

## Teen Devotion

Year A – Proper 27

The Time In Between



**One truth shared:** For a world with millions of reasons to lose sleep, our gracious God wakes us up with gospel words of comfort and peace. There is no nightmare that can steal the rest you have in Christ.

*Awake, awake, Zion,  
clothe yourself with strength!  
Put on your garments of splendor,  
Jerusalem, the holy city.  
The uncircumcised and defiled  
will not enter you again.  
Shake off your dust;  
rise up, sit enthroned, Jerusalem.  
Free yourself from the chains on your neck,  
Daughter Zion, now a captive.  
For this is what the LORD says:  
“You were sold for nothing,  
and without money you will be redeemed.”*

**Isaiah 52:1-3**

### The Redeemed Find Rest

What would you consider to be your worst nightmare? Falling from a tall building? Missing an important event? Getting dumped by your significant other? Or being chased by a terrifying clown?

As awful as nightmares are, at least they're over when you wake up. But for the inhabitants of Judah, it felt like they were stuck in a nightmare that would never end.

Not long before Isaiah wrote these words, the Judah's northern neighbor—the kingdom of Israel—was wiped out by the Assyrian Empire. And now the strength of Assyria's army was knocking at the doors of Judah. If you could walk Jerusalem's streets, you wouldn't hear songs and shouts for joy; you'd hear songs of grief, shame, and sadness—sung not in the clothing of celebration, but rags and ashes.

Those songs of grief and sadness were sung until the day—nearly a century later—when the Babylonian Empire would invade Judah and level the city of Jerusalem. Those songs of grief and sadness were sung as the last of Judah's inhabitants were taken away and deported to Babylon. And for 70 years, sad songs were sung while they sat in exile. The people of Judah felt they were sleepwalking through one, long, grief-filled nightmare.

We know the feeling. The feeling like everything is falling apart—and there's nothing we can do. The feeling of having nowhere to go with our guilt and shame. The feeling of sleepwalking through the heart and headache. The feeling of tossing and turning over questions of identity, meaning, purpose, and our destiny.

And just like a loving dad who runs to his son or daughter when they're having a nightmare, our God graciously runs into our broken world to wake us up from our nightmares too.

For the people of Judah, God faithfully upheld his gracious promise to deliver them from captivity. **“Awake, awake, put on your strength, O Zion, put on your beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city.”** “Set aside your sitting in dust and ashes! I have come to deliver you! I have come to redeem you—to buy you back! Though you gave yourself away for free, I have come to freely redeem you to myself! Because you are precious and valuable to me!” But those aren’t just God’s words for Israel; *these are his words for you!*

The same God who moved an empire to release his people from captivity is the same God who would work an even greater redemption for the entire world—including you! We live in a world in need of liberation from sin and death. And without redemption from that bondage, we’d be exiled from God and his goodness forever. We needed a Savior, someone who would end the nightmare of sin and death and make all things good once again.

And that Savior has come. Because of his undying love for you, your God and Savior Jesus pursued you to reconcile you to himself. To set us free from the nightmare of sin, death, and hell, Jesus would take ownership of our sin, endure our hell, and die our death on a cross. That was the cost to redeem you: God’s holy, precious blood. Jesus paid it all—all out of love for you.

Such a redemption came at a cost. The price of such redemption was God’s holy, precious blood. And that’s the price your Savior Jesus paid on the cross—all out of love *for you*. Not a single nightmare can separate you from the love of God you have in Christ. Not sickness. Not suffering. Not death itself.

So, get some good sleep tonight—knowing *you* belong to Jesus.

**Prayer:** Heavenly Father, you know all that’s on my heart and mind. You know the nightmares that leave me restless and afraid. Remind me of your goodness, your steadfast mercy, and abiding faithfulness—and that no nightmare can possibly separate me from your redeeming love. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

## Foundation Teen Facilitators Guide

### Year A – Proper 27

#### The Time In Between

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### The Redeemed Find Rest

**Starting the Discussion:** *This first section is intended to be light and easy, to engage and get the conversation going. Have a little fun with these questions.*

Which of these scenarios do you feel is the most terrifying? Why?

- You’re meeting someone for a date, and you forgot to put on deodorant.
- You show up at school to discover you have a test—and you totally forgot about it.
- You’re the lead in the winter play; it’s opening night, and you don’t know your lines.
- You’re given the ball for the last-second game-winning point—and you drop the ball.

- You trip in the cafeteria while holding your lunch tray and spill food all over yourself.

**Connecting:** *This section serves as a bridge between the opening conversation and the body of the study/discussion. It should get the group thinking about the topic/text even before they've looked at it.*

In 2018, the Pew Research Center surveyed nearly a thousand American teenagers (ages 13 to 17) to quantify the hardships they experience. How might you fill in the following blanks?

- \_\_\_\_% of teenagers feel tense or nervous almost every day. (Answer: 29%)
- \_\_\_\_% of teenagers daily wish they had more good friends. (Answer: 29%)
- \_\_\_\_% of teenagers say they spend too little time with their parents. (Answer: 25%)
- \_\_\_\_% of teenagers say bullying was a major problem where they live. (Answer: 70%)
- \_\_\_\_% of teenagers say anxiety and depression are a major problem. (Answer: 70%)

**Digging In:** *Here we want to dig into some texts or the text for the day and see what Scripture says. The questions are meant to be open ended to give a beginning of a scriptural conversation. These are a guide for a spiritual and scriptural conversation.*

- For many reasons, high school can feel like one long grief-filled nightmare. The people of Judah could relate. They were sleepwalking through a grief-filled nightmare, too. Read 2 Chronicles 36:15-23. What happened? Why were the Jews exiled to Babylon? And for how long?
- From that passage, how did God redeem (buy back) Judah “without money”?
- How has our God and Savior redeemed our entire world—including you—“without money”?

**Conclusion:** *Here we want to wrap up the discussion, perhaps circling back to the “connecting question” above.*

Our Savior wakes us from our “nightmares” with gospel words of comfort and peace. Your “nightmares” neither own you nor define you. You belong to Jesus—and your worst nightmare will never take away what he has won for you. How does that change the way we see each day?