Text: Isaiah 52:7-10

**Introduction**

There are two biblical phrases that originate in the Exodus. God performed his signs and wonders. And he did this by his holy arm.

From Deuteronomy 4:34 - Has any god ever attempted to go and take a nation for himself from the midst of another nation, by trials, by signs and wonders, and by war, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, and by great deeds of terror, all of which the LORD your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes? (Deut. 4:34 ESV)

Now the signs and wonders of that original act of God were the 10 plagues and the hardening of Pharoah’s heart. They were acts of judgement. As Moses adds, by war and deeds of terror. God made a nation for himself by judgement. By signs and wonders demonstrated that nothing can stand before his outstretched arm. Not even Pharoah the avatar of the god of the Sun.

Had any god ever attempted that? No, it’s a rhetorical question. Only Yahweh. I know no other god.

**Trouble in the World**

But the problem with such signs and wonders, with such acts, is what Nathan would say to David after he shamefully kills Uriah the Hittite. “Now the sword will never depart from you.” Or what Jesus says to Peter slashing the ear off of the Chief Priest’s ruffian, “the one who lives by the sword, dies by the sword.”

The history of Israel is one of warfare. And even to this day right now. The Sword has never departed.

God can fight directly. He can bare his arm in signs and wonders. And he wins. But the victory always seems hollow. The nation he claims in such a way, doesn’t follow his law. The wonder lasts for an hour, but soon come the complaints that there is no food and the pantry of Egypt was better. When you are the bread god, it is always “what have you done for me lately.” And as any parent knows, if you keep doing what your child should be doing, they never learn anything but a crippling dependance for things they should be doing themselves.

**Gospel in the World**

But Yahweh’s rhetorical question – Has any god ever attempted to take a nation for himself? – invites a further question.

Can God Almighty bare his arm in signs and wonders in a way that does not start in judgement and war? Can God create a people for himself, not by direct power? Can he reign in a way the world cannot imagine?

Those are also rhetorical questions. Because that is what Isaiah is announcing.

The watchman lift up their voices for joy for the Lord returns to Zion. He bares his Holy Arm before the eyes of all the nations.

And this baring is not in war, but he publishes peace.

This baring is not in judgement, but the salvation of our God.

This sign and wonder is not a terror, but good news, good news of happiness. Good news for the poor in Spirit.

**Trouble in the Text**

Of course when the LORD comes in this way. When the sign is child born of virgin lying in a stable, it isn’t as immediately impressive as the plagues. The chariots and horsemen of Israel have an immediate impact. Even if the result is always just more destruction and darkness.

As Jesus says to the crowds, you came because you had your fill of bread. And even though encouraged to work for the food that endures to eternal life, they desire the temporal. And many turn their back on him that day. When you want a bread god, there are options. And his own did not receive him.

Judgement and war, the lies of the various bread gods of the world, the direct power of signs and wonders all seem like more practical solutions. There is no way this weak one – this child in the manger – can reign.

**Gospel**

But the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

You waste places of Jerusalem, laid flat by the warfare, break forth into singing.

You who mourn the trials and terrors of life amidst the powers – take comfort. The LORD has redeemed Jerusalem.

He has made a people from the midst of all the peoples. The ends of the earth see the salvation of God. The salvation that comes not by might or subtle diplomacy, But it comes to individual hearts in grace and truth.

Today, God bares his holy arm, and more than that, he bares himself in the flesh and dwells among us.

A great and mighty wonder, a full and holy cure. God with man. Not in warfare, but offering peace.

Peace with God eternally.

Peace with our fellow man, under his righteous reign.

And one day, the idols shall perish and satan’s lying cease.

But today, this peace is yours. God has made you his child. By giving us his son.