

Thank God (Part 2) – Is 56:1-8

Is 56; (**Review**) This is Part 2 of a message I started last week, titled *Thank God*

And in our first pass, we found that – **When it comes to God’s people . . .**

Your race doesn’t matter (v3a,6-7); Your past doesn’t matter (v3b-5)

Your class doesn’t matter (v8)

Red, brown, yellow, black, or white; Jew *or* Gentile – God shows no partiality

Your race doesn’t matter in the household of God

And neither does your past – including where you’ve been or what you’ve done

You may not *think* God can redeem your past and make beauty out of ashes – but he *does*; And will; It doesn’t matter

And neither does your class; As in your socio-economic status – poor *or* rich; Or your education – or lack thereof; Or your talent

When it comes to the people of God – your class doesn’t matter

- Which is a big change in God’s design; But in the progressive revelation of God’s Word, it’s something the NT makes even *more* explicit
Like in Eph 2:19 where it says – *You* [speaking to believers, followers of Christ] *are no longer strangers and aliens* [foreigners as God says it in Isaiah], *but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God*
The same house as Isaiah 56; And according to 1 Tim 3:15, the church; The household of God is the church
It’s a big change; And thank God for it, b/c we’re the beneficiaries (**Summary**)

- Which brings us to Part 2 and the things that *do* matter for God’s people*****
Starting with your decision (**What matters is . . .**)

Your decision – to join yourself to the Lord (v3a,6a)

Not that your decision saves you, but in God’s design, he requires it to make the connection; He *requires* us to make a decision about him

That’s why he says over and over in the Bible – “Come to me”; It’s an invitation and plea to establish a relationship with him; To follow him; To throw in with him

That’s what it means to join yourself to the Lord as it says in v3 and 6

[3] *Let not the foreigner who has joined himself to the LORD say, “The LORD will surely separate me from his people”*; B/c he won’t
“And the foreigners [v6] who join themselves to the LORD . . . [7] these I will bring to my holy mountain; In which case, your decision matters
Your decision to join yourself to the Lord

- And if you haven’t done that, do it now
Confess with your mouth that Jesus is *Lord*, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead (Rom 10:9-10)
Throw down your nets, pick up your cross, and follow him; As in dispense with *your* plan, get on his plan, and join yourself to him; Make the decision
That’s what matters; And you can do it right now as I speak
“God, I’m in; I believe; I repent – of my sin and sinfulness; And I receive – I receive you as Lord of my life”; Make the decision; It matters

And so does your choice

Your choice – to do what’s right (v1a,2b,4b)

Having made the decision to join yourself to the Lord, your choice to do what’s right in life, *also* matters

Again, this doesn’t *save* you, or *make* you a part of God’s people; But once you are, it matters what you do; The choices you make matter

Especially your choices to *keep justice* as he says in v1; That is, to abide by God’s code of fair and moral treatment *yourself*, extend it to *others*, and demand it for all
It matters in God’s eyes

As does your choice to *do righteousness*; *Thus says the LORD: “Keep justice, and do righteousness*; Do what’s right

Now, don’t miss the fact that it’s an *action* thing; Don’t just *be* righteous, but *do* it
Don’t just *keep* your hand from doing evil like it says in v2, but use it to do what’s good, and best, and right; *Do* righteousness; It’s a command

- Which means passive living doesn’t cut it in God’s eyes
You can’t just sit back and *abstain* from sin, while failing to lift a finger to *snuff* it
That doesn’t cut it; God wants us to be *proactive*
Actually *doing* something about the evil and injustice in the world; Instead of pontificating about it from the throne of your easy chair

That could mean lobbying for the unborn; Or doing something about sex trafficking; Or loving the unlovable; Or getting involved in the lives of the least of these
Or even speaking the *truth* about something, when it would be far easier to remain silent and go along with the crowd
Or supporting someone who’s being maligned, but isn’t there to defend themselves
Whatever the case, keeping justice and doing righteousness is a choice to *act*, not withdraw; There’s nothing passive about it

And the good part, is that it results in blessing; Like it says in v4

To the eunuchs [people with a past] *who . . . choose the things that please me* [like righteousness and justice] . . . *I will give . . . an everlasting name*; That’s a blessing
But it starts w/ a choice; A choice to do what’s right, over and over again; It matters

And 3rd, so does your . . .

Your obedience – to honor the Lord and live his way (v2b,4a,6b)

Make the decision, do what’s right, and obey

That’s the thrust of God’s repeated reference here, to “keep the Sabbath”

The *Sabbath*, referring to a day of rest, that represented their obedience in *all* of life
It’s as if God is saying – “Show me your obedience in *this* area, and I’ll show you your obedience in *all* areas”

B/c it was a major indicator under the Old Covenant, of their buy in – their commitment to the *Lord*, and his ways

So in v2, when he says – *Blessed is the man . . . who keeps the Sabbath, not profaning it*, not failing to respect it and observe it . . .

He’s saying – blessed is the one who honors me and lives my way in *general*
Keeping the Sabbath was representative of their obedience in all areas of life

And again, in v4 – *To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths . . . I will give an everlasting name*; A blessing; Why? Why would he say such a thing?

B/c obedience always brings blessing, and obedience in keeping the Sabbath said a whole lot about their heart

And then in v6b he says – *everyone who keeps the Sabbath and does not profane it . . . I will bring to my holy mountain*

Everyone who obeys me and lives my way, stands to be blessed

It matters; Obedience matters

And keeping the Sabbath, both then *and* now, is a pretty good indicator of it; A pretty good gauge of whether you're honoring the Lord and living his way in general

Especially when you consider all that it conveys, and all that it is

➤ So I want to give you 12 *aspects* of the Sabbath in hopes of fueling your fire to observe it; So first of all . . .

The Sabbath is . . .

1. A day of rest and refreshment– physically, emotionally, and spiritually (Mk 2:27-28)
That's probably the most fundamental aspect

2. A day set apart for the Lord

There's a news flash – your day off isn't about you; Ex 31:15 says it – it's a day *holy* to the Lord; A day to focus on *him*

3. A day of sacred assembly and worship

God said in **Lev 23:3** – *Six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest* [serious rest, not to be taken lightly], *a holy convocation*.

A day of formal assembly, or meeting; What we refer to as *church* – this

4. A sign of devotion to the Lord – to show that you're all in

And how good is that? Instead of having to do *more* to honor the Lord and show our devotion, we have to do *less*

But that *doesn't* mean we have to do *nothing* on our Sabbath; It simply means we need to cease from the work that occupies us the *other* 6 days of the week

Which is what the word Sabbath means anyway – to cease or desist

So digging a ditch on Sunday isn't necessarily wrong, as long as you don't dig ditches for a living the rest of the week

5. A sign identifying us as God's people

B/c it was unparalleled in the Ancient Near East; Nobody else did something like this

And nobody else observes it in our day for the same reasons; It's just a day off for most

6. A means of remembering God's purifying work in us

Like he says in **Ex 31:13** – *Above all you shall keep my Sabbaths, for this is a sign between me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I, the LORD, sanctify you*. Purify you; The Sabbath is a means or a sign, to remember that

7. A means of remembering God's work of creation

Ex 31:17 says – *It [the Sabbath] is a sign forever between me and the people of Israel that in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed*. It's a sign to remember God's work of creation

8. A means of honoring God's example

That he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done (Gen 2:2)

9. A weekly pattern established at creation

From the beginning of time, there's been a Sabbath, every 7 days; Rain or shine

10. A day to remember our release from bondage

Moses said in **Dt 5:15** – *You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day*.

One of the reasons the Israelites of old were to observe the Sabbath, was to remember the bondage from which they were released*****

And given the *parallels* in Scripture between the bondage of Egypt and the bondage of sin – the same would be true in a spiritual sense

It's a day to remember our release from bondage

11. A day observed by Jesus himself

There's an aspect you can't overlook; **Lk 4:16** says . . .

As was his custom [his regular practice], *he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day*
IOW he gathered w/ other believers in a formal way, for worship/teaching, once a week
Which totally debunks the thought that you can worship from home by watching a service on the internet; Jesus went to church

12. An anticipation of our heavenly rest to come

Heb 4:9 says that – *there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God*; A time in the future when we will enjoy the *ultimate* rest from our labor (**Summary**)

12 aspects; And with so much wrapped up in it, no wonder our obedience in keeping it, matters; No wonder it's an indicator of our heart

I hope that fuels your fire to observe it*****

➤ That said, does that mean *Sunday* has to be your day? Or for that matter, Saturday, like it was under the *Old* Covenant? No; On both fronts

B/c after Jesus rose again, the Sabbath day for Christians changed from Saturday to Sunday, to coincide with the resurrection of Jesus, and all it represents

So no, there's nothing sacred about Saturday; And the same is true about Sunday

We don't have to observe a Sabbath on *Sunday*

B/c Paul says in **Col 2:16-17** . . .

Therefore [as in, since Christ has canceled our record of debt that stood against us] *let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath* [all corporate gatherings on particular days].
[17] *These are a shadow of the things to come* [a faint indicator], *but the substance belongs to Christ*.

The purpose is found in Christ; The focus, is Christ

IOW what matters is not the *day*, but the *essence* of it; The substance of it; What it consists of; What it stands for

And **Rom 14:5** says – *One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind.*
So no, we don't have to observe a Sabbath on Saturday or Sunday; B/c the purpose is to honor Christ, and that can be done on *any* day*****

- But we *do* need to keep a Sabbath on *some* day; We *do* need to set aside *1 day every week* – where we *rest*, and gather with other believer for the purpose of worship That, honors the OT principle and heart of God *behind* the Law . . .
It honors the pattern of God in *creation*; It honors the example of Jesus in *his* day . . .
It stokes the fire of our anticipation for a *heavenly* Sabbath someday . . .
And it obeys the commandment in **Heb 10:24-25**
Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, [25] not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near. The day of Christ's return
- So keeping the Sabbath is not an option; The problem is, far too many treat it as such; Maybe even you; "If I make it, great; If I miss, I miss; No biggie"
And I'm telling you, that's not the route to a life of blessing; And I'm not talking about financial blessing; I'm talking about peace; And joy; And love
And the *best* of what God has for you; *Blessed is the man . . . who keeps the Sabbath*
Who's *obedient* to the Lord in this respect; It matters; And goes a long way toward honoring the Lord and living his way in *all* of life

And then last, what matters is . . .

Your devotion – to love the Lord and serve him faithfully (4,6)

Which is basically what v4 and 6 describe

Even though the deck is stacked against them, they *choose the things that please me*
[God says in v4] *and hold fast my covenant*
And *join themselves to the LORD* [v6] *to minister to him, to love the name of the LORD, and to be his servants*

All of which, is devotion

From *ministering* to the Lord – as in blessing him and fulfilling *his* desires . . .
To loving his *name* – as in cherishing the totality of who he is . . .
To serving him *faithfully*; And holding fast to your commitment
That's devotion; And it matters to God

- You see, being a part of God's people isn't just a decision to join yourself to him, and then continue on with your life as if nothing's changed
It's not just about being a good person, or making good choices in your life, and being good for *goodness* sake
And it's certainly not about *grudging* obedience, where you do what he wants but don't really want to; That's not it

Being a part of God's people entails a devotion to him, even when you don't feel like it
And a commitment to love him and serve him faithfully, *all* the time

- It's a lot like marriage
The best of marriage isn't found in *occasional* devotion; Where you love your wife or your husband only when you feel like

Or serve them only when you're in the mood; Or have the energy
No, the best of marriage is found when you love and serve your spouse no matter what
When your devotion *supersedes* your feelings

And the same is true in your relationship with the Lord

The best of life, both now and forever, is found when you love the Lord your God with *all* your heart, soul, mind, and strength – and serve him faithfully no matter what
B/c that's what matters; That's the devotion God's looking for

- Whether it's serving in CM every single week; Or getting to church; Or living God's way every single day; Or doing righteousness (**Summary**)
It's your decision; And your choice; And your responsibility
And it matters

Prayer – Lord, encourage and bless those who are living out these truths in their lives
And convince those who aren't, that they matter; Mature our church in this respect
Increase our devotion and obedience; And sanctify our choices more and more
We give now, with all that in mind