

March 31, 2013 Easter

Isaiah 65: 17-25

¹⁷Pay close attention now:
I'm creating new heavens and a new earth.
All the earlier troubles, chaos, and pain
are things of the past, to be forgotten.

¹⁸Look ahead with joy.
Anticipate what I'm creating:
I'll create Jerusalem as sheer joy,
create my people as pure delight.

¹⁹I'll take joy in Jerusalem,
take delight in my people:
No more sounds of weeping in the city,
no cries of anguish;

²⁰No more babies dying in the cradle,
or old people who don't enjoy a full lifetime;
One-hundredth birthdays will be considered normal—
anything less will seem like a cheat.

²¹They'll build houses
and move in.
They'll plant fields
and eat what they grow.

²²No more building a house
that some outsider takes over,
No more planting fields
that some enemy confiscates,
For my people will be as long-lived as trees,
my chosen ones will have satisfaction in their work.

²³They won't work and have nothing come of it,
they won't have children snatched out from under them.
For they themselves are plantings blessed by GOD,
with their children and grandchildren likewise GOD-blessed.

²⁴Before they call out, I'll answer.
Before they've finished speaking, I'll have heard.

²⁵Wolf and lamb will graze the same meadow,
lion and ox eat straw from the same trough,
but snakes—they'll get a diet of dirt!
Neither animal nor human will hurt or kill
anywhere on my Holy Mountain," says GOD.

Sermon – “Time for a major renovation”

Just about 2 years ago I met a person who embodied the hope, optimism and belief in the impossible.

Isaiah spoke of a new heaven and new earth.

- Of forgetting the past – looking ahead with joy.
- A new age
- A radical new way of life.
- Ps. 118 – celebrates that God can turn the worst into the best.

(This is the theme of the TV show Property Brothers – they take the worst houses and make them look fabulous for their skeptical new owners!)

So back to 2 years ago... we were on holidays and booked a walking tour that was rated the very best in several travel books and websites.

The tour guide was Martin McCrossan and the city he helped us discover was Derry, N. Ireland.

- We walked the walls and gazed at the Roman Catholic and Protestant strongholds.
- We saw the mirals and memorials.
- We visited the Bloody Sunday Museum.

Every news bulletin I watched as a child and teen in the safety of our family living room returned -> it was chilling.

But Martin’s Derry is where he, a Roman Catholic, is happily married to a Protestant woman.

- Where he can walk freely throughout the city in safety.
- Where his children and all children have the opportunity to dream.
- Where commerce and industry thrive.

In the Collegeville Commentary of Is. 65, the message of the prophet is “We must have faith that the things that seem impossible can be accomplished by God.”

Martin McCrossan spends his working days celebrating the resurrection of his city from hatred to fellowship, from war to peace, from prejudice to understanding.

Martin’s joy was infectious on our tour just as our lives are in the light of the empty cross.

- We live in a new age.
- We’re not perfect but we’re loved.
- We are free from the one thing that scares people most -> death ->

When we let go of the fear, anger, shame, regret => the things that hold us in place, tie us down ->

- Then we open ourselves to God’s miraculous love ->

- There is no limit on what happens when we are motivated by love, optimism, hope and joy.
 - > we see the good and forgive the bad.
 - > we mend broken relationships and we find common ground.

In every age we see the need to do God's renovating in the world – with joy let us leave here to surprise people with grace - they won't expect it but will be better for it.