

Baruch 5:1-9

- 5 Take off the garment of your sorrow and affliction, O Jerusalem,
and put on for ever the beauty of the glory from God.
- ² Put on the robe of the righteousness that comes from God;
put on your head the diadem of the glory of the Everlasting;
- ³ for God will show your splendour everywhere under heaven.
- ⁴ For God will give you evermore the name,
'Righteous Peace, Godly Glory'.
- ⁵ Arise, O Jerusalem, stand upon the height;
look towards the east,
and see your children gathered from west and east
at the word of the Holy One,
rejoicing that God has remembered them.
- ⁶ For they went out from you on foot,
led away by their enemies;
but God will bring them back to you,
carried in glory, as on a royal throne.
- ⁷ For God has ordered that every high mountain and the everlasting hills be made low
and the valleys filled up, to make level ground,
so that Israel may walk safely in the glory of God.
- ⁸ The woods and every fragrant tree
have shaded Israel at God's command.
- ⁹ For God will lead Israel with joy,
in the light of his glory,
with the mercy and righteousness that come from him.

We don't often read from the Apocrypha, which is where this book is found. It was written by the prophet Baruch, during his exile in Babylon. After the fall of Jerusalem in the 6th century, he longed that the great city (Jerusalem) would rise from ashes, and be given a new name "Righteous Peace, Godly Glory" (vs. 5:4). He spoke of a longing for the return of those scattered long before... but rejoiced "that God has remembered them" (vs. 5:5). The seventh verse of this passage is reminiscent of the famous words from Isaiah 40: "For God has ordered that every high mountain and the everlasting hills be made low, and the valleys filled up to make level ground, so that Israel may walk safely in the glory of God".

In the northern hemisphere, the night creeps up on us earlier during Advent and continues to grow longer until the winter solstice. Even as we prepare for the coming joy of Christmas and anticipate the good, we also find ourselves contemplating what and who is missing from our lives. This can be both a beautiful and difficult time of year (as I recall the loss of two very dear friends just recently). Yet, we are never without hope and the promise of goodness. When the night feels too long and the joy of the season seems out of reach, we can always turn to God's peace. Then we will feel the 'light of his glory, and the mercy and righteousness that comes from him'!

Divine Love, gift us with peace, joy, hope, beauty, and goodness. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

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