

Visited by Majesty on High

“Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations he hath made in the earth. Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth. The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah.” (Psalm 46:8, 10, 11).

Our village received a very special visit by the Lord Christ.

It was a visit of the Majesty on High.

What we really received is a little foretaste of the end of the world.

Some of us went to heaven in the process of that visit. Others are in the hospital because of that visit. Some of us had a brush with death. All of us were deeply impressed by that visit.

God came to us, and he roared: I have never yet heard a voice such as we heard around supper time, Tuesday evening, April 3, 1956. It sounded as though a thousand express trains were traversing the sky.

His footsteps were seen; he walked from the southwest to the northeast, skirting our village: everyone was aware of his august presence.

And we were afraid: many cowered in the basement of their homes, while God ravaged their properties. He flung houses and barns far and wide. Such debris was mixed with black muck and the dust of the earth. He snuffed out the lives of some of us, broke the bones and the flesh of others: they were left moaning in his wake.

Oh yes, no one can dispute it: God walked among us; his Christ paid us a special visit; he left desolation, death, pain, and misery.

But also awe, the awe of the childlike fear of Jehovah.

One man said: My Jehovah was beautiful in his raging! And that man lost half of his worldly goods, and his life was in jeopardy.

Yes, I have seen him too.

His pathway through Hudsonville was about three or four city blocks from my dwelling.

But in it all is a terrible accusation.

We have paid attention to this little walk of God, a walk whose results are still among us in many ways. We have paid marked attention to that little walk. Both the good and the bad, the saints and the wicked, the church and the world have seen him, heard him, and marked his works. The blue-coats of the State Police are still among us, as are the members of the State Guard, or National Guard. Life has still not returned to its normal beat.

Everyone is still talking about that little walk of Jesus through Hudsonville, visiting us. He is constantly among us. From the time when Zacharias sang his song of salvation until now, Jesus and the God of our salvation has his march among us, and he always speaks, shouts, beckons, and calls to us his people.

Zacharias sang: The Dayspring from on high hath visited us!

And he is still with us.

He promised: And lo, I am with you alway!

And he kept his word.

Jesus is constantly walking through Hudsonville.

And he is constantly singing his song of the eternal Covenant of God's grace.

He sings that song as a lullaby at the cradle of the Covenant babies. He sings and he speaks of the everlasting love of God when we are very young and as we gather as little boys and girls in catechism and Christian schools. His speech and his works become plainer to us as we grow up. Oh, how wonderful is his voice from the pulpit Sunday after Sunday, year after year.

His song of the covenant: I love you so much that I died for you on the accursed tree.

And you can hear it in Hudsonville, both in the home and from the pulpit.

And his footsteps drop with fatness. He leaves in his wake regeneration, conversion, faith, justification, and sanctification. But also glorification when Hudsonville's children go to heaven.

That Tuesday, he left in his wake a picture of the desolation of hell. After I saw it for the first time I grew very still. It was awful.

But when Jesus is conducting business as usual, he leaves in his wake the glories of the Christian, the blessings of salvation, and we are blest.

Now here is the terrible accusation: we can see Christ in his usual business day after day and night after night, year after year and lifetime after lifetime, and we stay calm and orderly.

“How are things?”

“Oh, so so!”

After all, his daily and nightly walk through the village is much more beautiful than his special visit on that Tuesday, is it not?

Everyone wanted to get into Hudsonville. It took hundreds of special blue-coats and guardsmen to keep the crowds from hindering disaster cleanup. Last Sunday afternoon I had me a time getting out and getting back into my village.

But we do not need the cops on Sunday!

How easily we leave our place empty on Sunday during worship of God Who is in our very midst day and night!

How easily do we fall asleep during the service, skip the reading of God’s Word after a meal, and a prayer or two?

That Tuesday he came and said: “This is the way of My final coming, when the heavens and the earth shall be destroyed by fire, tornado, and earthquake, and then the hearts of men shall fail them because of My terror!”

We heard it and paid attention. Oh, how we paid attention!

But, every waking and sleeping hour he is in our very midst and says: “I love you with an everlasting love, and all my endeavor is to get you with me in the new earth and the new heaven. I move the heavens and the earth and the depth of hell to get you away from the world, the devils and the powers of sin. I send angels and my Holy Spirit of grace who explains and applies my precious Word so that you may eat and drink spiritually and be satisfied. I am a flaming wall of fire around you and your children so that no harm may come near your dwelling. I suffer no man to do you

wrong. I give men for thee and nations for thy salvation. Oh, I do love you and your seed and I have unutterable salvation in store for you. Listen to me, my people: I, the eternal God am thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms!”

That is what God, what Jesus, what the Spirit sayeth unto the churches.

And do we pay as close attention to it as to that Tuesday’s tornado?

There is our accusation.

Yes, I do know that the tornado came so that the wicked will have no excuse in the day of his final coming.

I know, too, that this tornado came as a sign of his final coming so that the church might take courage and know that her deliverance is nigh.

But I also am persuaded that the tornado came to shake the church awake, to direct us to his more beautiful voice of the gospel, to remind us of his daily and nightly presence among us.

The church was crowded Sunday morning. And they tell me that such was the case in the other churches in our little village.

The tornado calls us to a rededication, to a reconsecration.

It did that to me.

We have given our answer to God’s visit in our communal prayer.

And we tremble at his presence now.

For God says: “Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.”

God desires to be exalted. And, let us never forget it, he will be exalted. Therefore he walked through our town on a bias: on a line from the southwest to the northeast. And even the dogs saw him and trembled.

And he was exalted. Even by the reprobate, although they will not admit it. Some of them took time out to insult him: I saw a headline in a daily paper which called it a “brutal” tornado! It carries the proof with it that God was exalted. It was the wicked’s answer to his footsteps. When God says in our hearts: I am God and there is no other God; then they say: There is no God!

Did you note that the daily papers did not connect the tornado with God and his Christ?

But we are still, Father!

We know that thou art God.

And we exalt thee, even while we cower in the southwest corner of our basements.

Yes, we are still.

And we are going to listen as never before. That is our promise to thee.

On our plea for grace to keep our promise.

And we are reassured, for thou continuest: “The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge!”

God was seen for a few minutes.

He was clothed in black, the black swirls of dust, muck, trees, planks, and bodies of men and animals.

We saw him for a few minutes such as he will be seen again in the clouds of darkness of the final tempest, the final tornado of the last day, the Yom Jehovah.

But he is still with us in his dear Son.

He was in a hurry to come on Pentecost: the sound of a fiercely driven wind.

And he never left us.

He is so intimately close to us that the theologians are still fighting about the two natures of Christ. Oh, God is very close to man.

Do you realize that the sentence: “The Lord of Hosts is with us” is a name of Jesus?

Immanuel means: God with us. Well, for the name of God in the sentence, my text has: the Lord of Hosts.

He came well-nigh two thousand years ago, and united himself with man, and henceforth we are Zion, the city of God. His finger touched the earth; it was the greatest Tornado the world has ever seen. It was dark too. It was the Son of God dying on the accursed tree. There God embraced us with all our sin and guilt.

And then the tornadoes of God began to howl. It was an eternal tornado of wrath of almighty and holy God.

And when the tornado was over, it became still.

It was very still in the garden of Joseph.

The stillness of the peace of God that stole over and within the church of God.

That stillness shall last through all eternity.

That is our refuge.

The papers say: get to the basement. They even say and specify the exact corner which is safest: the southwest. Or under a table or a bed if you have no basement. I have no quarrel with the scientist. We must use the means.

But there is a refuge that is better, far better.

We hide in the shadow of the cross of our Jesus.

And all is well. Amen. Hallelujah!