

## Sermon Notes from the Church's Ministry Among Jewish People

Third Sunday of Advent: Year C

**RCL Readings** – Zephaniah 3:14-20; Isaiah 12:2-6; Philippians 4:4-7; Luke 3:7-18

**ACNA Readings** – Zephaniah 3:14-20; Psalm 85; Philippians 4:4-9; Luke 3:7-20

**Seasonal Introduction.** Advent is the start of a new liturgical year in the Christian calendar. The season doesn't start with the birth of the Messiah but rather with the expectation that God will fulfill His promises. Advent isn't just about the first coming of Jesus as God incarnate on earth but also His promise to return. As Christmas approaches, we can be assured that the God who was born of a virgin and dwelt among us, Immanuel—God with us—still wishes to dwell among His people.

**Common Theme.** There is, no doubt, a theme of judgment and redemption in the readings this week. However, the greatest emphasis may be placed on the presence of God in the midst of His people. If God is with us, we do not need to fear. If God is with us, we can rejoice for He has redeemed us. If God is with us, maybe we should fear and obey, for He is our judge.

**Hebraic Context.** Prior to David's reign, the political and religious leadership of Israel remained separate. The Tabernacle was located in Shiloh while the judges ruled from their regional hometowns. Later, Saul made Gibeah his capital but the Ark of the Lord largely remained outside his sphere of influence. Things changed after David moved his capital from Hebron to Jerusalem. Not only did David make this Jebusite city his capital, but he moved the Ark of the Lord to the capital as well (and gathered the material for his son to eventually build the temple there). The command in Deuteronomy 12:5-14 to "seek the place that the LORD your God will choose...to make His name dwell there" was finally fulfilled according to Solomon in I Kings 8:27-29. God's dwelling place was on Mount Zion. Psalm 132:13 states, "For the Lord has chosen Zion; He has desired it for His dwelling place."<sup>1</sup>

Originally, Zion refers to a specific place.<sup>2</sup> II Samuel 5:7 states, "Nevertheless, David took the stronghold of Zion, that is, the city of David."<sup>3</sup> Zion was likely a foreign word so we don't know what it means. However, while David renamed the fortress the City of David, the original name Zion persisted and became synonymous with Jerusalem. In the prophetic writings and the Psalms, the term Zion expands to symbolize the place of God's dwelling, the people of Israel, and the relationship between them.

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<sup>1</sup> See also Isaiah 8:18; Zechariah 8:3, "I have returned to Zion and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem, and Jerusalem shall be called the faithful city, and the mountain of the LORD of hosts, the holy mountain."

<sup>2</sup> Today, the word Zion often evokes strong emotions as it is often associated with Zionism. The biblical term Zion predates these modern connotations, albeit with no less evocative significance theologically and politically.

<sup>3</sup> Likewise, I Kings 8 states that King Solomon brought the "ark of the covenant of the LORD out of the city of David, which is Zion." The temple wasn't Zion, but the stronghold of David below the temple mount.

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The term daughter of Zion<sup>4</sup> was used interchangeably for both a geographical location “And you, O tower of the flock, hill of the daughter of Zion” and people, “Writhe and groan, O daughter of Zion, like a woman in labor, for now you shall go out from the city.”<sup>5</sup> Israel is both a people and a place and Zion has come to mean both as well. The Lord has chosen Zion to be His dwelling place and thus it has also become a symbol of His presence. Zion is the place where God rules and reigns. Despite being a foreign word, Zion is a word that encompasses both a physical location in Jerusalem and a rich array of spiritual and symbolic meanings, including God's presence and His kingdom.

**Zephaniah 3:14-20.** The fate of Israel is tied to their faith in God. Zephaniah exposed the corruption of Judah, Jerusalem, the Temple, and its leadership: Judah bowed down to false idols and Jerusalem had turned to Baal. Judgment would also fall on the nations around Israel, demonstrating God's universal justice, for they too had sinned. The context for Zephaniah 3:14-20 is judgment. In the face of judgment, the question arises: Will this be the end for God's people? The answer is no! Through God's judgment, the people will be purified and made clean once more. The prophet declares the good news that, after judgment, there will be hope and restoration.

Zephaniah commands the people to sing, shout, "rejoice and exult with all your heart." Not only has God removed the judgment against His people, but even the nations, previously judged for their sins, are now invited to worship the Lord (Zephaniah 3:9-13) demonstrating God's forgiveness to those who turn to Him. There is great cause for rejoicing. However, the real cause for celebration is not merely the removal of judgment—it is the presence of God in their midst.

Zephaniah's vision of redemption centers around God's presence. While at he spoke of foreign lands, his focus was on Judah, Jerusalem, and Zion.<sup>6</sup> God had brought Israel out of Egypt not just to save them from slavery but because God wanted to dwell among them.<sup>7</sup> It is at Mount Zion that God sits

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<sup>4</sup> Hebrew, like many other languages, carries a masculine and feminine form and it is not always understood why some words take one form or the other. For instance, Wisdom and Folly are personified as women in Proverbs. Israel is often given a feminine characteristic which has no bearing on their real physical status. However, the Bible does refer to the daughter[s] of Zion twenty-nine times and sons of Zion only twice in the Tanakh. Because of this, many of the prophets used very specific language and imagery—divorce, widows, brides, and daughters. The linguistic use can be quite vivid, stark, or beautiful but likely has little immediate theological implications on its own. The Church is also referred to as the bride of Christ, and it is made up of both men and women.

<sup>5</sup> Micah 4:8, 10

<sup>6</sup> Zion is often a poetic synonym for Jerusalem, specifically David's city, but it was also strongly connected to the place that God dwelled. However, God does not wish to dwell alone. The daughter of Zion is a common Hebrew idiom for the city or the people of Israel (such as in Isaiah 62:11 or Zechariah 9:9). Often in Hebrew poetry, prophetic utterances and psalms, Israel and Jerusalem are described metaphorically with feminine characteristics. The metaphor of a woman in speaking about the nation can be used negatively, such as the prophets describing Israel as an unfaithful wife, or positively here as a beloved daughter.

See also Hebrew Context.

<sup>7</sup> Exodus 29:45-46

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enthroned—where He dwells among His people.<sup>8</sup> God's presence among His people brings great things. Yes, He brings judgment with Him, but also the power to save.

Because God is in their midst on this great day of joy, Israel is called not to fear. Fear, the enemy of good news, often leads to inaction and an inability to speak out against the wrongs in the world. But the Lord is portrayed as a mighty warrior who can deliver, and His presence should remove all fear.

Interestingly, even as the people shout for joy, they are not alone. The Lord Himself "will rejoice over you with gladness." This image reminds us of the deep, unmeasurable joy that God feels for His people and for a restored relationship with them. It's easy to forget the extent of God's love, but this season of Christmas calls us to remember: "God so loved the world" (John 3:16). It was God's amazing, all-consuming love that sent Jesus into the world to seek and save the lost.

**Isaiah 12:2-6 (Canticle 9).**<sup>9</sup> Isaiah 12:2-6 is known as Canticle 9, or *ecce Deus*,<sup>10</sup> and is considered the first song of Isaiah. The canticle has two distinct but connected parts. The first focuses on personal confidence in God's salvation, while the second emphasizes the communal responsibility to proclaim His deeds to the nations.

Even though Isaiah repeats the opening line of the song of Moses following the parting of the Red Sea half a millennia earlier, the singer makes a very personal declaration.<sup>11</sup> God didn't simply save his ancestors nor will God only save him some time in the distant future—"Behold, God is my salvation". In Hebraic thought, God's redemptive acts always affect more than the immediate recipients. The redemption of Israel from Egypt is celebrated by the Jewish people of every generation as if God had redeemed them personally from slavery so that He could live amongst His people. The redemptive activity of the Lord has become the song on the lips of the singer even as God is his strength.<sup>12</sup>

Isaiah proclaims that it is God who saves. This truth is a powerful reminder: we should not look to government programs, institutions, or even ourselves for salvation. When we confess, "God is my

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<sup>8</sup> Psalm 9:11, 74:2, 76:2; Isaiah 8:18

<sup>9</sup> Instead of reading from a Psalm, the songbook of the Scriptures, Canticle 9 is drawn from Isaiah. Often recited during morning or evening prayers, canticles are beautiful songs that have been read, prayed, and sung for thousands of years to remember God's deeds. Whether it is the Song of Miriam, sung to children to remind them of the power and redemptive arm of God; the Song of Hannah, a prayer of thanksgiving and sure knowledge of God's resurrection, which may have encouraged the martyrs during the great tribulation of the people under Antiochus Epiphanes; or the song of Mary, praising God for the fulfillment of His promises and restoration of the lowly.

<sup>10</sup> Canticles generally follow the Hebraic naming pattern of taking the first significant words of a song, in this case, *ecce Deus*, behold, God.

<sup>11</sup> The last line of Isaiah 12:2 states, "יהוה יהי לי לישועה", "The LORD... He has become my salvation". This is the same as in Exodus 15:2.

<sup>12</sup> The Hebrew term זמֶרֶת (*zimrat*, "song") appears in both Exodus 15:2 and Isaiah 12:2, creating a second direct link between these two moments of salvation history. The more common Hebrew word for song, שִׁירָה (*shira*), is not used here, further emphasizing the connection between Moses' song and Isaiah's declaration.

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salvation,” we also declare, “I am not my salvation.” This admission brings peace that surpasses understanding, giving us confidence in God’s redemptive work and removing fear and uncertainty about the future. Isaiah’s confidence in God’s salvation is especially striking when we consider the context of his next oracle. Babylon would come with great destruction. Just as Assyria destroyed Israel during Isaiah’s lifetime, the Babylonians would also rise up and plunder Judah. Faced with such looming threats, Isaiah knew that salvation could only come from God, not from the feeble hands of men.

In the second part of the canticle, Isaiah reminds us that we have a responsibility towards the Lord for His redemption: “Make known His deeds among the peoples.” Christmas is coming, and we should not keep silent about the real meaning, the true hope, and the miracle and mystery of Immanuel—God with us. Let our trust in the Lord’s salvation inspire us to overcome fear (and distractions, such as selfishness and greed during this season) and confidently “make known” the good news of Messiah this Christmas. By making His deeds known, we share the profound message of redemption, hope, and God’s unfailing love. Truly “great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel.”

**Philippians 4:4-7.**<sup>13</sup> As Paul starts to wrap up his letter to the Philippians and reiterates his message to them, he states, “Rejoice in the Lord always”.<sup>14</sup> Paul’s call to rejoice in all circumstances might initially seem insensitive, especially when addressed to those facing hardships. However, Paul does not instruct us to force happiness through a positive mental attitude or a rosy outlook on life. Instead, the foundation of his exhortation is theological: “The Lord is at hand”.<sup>15</sup>

The early church lived with the expectation of the imminent return of Jesus. They also lived with the expectation of persecution. Knowing that God is in control, in both the good and the bad, can help us to not fear what we must face. Knowing that God “began a good work” in us and will complete it on the day of Jesus Christ should give us great cause to rejoice.<sup>16</sup> For the early Christians, this hope was transformative—when the Messiah returns, He will make all things right. Yet, as with the other readings from Zephaniah 3 and Isaiah 12, it’s also important to know that God is in the midst of His people now. He is the King in our midst today. The Holy One of Israel is in our midst. “The Lord is at hand” does not only point to the eschatological return of Jesus but also affirms His constant nearness to His people for truly He is “with you always, to the end of the age”.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> ACNA includes Philippians 4:8-9

<sup>14</sup> See Philippians 1:18, 2:17-18, 28, 3:1, 4:4, 4:10

<sup>15</sup> Moses, in Deuteronomy 16:13-15, commanded the people of Israel to be joyful during the feast of Succot. Regardless of the situation, everyone was to rejoice—including, very specifically, the slaves, the orphans, and the widows. Joy can certainly come from our circumstances, for instance, in I Maccabees 4:58 “there was very great joy among the people” when the new temple altar was dedicated. Paul gives several circumstantial reasons to rejoice in Philippians 1:18, 2:17-18, and 2:28. However, our greatest joy comes from God—His work and, most importantly, His very person (Philippians 3:1, 4:4). God’s presence is constant and something for which we should be constantly grateful as we rejoice in Him.

<sup>16</sup> Philippians 1:3-7

<sup>17</sup> Matthew 28:20

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And so, Paul continues by commanding believers: "Do not be anxious about anything." This is not a gentle suggestion but a command. Anxiety can be a horrible emotional burden, even physically it can be quite dangerous when it continues long-term. How can we deal with anxiety, especially when faced with persecution? Paul provides the answer: through constant prayer. Everything—our joys, fears, and concerns—must be brought before the Lord. God is not far off, He is near at hand and will hear our prayers.

Paul encourages us to set aside our worries, not because they are unimportant, but because we are called to actively depend on God's goodness and benevolence. He hears our prayers and understands our needs better than we do.<sup>18</sup> God's provision may not always align with our desires or expectations, but His love ensures that He provides what is truly needed. Knowing that God is close by can bring us supernatural peace. Paul describes it as surpassing all understanding. You can't explain it but you can experience it.

**Luke 3:7-18.**<sup>19</sup> This week's gospel reading brings us the voice of John the Baptist once again. John, though descended from a priestly family—his father Zechariah served in the Temple, and both his parents, Zechariah and Elizabeth, hailed from the tribe of Levi—did not follow in the family tradition of priestly service in the temple. Instead, filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother's womb, John stepped into the role of a prophet, anointed to prepare the way for the Messiah.<sup>20</sup>

Prophets often deliver fiery messages, but John's approach may seem especially shocking. Addressing the crowds seeking baptism, he calls them a "brood of vipers"—hardly a welcoming tone! Γεννήματα (gennemata, brood or offspring) is used in two distinct ways in the New Testament: to describe the fruit of the vine (and fruit of righteousness) or the fruit of serpents.<sup>21</sup> As Jesus states in Matthew 7:18-20, "A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit... thus you will recognize them by their fruits." Scripture frequently associates "fruit" with a person's actions, the natural offspring of their spiritual father—God or Satan.<sup>22</sup> During the Second Temple period, the connection between snakes and demonic forces had already been established.<sup>23</sup> John's audience would have recognized the strength of his rebuke in calling them a "brood of vipers."

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<sup>18</sup> See Psalm 34:4, 55:22; Isaiah 65:24; Matthew 6:8; I Peter 5:7

<sup>19</sup> ACNA includes Luke 3:19-20

<sup>20</sup> Levites were all from the tribe of Levi, and priests served in hereditary positions within the tribe of Levi. While some Levites and priests became prophets—such as Moses, Samuel, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist—the role of a prophet, unlike the priesthood, was not typically passed from father to son.

<sup>21</sup> Brood of vipers: Matthew 3:7; 12:34, 23:33; Luke 3:7. Fruit of the vine: Matthew 26:29; Mark 14:25; Luke 22:18. Fruit of righteousness: II Corinthians 9:10.

<sup>22</sup> This concept reflects Second Temple thought, as seen in Sirach 27:6, where "fruit discloses the cultivation of a tree; so does speech the thoughts of the human mind." Even Philo, in *De Agricultura* (III-IV), explores this metaphor, transitioning from physical trees to the spiritual cultivation of the soul.

<sup>23</sup> The Aramaic Targum of Genesis 3 identifies the serpent as Satan, a link reinforced in Revelation 12:9, which describes Satan as "...that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world." The Wisdom of Solomon 2:24 states, "through an adversary's (diabolos') envy, death entered the world."

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In last week's reading, we saw John traveling the region of the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance. Multitudes came to him in the wilderness, drawn by a messianic expectation and often a genuine desire to repent.<sup>24</sup> Yet, as Luke recounts, John's tone suddenly shifts, chastising those who had come to repent. In Matthew's parallel account (Matthew 3:7), John's harsh rebuke is directed specifically at the Pharisees and Sadducees who approached him for baptism, whereas Luke implies his message was aimed at the broader crowd. In both accounts, John remains steadfast, refusing to soften his condemnation of societal corruption and unfaithful religious leadership.

Despite John's severe words, the people respond with a heartfelt question: "What then shall we do?"<sup>25</sup> Notice that the people don't ask what to believe—they already believe in God and His promise of a Messiah. Instead, they ask what they should do. Their faith was active, rooted in a desire to align their lives with God's will.

John's response is theologically simple, "Bear fruits in keeping with repentance." He exhorts them to demonstrate their faith through their actions: share with those in need, act fairly in business, and treat others with kindness and contentment. The people approaching John would have been familiar with the solution he offered—repentance demonstrated by righteous actions—even if they did not always practice it. These timeless principles remain core values we teach our children today and should be something we demonstrate by our actions. True repentance, John insists, is evidenced by how we live, not just by what we profess.

John also points to the coming Messiah, clarifying that he (John) is not the Christ. While some initially assumed John might be the Messiah, he understood his role as forerunner of the Messiah. Yet, even John's understanding of the Messiah's immediate mission was not entirely clear. He declared that the Messiah was bringing a baptism of the Holy Spirit but also a baptism of fire, heralding the day of judgment.

John was not wrong about the coming judgment, but his timing was off. The first advent of Jesus was not to bring judgment but to proclaim the good news of the kingdom of heaven and to procure redemption and salvation for many through the New Covenant. This is and always will be good news to the people.

**Hebraic Perspective.** While God is omnipresent—present in all places and at all times—the Bible emphasizes His deep desire to dwell intimately with His people. From the beginning, God is not distant

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<sup>24</sup> John didn't preach to everyone in Israel. He wandered in the wilderness, anywhere between one and three days travel for most people, in an inhospitable part of the country where only those who were faithful or genuinely curious would come to him and hear his prophetic word. While John's ministry was extremely popular and his message reached even Herod, it probably wasn't the secular, hellenized Jews or the Romans that would have heard him unless they too feared God.

<sup>25</sup> This question mirrors the one asked of Peter after his sermon during Pentecost in Acts 2:37.

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but relational. God rules over all creation—fashioning heaven and earth. Yet, He chooses to leave the heavens to walk in the cool of the evening with Adam. God constantly and persistently sought a relationship with His people, even while they rebelled against Him.

When Jacob prepared to leave the land of Canaan and journey to Haran, he encountered God in a dream of a ladder reaching heaven. God assured him, saying “I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land. For I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.”<sup>26</sup> God continued to be with Jacob and his sons even when they went to Egypt.

When the people of Israel cried out to God from slavery, God heard their groaning. He delivered them from slavery, not merely to bring them to the promised land but for a greater purpose: “I will dwell among the people of Israel and will be their God. And they shall know that I am the LORD their God, who brought them out of the land of Egypt that I might dwell among them. I am the LORD their God.”<sup>27</sup> At Mount Sinai, God's desire to dwell with His people took physical form in His command, “Let them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them.”<sup>28</sup> The Tabernacle, and later the Temple, became a visible sign of God's presence in the midst of Israel—a reminder of His nearness and faithfulness.

God's desire to be present with His people never stops, for in Revelation 21:3, at the culmination of history, we hear “a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be His people, and God Himself will be with them as their God.’”

In the meantime, God so loved the world that He sent His son. At Christmas we celebrate the mystery of *Immanuel*—God with us. The presence of the Messiah among His people brought blessing to all nations. Jesus' presence is transformative, giving great joy and peace to His disciples. After His resurrection, Jesus ascended to heaven. Did God leave us on our own? Sure, Jesus went to prepare a place for us to dwell with Him one day but what about today? “Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.” God sent the Holy Spirit to dwell among us. God still dwells among us today.

### ACNA Reading

**Psalm 85.** The specific history of Psalm 85 is unclear. However, the sons of Korah, to whom this psalm is attributed, serve as a powerful example of redemption and inclusion in God's family, despite their ancestor's rebellion.<sup>29</sup> The psalm reflects the hope of renewed relationship with God following judgment and its close connection between the forgiveness of the people and restoration of the land may point

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<sup>26</sup> Genesis 28:15

<sup>27</sup> Exodus 29:45-56

<sup>28</sup> Exodus 25:8

<sup>29</sup> Korah was a levite during the wandering in the wilderness whose tasks included the carrying of the Ark of the Covenant when the community moved. Korah joined in the rebellion against Moses, earning the wrath of God, with the earth swallowing the rebels. His descendants did not follow in their fathers rebellious footsteps but returned to faithful service in the Tabernacle (Samuel) and later the Temple as worship leaders.

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towards this being a Psalm after the exile or, like Solomon's prayer at the dedication (II Chronicles 26:24-42), prophetic regarding the possibility of a future exile.

In the Scriptures, Israel is both a people and a land and the two are inextricably linked. The spiritual well-being of the people of Israel is often connected to the health of the land.<sup>30</sup> While the whole earth is the Lord's, the opening line references Israel as "your land." Psalm 85:2 then paired the land of Israel with the people of Israel, to whom God had shown forgiveness. The exile was the painful, but promised, consequence of a spiritual rebellion against God. Israel had embraced foreign gods and broken His covenant. The consequence, for there are always consequences for every action (sometimes good, sometimes bad), was Assyrian captivity and, later, Babylonian exile for Judah.

This might have tempted the people of Israel to hopelessly abandon the Lord. However, from verse 8, the psalmist expresses a desire to submit to the Lord by attentively hearing Him speak. If not listening to God had caused the exile, failing to listen after the exile would be folly. Repentance brings a renewed and restored relationship with God, including His presence. The psalm sends a message of hope: salvation is near for the people of God, and the Lord will once again dwell in the land, bringing blessings with His presence.

Three things meet in Psalm 85:10-11 (11-12 in the Hebrew). First is steadfast love and truth.<sup>31</sup> A very common phrase that appears together 25 times in the Tanakh. If we have mercy God will be true and if we are true God will have mercy. Righteousness and peace kiss. If we are righteous (often interpreted as charity) then peace will come. And if we are at peace, God will be charitable.

The third is that truth and righteousness meet—truth springing up from the ground while righteousness looks down from the heavens. We know that God looks down (רָקַשׁ) in judgment—first in Genesis 18:16 and 19:28 the angels and then Abraham looked down to see Sodom's fall. More explicitly, in Exodus 14:24, the LORD looked down on the army of the Egyptians before they were destroyed in judgment. In Psalm 14:2 and 53:2 God once again looks down to earth to see if any seek after Him, they don't. But God also looks down in mercy. Psalm 102:19 states that God looks down and hears the

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<sup>30</sup> A significant part of the identity of the Jewish people is the ancient and Biblical connection they have with the land of Israel. The *Sh'ma* (Deuteronomy 6-11) clearly declares that if Israel sins they will be removed from the land God promised to them. But if they turn back to God they will be restored to the land God provided—Israel. From the beginning, Abraham's call (which included being a blessing to the nations) involved the leaving of one land to go to another land—a land for him and his descendants. The prophets and the psalms constantly connect the land of Israel with the people of Israel. Jesus also has a connection to the land as part of His Jewish identity as a literal descendent of Abraham.

<sup>31</sup> Many translations interpret truth (אמת) as faithfulness (אמונה) here. While they have a similar root, truth is a better interpretation and is also how the LXX translated it (αληθεια). However, both interpretations convey similar meanings as faithfulness is the action of being true or steadfast.



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groaning of the prisoner while in Deuteronomy 26:15 Israel is to pray that God would look down on them and bless His people.<sup>32</sup>

But what of truthfulness springing from the earth? Is it of God? Of men? Of Israel? Truth and righteousness appear together in several different contexts:

In I Kings 3:6, Solomon declared that God showed great benevolence towards David in response to David's truth and righteousness. Here David was true and righteous.

Isaiah 48:1 declared that Israel was deceiving themselves. They called on God, but did so without truth or righteousness. Here a nation was neither true nor righteous.

Jeremiah 4:1-2 declared that Israel can return. They can call on God, but this time in truth and righteousness. Here a nation was called to be true and righteous.

Zechariah 8:8 speaks of God bringing His people [back] to Jerusalem to renew the purpose of the Exodus—that Israel would be God's people and God would be their God in truth and righteousness. Here God is true and righteous.

The first time we encounter something wishing to sprout (נִצַּח) up from the ground is in Genesis 2:5. No plant could spring up from the earth for God hadn't sent His blessing, His rain, to the earth. Isaiah 45:8 makes it clear that it is the LORD who created the righteousness that pours down from the heavens and the earth it pours down on. But Genesis 2:5 reminds us that the other reason no plant could spring up was that there was no man to cultivate the ground. Isaiah 45:8 also states that God's righteousness and salvation should bear fruit and righteousness should sprout—So we get the picture that God and man work together. God is true and righteous, obviously we, as his people, are also called to be true and righteous.

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<sup>32</sup> As we have seen earlier, the blessing involves Israel, the people, directly with the land that God had promised them—the land flowing with milk and honey. Even as Psalm 85:12 also includes the land as part of God's blessing for doing what is good.