ans: forge a new alliance. Ergo Egypt (2), sought help from Shabaka, king from Cush/Ethiopia who reunited Egypt under his rule. So Jeru sent a delegation: *officials & envoys* (4), *riches & treasures* (6).

Only one prob: *plans that are not mine* (1, lit. "not from me"). Oswalt: "They did not look to Egypt as G's way of delivering them. Instead, they looked to her as *their* way of delivering themselves" (352). Did not consider what G wanted of them, but simply did what they thought best. But prob goes deeper than that: consider who they went to—Egypt! You don't have to know much of Isr's story to know that Egypt plays a huge role in their history. The nation that enslaved them for over 400 yrs. The nation that G graciously delivered them from w plagues & miracles & culminating w the Red Sea crossing. The one nat that G explicitly told them, "Don't go to them" (Deut 17.16). These are the peo to whom the redeemed peo of Isr now return.

Why would they do this? Why v. 9—*rebellion, deceit, unwilling to listen*? Why not consult the G of the Exodus but instead return to the peo who enslaved them? Hint in v. 2: *shade*. Used reg in the Pss: 17.8 (*keep me as the apple of the eye, hide me in the shadow of your wings*), 36.8 (*how priceless is your unfailing love, O G. Peo take refuge in the shadow of your wings*), 91.1 (*whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty*). Psgs like these would've been known to peo of Jeru. Why then the rebellion? Bc in some sense the peo believed G had **disappointed** them. Sure G made promises to Abr/Isaac/Jacob, but peo still went into bondage. Sure G kept his

promises, rescued them & brought them into promised land. But nation had long split into two & most of it had already been obliterated by Assyria. They'd heard the big pic all their lives: they were G's peo, called to be holy, follow Temple worship. But when a mission doesn't go like you expect, the temptation to turn back is almost overwhelming. It's the reason Ron left Harry & Hermione in book 7. & it's the reason the peo of Jeru went to Egypt in Isa 30. G had called his peo out of Egypt, had given them the promised land, had given their kings an eternal cov. Yet the peo were threatened. Things didn't develop as they thought, their nation had been split into two, & now they faced a threat to their very existence: the Assyrians were coming. What good were G's promises if they would be destroyed? & so they found the only ally they thought could protect them—Egypt.

In theo terms what we're talking about is the tension bet **already & not yet**. Tension we've run into repeatedly: one one hand our expectation bc grace is at work, and on other our experience bc human brokenness is at work, too. G has redeemed his peo, given us every spir blessing heaven has to offer, has begun process of renewing us in his image. But sin still clings so closely, relats are still a mess, world is still a terribly broken place. We enjoy what G has done/is doing, yet he hasn't completed it.

& while we wait for him to work, we live in this tension. & when the tension heightens, the temptation to **turn back** is almost overwhelming. Perh reality that impresses me after a week in this psg is the motif of returning to bondage. Not only was Judah commanded not to go back to Egypt, they took all their treasures with them as they went. & we are no dift from peo of Jeru. How quickly we return to captivity! How easy it is for us to go back to our old ways! G rescues us, offers us eternal comfort in the gos, but when life is difficult we think somehow G has shortchanged us on his promises. Why do bad things happen to us? Doesn't having the 1TG as our G mean that life will break our way? Sure, no one's life is perfect, but why *this*? So we turn back to our old

way of living: perh vice (e.g., alcohol, prostitutes), perh more subtle (e.g., our career, like Peter), or worse yet per relig. Even though we know that these things bind us/that they tie our hands together, even though we know that they are a prison from which we cannot escape, there is safety in the prison—predictability, familiarity, & a sense that we are in control. But we are fools. We are not in control, and safety is just a mirage—one of the many weapons in the enemy’s arsenal to keep us in a prison of our own making.

And ultimately where that leaves us is right where G said peo of Jer would be (**end**): vv. 13–14, destroyed like a cracked wall that finally collapses under its own weight. May take yrs for the cracks to bring the building down, but once they do, the building collapses in a moment. Not only destroyed but also ashamed (v. 5). Like someone swindled out of their money—again. Fool me once, shame on you. Fool me twice, shame on me. And alone (17). Like a tattered flag atop a hill that its soldiers failed to protect, w the dead strewn all about.

When Ron storms off in anger, leaving his friends behind him, this is where he finds himself. Collapsing under his own weight, ashamed of what he had done, & miserably alone. So if you were a character in HP & you ran into Ron right then, what would you say to him? I can think of a number of things I’d say, but none of them is so **gracious** as what G says to his peo who’ve run off on their own. v. 18 the turning point of the ch. G waits to be gracious, waits for us to discover how foolish we are, lets us have what we want, only to find out that what we want turns out to be what we feared most. But he has not left us. When everything we’ve turned to for safety and protection and comfort and control have crumbled to dust, he rises to show us just how much he loves us & he **delivers** us. And the greatest demonstration of his love came on a day when he left his S alone, when his own S asked why G had forsaken him, when his own S was left hanging on a tree like a flag on a mtn or a banner on a hill. Alone. Ashamed. Destroyed. IOW the product of the

prison we choose was given to J. He went to prison, he was left alone, he bore our shame, and in the end his life was destroyed. In those very hours G demonstrated just how gracious he is to us. In that moment we see G rising to show us compassion. Yet bc *the L is a G of justice* (18) he did not leave J in the grave, but on the third day brought him out of the tomb to new life & the great already of the gos was finished. The cross & empty tomb were not yet for peo of Jeru—they couldn't see it & so they didn't trust G to bring it about. But J's life, death & res were always the endgame, ever the goal G had in mind for the deliverance of his peo. & in him the not yet has become already.

No wonder then that G says the way we are to live is marked by **repentance & rest** (15), turning from our old ways & relying on him. Don't be mistaken, not a statement in support of quietism, encouraging monastic life. Rest not inactivity but reliance. When you rest, what do you do? You lean your weight on something else: if standing, a wall; if sitting, a chair; if lying down, a couch/bed. Your weight is leaning on the other. Not nec inactive: could be working, reading, conversing. Yet body resting. That's the pic, not inactivity but reliance on another. G is telling us to lay down our frenetic lives, turn away from our old ways that seemed to bring us comfort but only put us back in jail, & to rely wholly on him. The choice G puts before us: bondage or rest, feeling of control or reliance on another. Friend, let J lead you to rest.

Takeaways

1. **Learn how to rest.** Thought this sermon might be a full BT of rest/sabbath, but Sp directed otherwise. Nevertheless still an imp point of app. Sabbath stamped in creation, not just part of Moses' law. Our bodies were made to rest one day in seven. A good discipline: to stop your normal activity one day a wk & enjoy what G has given you. No mandated list of approved activities, but a gift of grace to renew you/refresh you while you navigate this difficult life.

2. **Walk by the Sp.** Beautiful descrip of the Sp-filled life (21): “conveys the nearness of the Teacher & the sensitivity of the pupil. Instead of the stubborn animal which has to be dragged or beaten into going in the proper direction, here is a person whose teacher is just at his shoulder & little more than a word of guidance from time to time is nec for him to stay on the right path” (Oswalt, 560). Combo of word & Sp, obj & subj, prop & pers. Not either/or, but both/and. Listen to his word, listen to the Sp who gave that word.

3. Relates to q: if rest is not inactivity, what activity does it entail? Here’s pt Isa’s made all along: **Pursue justice for all.** Turning from your old ways means no longer oppressing others, rendering false verdicts, but instead defending the oppressed, treating others w compassion/love/integrity. One interesting feature of this psg: G’s concern for animals. At beg of psg: whereas his rebellious peo are concerned about the envoys, G is concerned about the animals (v. 6)! At end of psg, when blessings flow, animals are included (vv. 23–24). Grace transforms us so that we pursue what is right in every relat & in all of G’s creation.

But make no mistake. Doing justice isn’t easy. Since we live bet already & not yet, G sometimes calls us to do very difficult things in order to reflect his concern for oppressed & display his glory.