

Emmanuel Ev. Lutheran Church—Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod  
Pentecost 2  
June 22, 2025  
Sermon by Pastor Gary A. Pufahl  
**We testify to what we have seen and heard.**

Bring out the people who are blind, though they have eyes, and the people who are deaf, though they have ears. Let all the nations be gathered together, and let peoples be assembled. Who among them has declared this? Who has made known to us the former things? Let them produce their witnesses to show that they were right, so that people can hear and say, "This is truth." You are my witnesses, declares the LORD. You are my servant, whom I have chosen, so that you may know me and believe in me, so that you will understand that I am he. Before me no god was formed, and after me there will not be another. I, yes I, am the LORD, and apart from me there is no savior. I myself declared it. I brought salvation, and I announced it. It was not some strange god among you. You are my witnesses, declares the LORD, and I am God. Indeed, from the first day, I am he. There is no one who can deliver anyone from my hand. I act, and who can reverse it?

—Isaiah 43:8-13 EHV

*I had a vision of the future. I can see it. God's judgment is coming. We don't have much time. Just over a century from now, in the year 2135, America will be destroyed. An army from Mexico will stream into our country and level every great city. Millions of people will be taken captive and live as captives in that country. Life as we know it will end.*

*But there is hope. Someone is coming from the Land of the Maple Leaf. God is raising up Antoine from Saskatchewan, and he will set us free. God is raising up a deliverer. In 160 years from now, in the year 2185, the American people will be set free. Antoine the conqueror will lead a great army and rescue the American people. We will return to this country.*

*I can see it. God's judgment is coming, but so is his deliverance. It will all take place in the next one and a half centuries.*

Now, if I stood before you today and announced that and meant it, what would you do? I'll tell you what you would do. You would get rid of me. I'm actually really glad nobody got up and left. But if I really said and meant those words, you would say, "Uh-huh. Nope. This guy is a nutcase. There's no way he can predict the future. I'm out."

Right? And you should.

But here's the thing. God did prophesy something similar to that through the prophet Isaiah. Oh, it wasn't about America, but it was about Judah. You see, Isaiah was a prophet who lived approximately 700 years before Jesus came into this world. And there were a lot of things that God declared would happen before they did. He said that he was going to bring his judgment against his people. They had rebelled against him. They had pushed him away. For centuries they had just about been inviting God to go into action against them, and Isaiah prophesied that God was going to take them up on their offer.

In a little more than a century from when Isaiah lived, the Babylonians would storm into Judah and take Judah's finest into captivity. Fifteen years later, they would return and completely destroy the city, the people, the temple. God's people would be hauled off to live in a foreign country. God predicted that would happen.

But God also prophesied a redeemer, a conqueror. Someone was coming who would set his people free. In fact, God even named this individual. He said that Cyrus the Great from Persia was coming to set his people free. That event would be 160 years after Isaiah lived. God predicted these events would happen.

But those events pointed to even a greater event, which you and I are a part of. There was another captivity that Isaiah saw, and it extended farther than Babylon. It is the captivity of sin. Every single person is a part of that captivity. And there's no way we can rescue ourselves from that. So, God promised a Redeemer. Someone was coming. Isaiah saw it. He even named him by name. His name is "Emmanuel – God with us." This Redeemer is, of course, Jesus. Jesus, the Son of God, came into this world to set people free from the captivity of hell itself.

And Isaiah's visions even extend farther than that. God prophesies that because of this Redeemer, all of his people will be gathered around him and live together in unending peace and joy. God gave Isaiah even a glimpse of heaven. All believers in Jesus would live in that eternal joy and peace. So, in Isaiah's day, God predicted events that would happen in the future. Isaiah spoke them and wrote them down.

Can anybody do that? You know that there are people today who try to predict the end of the world. And what do you do with people like that? You steer clear away from them, right? And with good reason. Jesus said, "No one knows the Day of Judgment." And we trust Jesus. Therefore, if someone says, "The Last Day will be on this particular day," we steer clear from those people.

Nobody can tell the future. Unless, of course, God reveals it. Which is what God did with Isaiah. God can reveal the future. God can show us what will take place. In fact, God is the only one who can do that. In the words before us today, God reveals that he is not like anything or anyone in this entire world. He is completely unique, one-of-a-kind. And one of the characteristics that makes God unique is that he can predict what will take place in the future. He makes promises of the future, and then he fulfills them.

In fact, the prophet Isaiah implies an interesting question, "If God cannot predict the future, is he any better than any other god?" Or, think of it like this. "If God cannot predict the future, what makes our theology any different from the theology of Islam, Buddhism, or Mormonism?" We take great comfort in the fact that God knows all things and acts for the best interest of people. The central message of Scripture is that God has a plan of salvation to rescue and redeem us from our sins, from Satan, and from hell itself. He promised that Jesus would come to set us free.

And God used people like Isaiah to make that prophecy known. He prophesied truths like this, "**The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son and name him Immanuel**" (7:14). He prophesied that this Savior would come from the line of David, "**A shoot will spring up from the stump of Jesse** (Jesse was David's father), **and a Branch from his roots will bear fruit**" (11:1). God gave his Old Testament people hope, and he gives us hope when he says in Isaiah 43:1, "**Do not be afraid, because I have redeemed you. I have called you by name. You are mine.**"

So, it's not too much that God told his Old Testament people about Cyrus 160 years before he comes and about the promised Messiah 700 years before he comes. God predicts the future. These prophecies are not just words of a human prophet speculating about theology and world history. No. These are words that God gave to the prophet.

In fact, God challenged people to try to prove that he could not predict the future. In the words that are before us today, God sets up a courtroom scene. He calls two groups to present their case as though they were in a court. On the one side are the nations. On the other side are the people of Israel.

He says, "**Bring out the people who are blind, though they have eyes, and the people who are deaf, though they have ears.** (By the way, that is a reference to his Old Testament people of Israel. If you look at chapter 42, the chapter right before these words, you will see that he clearly is calling his people blind and deaf. They had eyes to see and ears to hear. But they were like a child who plugs his ears and closes his eyes, "I can't hear you." So, he is gathering his people for this testimony even though he describes them as blind and deaf. But then he continues to describe the other side.) **Let all the nations be gathered together, and let peoples be assembled. Who among them has declared this? Who has made known to us the former things? Let them produce their witnesses to show that they were right, so that people can hear and say, "This is truth."** (Then he goes back to his people.) **You are my witnesses, declares the Lord. You are my servant, whom I have chosen, so that you may know me and believe in me, so that you will understand that I am he.**"

So, here's the courtroom scene. And you have two groups of people that are put on the witness stand. How do they respond? Well, with the other nations, they do not have any testimony. No one can come forth and proclaim that their gods could predict future events. They stand there dumbfounded. They can't say that they have the truth.

But God refers to his people as witnesses. Even though he calls them blind and deaf, they still are witnesses. Sure, God's people were stubborn. But they knew. They saw. They heard. Even though they did not know what it all meant, they still could be witnesses. And they could testify to what they have seen and heard.

Who led the people of Israel out of Egypt? They saw the acts of the Lord through the plagues and the parting of the Red Sea. Who provided food and water and kept their sandals from wearing out when the people were in the desert for 40 years? They saw God provided manna and quail. Who brought his people to the land of Palestine just as he promised Abraham 500 years earlier? The people could testify that God kept his promise. Or look at something closer to Isaiah's day. When the Assyrians attacked God's people in Isaiah's day, everything looked so desolate. It looked so hopeless. But God promised deliverance. He told them to have no fear. And sure enough, the next day 185,000 Assyrians were lying dead on the other side of the wall because God delivered his people. The Angel of the Lord defeated their enemies. God kept his promise. He knows the future.

So even though they may not fully know and see what all this means, they could testify to what the Lord did. And what is it that these people could testify to? "**Before me no god was formed, and after me there will not be another. <sup>11</sup>I, yes I, am the Lord, and apart from me there is no savior. <sup>12</sup>I myself declared it. I brought salvation, and I announced it. It was not some strange god among you. You are my witnesses, declares the**

**Lord, and I am God. <sup>13</sup> Indeed, from the first day, I am he. There is no one who can deliver anyone from my hand. I act, and who can reverse it?"**

God sets himself up against every single false god in the world. **"Apart from me there is no savior."** He is the one who sets free. He is the one who helps. He is the one who rescues. Just look at the history of the Old Testament people. He rescued them from Egypt. He rescued them from Babylon. And he promised a deliverance from the bondage of sin and death.

Who can provide that kind of rescue? Who can rescue from sin, death, and hell? Only one! Only the Lord, the God of free and faithful grace, can redeem and save.

And now here's the remarkable and amazing part of all this: you know this. Not only do you know this, but you also believe this. You trust this. You look at the Bible, and you know that these are not merely human words. This is God's Word. He has revealed what would happen. He carried out his saving plan of salvation in time. Jesus has come as the great rescuer for mankind. God still works through that precious truth to change hearts and minds.

You are not blind. You see. You see Jesus. You know who he is as your Savior, your Lord, your Brother. You see him with all power, even power over demons, as we saw in the Gospel for the day. You see him offer his life as the sacrifice for your sins. He has taken them all away. You see Jesus. You are not deaf. You hear. You know that these are not just words of great literature. These are words through which the Holy Spirit calls you to faith in Jesus. You know these words are true. And therefore, you know that all of these words of the Bible are true: his promises to be with you and comfort you, his promises that he will never leave you or forsake you, his promises that he will make all things work out for your good, his promise that those who die in faith in Jesus will open their eyes to eternal life, his promise that he will return to take you to be with him forever. All of those words are true. And they are for you.

So, what do you do with that? What do we do with that? It's simple. **We testify to what we have seen and heard.** Amen.