

Thursday, December 11

Isaiah's words express a longing for God's realm to be established on earth. There are countless moments in human history when hopes for better future were dim. Perhaps you have experienced a loss of hope yourself? The prophet reminds us that hope arrives in its own way and on its own timetable...and often in remarkable ways!

The African American gospel hymn, Soon and Very Soon, was written in 1976 by Andraé Couch. Couch (1943-2015) was raised in California by pastor-parents. They worked during the weekdays but pastored everyday not only for congregations but also as street ministers. As a young boy in a small rural church called the couple; sadly, there was no musician in the congregation. But, God graced Andraé with the gift of music; he began accompanying the church singing at age 11. He wrote his first Gospel hymn at age 14 and became part of a resurgence of Gospel music in college. His influence spanned both coasts – from Valley Community College, CA to Carnegie Hall. His gospel group, The Disciples, even appeared on the Johnny Carson Show!

As an African American youth in the 60ies and 70ies, Couch understood the power of gospel music. He also knew the history of the spirituals as signal songs, such as “Wade in the Water,” “Follow the Drinking Gourd,” and “Steal Away,” provided the necessary clues for safe passage along the Underground Railroad. Think of the scriptural, personal, and church history folded into “Soon and Very Soon” page 384 in Glory to God. I've added the bridge (a musical section between verses) here to intensify Andraé Couch's hope for a new heavenly life with God.

1 Soon and very soon we are goin' to see the King,
Hallelujah, Hallelujah, we are goin' to see the King!
2 No more cryin' 3. No more dyin' 4. Repeat 1.

Bridge: Should there be any rivers we must cross
 Should there be any mountains we must climb
God will supply all the strength that we need Give us grace till we reach the other side
We have come from ev'ry nation God knows each of us by name
Jesus took His blood and washed my sins and He washed them all away
Yes there are some of us who have laid down our lives
But we all shall live again on the other side.

Consider the power of this vision for life on this day, in this Advent season as you listen to:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lmGiu9Jfbls> Featuring Andraé Couch

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a7rDXWCTn1Y> Unchained Gospel Choir, Germany

Prayer: God of Wisdom and Power we look to you to right this world, to bring justice, to comfort the suffering. As we await the celebration of Jesus' birth, remind us anew of your power present to us in him. Amen.