

How Then Shall We Live? – Is 54:1-10

Is 54:1-10; This is the 40th message in our study of Isaiah, and super appropriate on the heels of Is 53; In fact, this chapter answers the question – “What now?” Since God has provided a servant to save us a la ch53, and we put our faith and trust in him like 55 of you did last weekend – what difference does it make? How then shall we live? That’s the question; And Isaiah answers it here in ch54 IOW Is 54 should be the result of embracing Is 53; And the 1st part is this . . .

Drop your inhibitions and bust out with joy (v1)

V1 – “*Sing, O barren one, who did not bear; break forth into singing and cry aloud, you who have not been in labor! For the children of the desolate one will be more than the children of her who is married,*” says the LORD.

It’s a metaphor that strikes at the heart of every couple who has ever struggled to get pregnant; And when they finally do, what’s the result? Joy! Unfettered, unspeakable joy; It just happens; B/c there’s suddenly great relief, and great hope

And God’s saying that’s exactly how we should respond in being saved; When we go from barrenness to blessing; From burdens to relief It ought to result in an outburst of *singing* and crying aloud as he says Just like the lame beggar in Acts 3 who went walking and leaping and praising God He was busting out; *Sing, O barren one*

➤ And then he says this; *For the children of the desolate one will be more than the children of her who is married*; It’s another reason to bust out with joy . . . But it’s a bit obscure until you understand that *the desolate one* refers to Sarah – Abraham’s wife; Remember her, all the way back in Gen 16? She was the one who was barren, and desolate, and couldn’t have kids

And yet she’s exactly the one God used; Telling Abraham that it was through a son that she would bear, that he would fulfill his promise to make of him a great nation, Israel With their offspring numbering like the stars of the sky (Gen 15) Through a desolate woman, God would fulfill his promise to make a great nation

➤ But b/c of their disobedience, and God’s design – we find in **Rom 9** that the nation he promised, consists of more than just *physical* offspring [6b] *For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, [7] and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring, but “Through Isaac [Sarah’s child, the first child of promise] shall your offspring be named.” [8] This means that it is not the children of the flesh [i.e. the children of her who is married] who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring.*

What promise? That God would extend his righteousness to those of *any* ethnicity, Jew or Gentile, who put their faith and trust in Jesus, God’s servant They are the ones counted as Abraham’s offspring; And therefore *they* are the children of the *desolate one*; The ones who comprise the great nation God promised Which is why he said in Is 54, that *the children of the desolate one* would outnumber *the children of her who is married*, the children of the flesh B/c they consist of people from *every* tribe, tongue, and nation*****

So Is 54:1 is a reaffirmation of God’s promise to Abraham 1400 years earlier And therefore cause for great joy among those who are a *part* of that promise, those who are saved; Including us By virtue of our faith in Jesus, we *are* the children of the desolate one; And recipients of God’s blessing after living barren and hopeless lives ourselves All of which ought to so fill our hearts to overflowing, that we can’t *help* but bust out

➤ When I was little, we used to sing a song in Sunday School called – If You’re Happy And You Know It; And I’m pretty sure some of you know it If you’re happy and you know it, clap your hands If you’re happy and you know it clap your hands If you’re happy and you know it, *then your life will surely show it* If you’re happy and you know it clap your hands

And then it was – If you’re happy and you know it, stomp your feet And then *amen*; And then it got really crazy with all 3 If you’re happy and you know it do all 3 – clap-clap, stomp-stomp, amen

And after singing that all the way through and burning some energy, we would change just *one* of the words, and sing it all over again And though I didn’t fully get it then, I do now; Especially in light of *this* chapter We sang – If you’re *saved* and you know it clap your hands If you’re *saved* and you know it stomp your feet If you’re *saved* and you know it, then your life will surely show it If you’re *saved* and you know it do all three – clap-clap, stomp-stomp, “amen”!

And that’s the *exactly* the idea of v1; We ought to be busting out with joy, and breaking forth in happiness b/c of our salvation

➤ The problem is, we don’t appreciate the depths of hell from which we’ve been saved, or the heights of heaven to which we’re destined; And little appreciation equals little joy Or, maybe you’re just too embarrassed; Caring more about what *others* think than what God thinks; More about appearances than praise Or maybe you’re just a fuddy-duh – bound by your inhibitions and over-inflated sense of decorum Whatever the case, it’s time to stop draining the joy pool, and start contributing to it

➤ B/c when you get right down to it, it’s pride; All pride And I love how one pastor put it (Ray Ortlund, Jr); He said every church should put a sign on its front door that says . . . “**[Depressed sinners and broken saints welcome; But] all face-saving moralists, take warning! Within these doors your chilly pride is in danger of melting into exuberant joy. Enter at your own risk.**” I love that; And I want that to be *our* church

➤ Will that look the same in every person? No***** But it certainly ought to look different for *some* of you; Like in how you *worship* Some of you are so unresponsive and stoic in our time together, I wonder if your heart’s been touched at all; I wonder if you’re really saved B/c a joyless Christian is a contradiction of terms

And the same is true in how you *talk*; We all don't have bubbly personalities, but if you rarely *mention* the Lord in the course of your life, something's wrong
Granted, some people use more words than others, but *everybody* ought to bust out with *some*; Having found the pearl of greatest price, how can you do otherwise?

And then there's how you *look* – from the countenance of your face, to the hygiene you keep; If you look as if nothing extraordinary has happened in your life . . .
Something needs to change; B/c your *outward* appearance ought to reflect your inward *joy*, and the miracle that caused it

If you've been saved; If you've received God's sin-bearing servant as Lord of your life
If you've made the great exchange of *your* sin for *his* righteousness . . .
If you're a child of God by virtue of *your* faith and *his* promise to bless the nations through a desolate woman . . .
The time has come to drop your inhibitions and bust out with joy
That's the 1st part of living in light of Is 53

➤ The 2nd comes from v2-3 – [2] “*Enlarge the place of your tent, and let the curtains of your habitations be stretched out; do not hold back; lengthen your cords and strengthen your stakes. [3] For you will spread abroad to the right and to the left, and your offspring will possess the nations and will people the desolate cities.* IOW . . .

Step out in faith and make room for others (v2-3)

That's the second way to live, upon receiving Jesus and his righteousness – make room for others

Which must have caused the Israelites in Isaiah's day to scratch their heads
Think about it; Their country and people had already been decimated by war and siege;
More was on the way; The Babylonian Captivity was to follow . . .
And after all that they were to return to the land and not only make more room for *others*, but spread out to other *nations*? And *possess* them?
And populate desolate *cities*; With *children* of the desolate one?
Are you kidding me? I'm pretty sure they couldn't imagine it

➤ But we can; B/c the fulfillment is found in the *church*; Starting at Pentecost in Acts 2
Where people from all over believed in Jesus and received the Holy Spirit
In which case the *tent* of God's people, the community of believers – was *enlarged* and *strengthened*
And the nations were possessed; As in the nations became a part of God's people
And they spread *out* all over by preaching and living in places that up to that point *had* no Christian witness; They were *desolate*

All of which is the very thing God *said* would happen in Is 54; V3
You will spread abroad to the right and to the left [indeed, to the end of the earth in our day], *and your offspring will possess the nations and will people the desolate cities*
And, it's the very thing he *told* them to do – *Enlarge the place of your tent, and let the curtains of your habitations be stretched out*
It's a command; And here's the deal – it still stands today

As children of promise, followers of Jesus Christ, we're part of the audience here

And need to make room for others; For those who put their faith and trust in God, just like we have

- We need to make room first of all, **in our . . . hearts** – combatting the “us and no more” mindset; The frozen-chosen mentality
- 2nd we need to make room in our **lives** – fighting the desire to only interact with those we already know
- 3rd we need to make room in our **homes** – for those who need a place to live, or a family to love them
- 4th we need to make room in our **church** – welcoming those who come behind us with open arms, wide smiles, and increased capacity
- And 5th we need to make room in the **kingdom**, the kingdom of God – for people who are vastly different than us from all over the world; That's a tall order; On *all* fronts
- And requires *faith*; Especially so in light of the phrase in v2 – *do not hold back* (**Summ**)
You may not *think* more people are coming God says; You may not *think* more people will be saved; You may not think the church will move forward
But don't hold back; Step out in faith and make room*****

It's one of the reasons we built the North end; And still need to renovate the South end
And one of the reasons we constantly work to enlarge the capacity of our ministries
And keep an empty chair in Small Groups; And take a minute in our service to welcome those around us; And park 2 blocks away
And share the Good News of Jesus with boldness; And reach *outside* of our walls
And support others who are doing the *same*

It's all part of stepping out in faith, not holding back, and making room for others – in our hearts, our lives, our homes, our church, and the kingdom; Get a bigger tent

And then 3rd . . .

Stop with the worry and rest in his grace (v4-10)

If you're going to live the way God *intends*, in light of the salvation you've *received* – stop with the worry and rest in his grace

[4] “*Fear not* [he says; worry not, fret not], *for you will not be ashamed; be not confounded* [don't be confused; make no mistake], *for you will not be disgraced* [shamed, humiliated]; *for you will forget the shame of your youth*
Originally speaking to the Israelites of Isaiah's day, he's probably referring to their rebellion and Egyptian slavery 1000 years earlier, when they were a young nation
Saying they would forget that; They'd put it behind them

You will forget the shame of your youth, and the reproach of your widowhood – the blame/shame of your exile in Babylon; That reproach, *you will remember no more*.
IOW the heartache of your soul will be purged from your life
Just as true now, as it was then; It's for us

[5] *For your Maker is your husband, the LORD of hosts is his name*
When God made a covenant with the nation of Israel at Mt Sinai, the Mosaic Covenant or Old Covenant as it's called in the Bible – he essentially became their *husband*
Their loving provider, protector, and Savior

Which ought to sound familiar, b/c it's the very role that *Jesus* now fills, as *our* husband – the bridegroom of the church

The one who lovingly provides for, and protects, and redeems *us*

In which case there's no need to worry about the consequences of the past, b/c the One who *made* you, *loves* you

And, he commands the armies of heaven – *the LORD of hosts is his name* [God Almighty]; *And the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer, the God of the whole earth he is called*. Fear not he's saying, b/c you're in good hands; *Powerful* hands

Not only that, but – *the LORD has called you* [v6] *like a wife deserted and grieved in spirit, like a wife of youth when she is cast off, says your God*.

That's what the Israelites were like apart from God – a wife that's been abandoned

And there's no sweeter relief nor any greater joy for a woman, than to be pursued and loved after being discarded and hated

Worry no more God is saying, b/c when you embrace the One *I* send, I'll embrace you

And then he explains himself a bit; [7] *For a brief moment I deserted you* [referring to their captivity], *but with great compassion I will gather you*. [8] *In overflowing anger for a moment I hid my face from you, but with everlasting love I will have compassion on you,*” says the LORD, your Redeemer.

➤ If you're going to live for the One who saved you; Really live for him like he wants – you gotta stop with the worry; **The worry that . . .**

1. You'll look bad (4a) – that things aren't going to work out, and in the end you'll you'll bad for following him; You won't
[4] *Fear not, for you will not be ashamed; be not confounded* [don't be troubled], *for you will not be disgraced*; God's not going to fail you
Refine you, yes; Stretch you, yes; Test you, yes; Strengthen you, yes
But not let you down

Second, stop with the worry that . . .

2. Your past is your future (4b) – it's not; One of the beautiful things about a life in Christ, is that history doesn't necessarily repeat itself; It doesn't
Not the *bad* stuff; Not the *sin*; Not the consequences; Not the hurts, habits, or hang-ups
Just b/c you made a mess of things yesterday, doesn't mean you're destined to do so today; You're a *new* creation; A *new* life; Leaving the shame of your youth *behind*
Not b/c you just decided to, as if you could, but b/c God Almighty wiped your hard-drive and gave you a Mac
Your past is not your future; You can stop with the worry

And third, having embraced Jesus as Lord and Savior – stop with the worry that . . .

3. God might leave you (8b) – *with everlasting love I will have compassion on you* he says; Which means he's not going anywhere
Made even more sure by the NT truth that the HS dwells within us, and will never leave us or forsake us (**Summary**)
If you're going to live for the One who saved you, stop with the worry

➤ And rest in his grace; **The grace of his . . . Power**; The grace of his *Call*; The grace of his *Compassion*; The grace of his *Love*; And the grace of his *Promise*; It's all there

Especially his **promise**; V9-10

[9] *“This is like the days of Noah to me: as I swore that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth, so I have sworn that I will not be angry with you* [it's a promise], *and will not rebuke you* [will not disapprove of you].

[10] *For the mountains may depart and the hills be removed, but my steadfast love shall not depart from you* [another promise], *and my covenant of peace* [his promise of being at peace with us, and granting us peace] *shall not be removed,*” says the LORD, who has compassion on you. (**Summary**)

➤ That promise became very real for us this week, as the guy who's staying with us, a baseball player with the River Bandits . . .
Received a call from his sister in Florida, telling him that the police had just come to her door with news that their parents had just been involved in a bad motorcycle accident
And told he she needed to get to the hospital right away
And as soon as Brett heard it, he just broke down; And couldn't talk

So he handed the phone to me, and though I was only able to make out every 5th word or so, b/c she was so hysterical . . .

It was obvious that she was desperate need of *peace*

So I just said, “Brittany, I want to pray for you; You keep your eyes open, and I'll pray”
So I did, asking God to give her peace in the midst of such uncertainty and worry
And there was an immediate change in her voice and control

And after some more tense phone calls and uncertain minutes during which we prayed and reminded *ourselves* of God's promise of peace
We finally found out that they were alive; Not in the greatest of shape, but alive
And his sister said the next day, that apart from the prayer and the peace it brought, she's pretty sure she couldn't have made it to the hospital (**Summary**)

➤ The grace of God's promise to *be* at peace, *grant* us peace, and keep us in *perfect* peace – is real; And you can rest in it; Even rejoice in it
That's how we should live; Bust out, get a bigger tent, and rest in his grace

Prayer – Lord, help us to drop our inhibitions; And step out in faith; And stop the worry;
We want to bust out, we want to rest, and we want to make room for more
So receive our tithes now to that end; It's all b/c of Jesus