

## Isaiah 46 – October 1

The point of today's devotion is that false gods (idols) will certainly fail their worshippers when most needed. Just the opposite is true when it comes to our God. He is the One who had been with Israel from birth (v.3) and will be ever present and faithful throughout their lives (v. 3-4). Folks, I hope that as you read chapter 46 today, you will be comforted by the faithfulness and constancy of God. There is no other like Him and the good news is that we don't need another (v.9). The fact that He is always the same and means so many things including – we always know where we stand, what He expects, and what we can expect from Him.

What had happened as we get into this chapter is that Persia had defeated Babylon (in the previous chapter) and was now carrying the spoils of war away. Interestingly enough what we find them carrying off in verse 1 are the false gods of Babylon. Bel (Baal) and Nebo were their prominent gods and here we see them strapped down on the backs of oxen or camels. Do you get the picture? Their gods, nothing more than man made statues strapped down like the mere fabrications that they were. They could not save themselves how in the world could they save anyone else? It is actually rather ludicrous, isn't it? Now, we must contrast that with who and what our God is.

Our God is the One and Only who can indeed carry us from birth to death and beyond. He declares in verse 4 that He has already done it and will continue to. Our God knows the end from the beginning (v.10). In other words, He is sovereign and He is all knowing (omniscient). It is so encouraging to be reminded in verse 10 that He will establish His purpose and accomplish all that He desires. Notice in verse 11 that He has the power to direct the birds of the air and mankind regardless of where they are on the planet. He is not operating haphazardly, but with a definite plan (v.11). He is patient and longsuffering which causes some people to doubt these teachings. The Word tells us today that He is absolutely going to execute His plan of salvation.

What does this mean for us today? Simply put, it means that we should continue to make our decisions in light of these certainties and truths. I know that it takes faith to take Him at His Word but dear friends, He has proven Himself trustworthy. Please don't be fooled into thinking that the world has the answers you are looking for or that it can provide security for you and yours. The Israelites thought they could find security, safety, and provision through false gods that this world offered. They were wrong. If you pursue what only God can provide somewhere other than God Himself then you can rest assured that someday the false gods that you worship (money, pleasure, relationships, entertainment) will be carried away and you will be left empty, abandoned, and hopeless once again. Jesus is the answer and He is the only way. Come to Him and find rest for your souls, purpose for your life, and peace for your souls.

## Isaiah 47 – October 2

I cannot help but think today of the powers of this world. Whether they be foreign nations, powerful entities in our own nation, or ridiculously wealthy people who ignore God they will someday be brought down to the dust (v.1) like Babylon. It is so easy to feel safe and secure in our position of plenty that we forget how vulnerable we are and how fragile is our life and prosperity. The Babylonians had surely forgotten from whence they came.

God compares their fallen position, at the hands of the Persians, to a rich virgin girl who has lost everything and is now being forced to live like a common slave girl. Notice what Isaiah says in verse 10, “You felt secure in your wickedness and says, ‘No one sees me.’ Your wisdom and your knowledge they have deluded you; For you have said in your heart, ‘I am and there is no one besides me.’” That sounds a lot like what Satan said in Isaiah 14. The pride and arrogance drips from these verses and is the root of all sin.

I can't help but take a moment to point out the reality of the sovereignty of God in this chapter too. Many people today don't like to think of God as orchestrating harm and punishment on a people, community, or nation. Once again, we find that He does do such things – we call it judgment. If you look at verse 6, you will find Isaiah telling us that God had become angry with His people due to their blatant sin and rebellion against Him. He writes that it was God who “gave Israel into the hands of Babylon.” Do you see that? God actually raised up Babylon, removed the umbrella of protection from Israel, and delivered His people into the hands of a pagan nation – for judgment! He did it then and He will do it today. Notice what happened though.

Babylon went too far in their merciless brutality against Israel. It says that the Babylonians were cruel to the elderly and swelled to the point of thinking of themselves as divine (6-8). Just like God controlled what happened to Israel, He controlled what happened to Babylon. They thought of themselves as invincible and totally independent while in reality they were as fragile and dependent upon God's will as anyone. God tells them they will fall and they did.

Friend, are you living today thinking that all you have you earned; maybe even deserve? Are you forgetting that in the blink of an eye God can take away everything? Do you still remember how dependent you are on Him for life, breath, provision, and protection in this world? Please do yourself a favor today and spend some time in prayer thanking God for who He is and what He has done and continues to do in your life. Give Him credit for any successes and accomplishments you have achieved and enjoyed. Thank God for the sharp mind that you have, the physical abilities, and the special talents that He has blessed you with. Don't be like Babylon who thought they were all of that and could never fall. Praise God today for the blessings and the grace for the challenges.

### Isaiah 48 – October 3

This chapter shows us the judgment that is due Israel, or Judah more specifically (the southern kingdom), and the mercy that God promises His people upon their repentance in spite of their sin. The point that I'm making is that within these 22 verses, we find the reality of judgment but also the grace, mercy, and love of our great God. One of the gravest sins that Judah committed was that of hypocrisy. In verse one it says, "Who (Judah) swear by the name of the Lord and invoke the God of Israel, *but not in truth nor in righteousness.*" Friends do you see that people can sound "churchy" and religious but have no genuine relationship with the Lord? Please be sure that you are in the faith.

They prove themselves to be hypocrites in spite of all that God says He revealed to them through the ages (vv.3-5). Yet, He knew how they would act (v. 5b, 7b). God knew that they were obstinate, stiff-necked, and hard headed (v. 5,8). Now, don't miss the truth revealed in verse 9 and following. There it says, "For the sake of my Name I delay My wrath, and for My praise I restrain it for you, in order not to cut you off." Then in verse 11, "For My own sake, for My own sake, I will act; for how can My name be profaned? And My glory I will not give to another." Beloved I am here reminded that if we don't praise the Lord Jesus the rocks will (Luke 19:40). He is going to have His praise and His glory and will act to protect both.

Never forget that sometimes the Lord spares us and covers, even hides, our sin for His name sake. Sometimes He chooses not to allow His name to be profaned because of the sins of His people. Yet, He swears that He has chosen His people and will not give His glory to another. There is hope, mercy, grace, forgiveness in the Lord. When God chose Israel as His people, it was not due to any merit in themselves. The same is true of any of us that the Lord has chosen to be His own today. If you are born again, it isn't because you deserved it or earned it. Your salvation is solely the gracious work of God in your life. He has saved us all so that we bring praise and glory to His name.

As verse 12 begins, God is making a case for why Israel should listen to Him. It appears that it is Jesus who is talking beginning in this verse and certainly in verse 16. Friends, God is the One who teaches us, chastises us, and leads us for His glory and our good (v.17). There is everything to gain by obeying Him. He says in verse 18, "If only you had paid attention...." Notice the missed blessings due to sin and rebellion. He continues by saying their well-being would have been like a river, righteousness like the waves of the sea, their descendants like the sand and offspring like grain. All of these things would have been characteristic of the people of Israel. They all point to blessing, prosperity, and favor.

I cannot help but think as this chapter ends of the provision of Jesus Christ. In our lives, He is the Rock that has been given which provides refreshment and sustenance. He is our drink in dry places (desert). He is our provision in hard places (the rocks). He is the source of our peace and those who don't know Him are destined for disappointment. Let Him pick you back up today.

## Isaiah 49 – October 4

Yesterday we looked at God's judgment against Israel but more importantly, His plan to restore them by leading them to repentance. He promised to His chosen people that He would not let them go but would make a way to bring them back into a right relationship with Him. In this chapter, we see redemption for another group of people. This time it is the Gentiles. In verse one the reference to the "islands" and "people from afar" is a reference to gentiles. This is an amazing moment really when you consider this was God, revealing a little more of His plan, to reach the ends of the earth. The message that they (we) were to listen to was one of a coming Redeemer. It is the second Servant-song of the book of Isaiah and serves as a continuation, from chapter 42, of the Lord Jesus introducing Himself to them. Let's look for what we can find about Jesus – the Suffering Servant, Our Redeemer, and our Savior.

The position that Jesus took on as our Redeemer was planned by God and He was set apart for it from His mother's womb (v.1). This was of course made known in Matthew 1:21 as an angel made the declaration. In verse 2 He is given the equipment that He will need for the task before Him. These elements, the sword and arrows, would be used to defeat the devil and deliver His people. I can't help but think of Hebrews 4:12 that says, "The WORD is sharper than a two-edged sword" and of course the book of Revelation that speaks of Jesus coming back with these weapons in His arsenal (Rev. 1:14ff). God has hidden Him (Gal. 4:4,5) until the fullness of time and will show His glory through Christ (v.3).

Folks, there is so much revealed to us in this chapter about the coming Messiah that we could focus on but I want to spend the rest of this devotion on is the reality that Jesus was indeed a suffering servant. Even though the Word of God reveals that God's plan was that Jesus would suffer and die, the people simply could not wrap their minds around such a plan. How could their King suffer and die at the hands of evil people? Jesus, and God's plan of redemption, became a great stumbling block to the Jews. I want you to see in verse 4 that God gives us a glimpse of that truth too. It says that it appeared all that Jesus did was done in vain. It appeared that what He did was for nothing. YET, Jesus states that He knew God would justify Him and ultimately reward Him. God made Him the light to the nations and extended salvation to the ends of the earth (v.7).

How many times in your life have you felt that things weren't working out? I know you, like me, have wondered and even questioned God's plan. This chapter reminds me that I need not do that. It has always been this way. As we will see in a few days in Isaiah 55, "God's ways are not ours." We must trust Him the way Jesus did. It may first appear that things aren't as they should be but I want to remind you today that you can always trust the character of God. We will see over the next few days that Jesus was indeed our Savior but He was undoubtedly a man of sorrows acquainted with grief and suffering. God had a plan that included reaching even us with the Gospel. He gave His own Son to save us so surely He will provide and protect us now (Rom. 8:32).

## Isaiah 50 – October 5

The southern kingdom of Judah had sinned egregiously. They had brought on the discipline of the Lord God because of their obstinacy and rebellion. To this point we have read about the judgment of God as well as His mercy. In case any in that day would have been thinking that God had completely given up on them, we get this chapter. In verse 1, the point that Isaiah is making is that even though they were being punished God had not rejected them as there was no record of a certificate of divorce. This means He had not legally let them go nor would He as He is a covenant keeping God and would never break the Davidic covenant. The take away for us is that even in times of discipline, God still loves His children and will not ultimately abandon them.

The other rhetorical question in verse 1 deals with the possibility that God had sold His people off to a creditor. The obvious answer again is of course not. First of all, God owes no one anything and secondly, as mentioned above, He will never do such a thing. The point of the passage is that God has not forgotten, forsaken, nor sold them. That is good news for us today. As He was then, He is now and will always be. This does not negate the reality of their punishment. The real problem in the relationship between God and his people is found in God's answer in v. 1b. it was always because of their deliberate rebellious choices and their iniquity that the people were sent away to endure times of trials. The trials were meant to humble His children and to bring them back to Him. Same is true in our trials today. (Every trial is not an instrument of discipline).

Now God asks two additional probing questions that get to the heart of the problem in order to cause the audience to reflect more deeply on the real reason for past trials and difficulties. God asks why none of them answered him when he came and called them? This line of questioning lays the real blame at the feet of the people, for God was present (He came) and God called, indicating at minimum a desire to have a relationship. This suggests that God has long been ready to speak with them and work on their behalf, but "there was no one" who was willing to admit the people's sinfulness. They were not willing to come to talk to God about it in order to restore their relationship. The second question wonders why they did not answer. Was it because they thought God would not hear them or that his power (his hand) was too short to deliver them? (v.2) If this was the case, it is evident that the people did not really know much about the true nature of God. Have they still not learned that God is (from yesterday's devotion) "Yahweh, your Savior, your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob" (49:26)?

God's second answer begins like the first answer. "Behold" God has the power to simply speak a word of rebuke and the sea and rivers will dry up, then all the fish will die and begin to stink. God is also able to darken the heaven with his power. This confirms that God has the power to accomplish anything he decides to do. He does not lack in his ability to hear his people or save them. Are you trusting God for who He is today? Don't doubt Him, dear friend. He is more than able.

## Isaiah 51 – October 6

I can't help but think that the audience in this chapter are the ones mentioned in verse 10 of the previous chapter. There Isaiah wrote, "Who is among you that fears the Lord, that obeys the voice of his servant...Let him trust in the name of the Lord and rely on his God." Whether they were already believers or those who were to be called to follow His we don't know. My point is simply that the beautiful promise of deliverance in chapter 51 is not for those who remain rebellious and unrepentant. It is for those in 51:1 who "pursue righteousness, who seek the Lord." Again, I don't want you to be lulled into thinking that God simply changed His mind and decided that if they just hang in there everybody is going to be okay. That is not so. We might say that He is speaking to the remnant that remains faithful through the judgment and years of captivity. Regardless, chapter 51 is a beautiful chapter of exhortation, encouragement, and hope that is all predicated upon God's past faithfulness to His people and guarantee of continued faithfulness for their future.

This unusual imagery in verse 2 about the rock and quarry is explained as a reference to their ancient forefather and mother, Abraham and Sarah. The audience is encouraged a second time to "look, examine, notice" that Abraham was a man like them, who had to walk by faith in God's promises about the future; as we must today. One of the reasons for bringing up the righteous man Abraham and his wife Sarah was to point out a comparison between the past history of the nation and what the future holds. Long ago God called one man who did not have any children, so he was somewhat like Zion, which was "bereaved and barren" (49:21). When God called him from Ur many years earlier, it was "so that I might bless and multiply him" (Gen 12:1–3), and this is still God's plan for the descendants of Abraham. Just as the children of Abraham increased through the ages, so God will act on behalf of his people in Zion to make them multiply. Can you imagine how encouraging and even unbelievable this news was in light of their current predicament?

Now the prophet reassures his audience in verse 3 that these are God's words of comfort or compassion for the people of Zion because God is going to act on their behalf (40:1). God's intended transformation of Zion is compared to the radical transformation God will accomplish when he changes the deserts of earth into Eden, most likely the garden of God in Gen 2:8. This will cause the people of God to rejoice, sing, and thank God. Certainly, this is in reference to the coming Messiah and His ultimate reign upon the earth. He is telling them that He did an amazing work before and He will surely do it again. All that has been lost will be restored through Jesus Christ.

Our hope for today is the same. We live to date on this side of the cross and with the complete canon of Scripture. We know Jesus is coming back so we can face our dark moments, our seasons of loss and defeat, and even our captivity in this fallen world with a hope that elevates our spirits about the temporal to a place where we see that which is unseen and focus on that which is eternal. As a result, like Israel, we should not lose heart as we keep our eyes on the great joy that is sure to come. He is faithful, beloved.

## Isaiah 52 – October 7

This unit dramatically announces the good news of the eschatological (end times) coming of God's great salvation to the people of Zion. God's holy people will no longer be despised and humiliated by the Egyptians or the Assyrians (v.4), and God's name will no longer be blasphemed (v.5). This will be a time of peace and joyful singing of a song about God's redemption and salvation. They will sing before all the nations (vv.9–10) when God comes to reign as King in Zion (vv.7–8). The paragraph ends with admonitions to be separate from impurity (v.11), plus assurances of God's presence, guidance, and protection (v.12). Isn't it a wonderful thought to consider God going in front of us and at the same time "having our back"? Friend this is again one of those chapters that is meant to enlighten on us what is coming while at the same time giving us a hope for today to persevere during the times when it appears God's people are losing.

The past history of the people contained times when Zion was taken captive and in bonds (v.2) in Egypt and Assyria (v.4), but the future will be a time of strength, holiness (vv.1–2, 11), freedom from oppression and redemption (vv.2–5), knowing God (vv.6, 10), peace and salvation (v.7), joyful singing (vv.8–9), and divine protection (v.12). At that future time God will reign as King, and the world will be transformed by his presence. Just breathe that in this day beloved. Hope in the Lord and His return. It does a soul good to meditate on these truths. I am reminded in this moment of 1 Thessalonians 4:18 where Paul is writing about the return of the Lord at the rapture. He concludes that section of Scripture (vv.13-18) by saying, "Comfort one another with these words." The hope of our bright future is meant to encourage us today.

Now folks, it isn't natural for us to easily set our minds on the hope of a better day when we find ourselves in the midst of a bad day. So, this chapter begins with the Zion "Awaken" from her stupor. She is to clothe herself in the strength and beauty that is hers because of who she is as God's people. They must do this by the simple confession noted in Isa. 12:2, "The Lord is my strength." See folks this is something we muster up in our own strength. Getting our minds right is a product of humbling ourselves before the Lord and making heartfelt proclamations that He is God and He is our source of strength. We admit that we find no security in the gods of this world but solely and completely in Him. Then and only then do our minds and souls rise to a place of peace, joy, contentment, and security. Then we learn to trust in His future promises.

Let me close with a pretty awesome truth from verse 3. Isaiah says we were sold for nothing and will be redeemed with no money. That may sound strange but what he is actually saying is that God never lost possession of us. Nobody bought us from Him so He doesn't have to buy us back. "God's right to his people was not forfeited. Israel was and has always remained God's possession." Thus, there is no external power that can prevent God from fulfilling his plan to redeem his people in the future.

## Isaiah 53 – October 8

Although we recognize chapter 53 as the chapter detailing Christ as the Suffering Servant, I still think few grasp what this text is saying about Jesus. In verse one, the question is asked, “Who has believed our report?” I think the same question could be posed today. Think for a minute about paintings of Jesus. They typically have him as a white man with blue eyes and long, beautiful flowing hair. But here in verse 2 we read, “He has no stately form or majesty that we should look upon Him, nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him.” He did not have the look that we would normally associate with royalty or majesty. He was a man who was despised, forsaken, and acquainted with sorrow and grief (v.3). Notice that it doesn’t say He experienced a little grief it says He was acquainted with grief. This means He knew it intimately and personally. If you are surprised by this truth today, imagine how they felt from their perspective. They didn’t know all that we know today about God’s plan of redemption. How would you like to be known as a person of sorrows?

I must point out the second question in verse one which says, “And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?” It is the Lord who gives us eyes to see, ears to hear, and a heart that comprehend and believe. For those of us who believe, like the people in chapter 53, we are to tell others that they too might see. Oh, how beautiful it is to consider what God is doing here. He mentions the “arm of the Lord.” Friends, it was by the outstretched arm of the Lord that God delivered His chosen people from the bondage of the land of Egypt during the Exodus. It will be by the strong arm of the Lord that He delivers His people through the finished work of the Suffering Servant on the cross. In both cases, there is a deliverance and a setting free from enslavement.

I must point out a few of the wonderful doctrinal truths that make this chapter an evangelistic appeal from the Old Testament prophet Isaiah. We know that it was the Father’s will that He go through this (v.6,10). It was through His suffering and death that He made atonement for our sins (vv. 4-6,8,11,12). Of course, it wasn’t for any sin that He committed that he suffered (v.9). He bore his suffering with amazing strength and grace (v.7) and one of these days He will get the rightful honor due Him (vv. 10-12). Folks, all we have to do is mix a little faith with this prophecy and we will find great comfort and hope for our souls. I cannot count the times I have read this single chapter and shed tears at this truth. How could He love us so much? How could He sacrifice and pay such a tremendous price after having lived a perfect life? He left heaven to come to this fallen world to save us. What a rescue!

Please let this chapter humble you today and wash over your circumstances that you might see them in a different light. The book of Hebrews says, “Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross...for consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.” Read and reread Isaiah 53 often friends. It will keep things in perspective and will aid in your attempt to be forever grateful.



## Isaiah 54 – October 9

This chapter once again speaks to the hope that is ours (and the Israelites during this time) because of the promises of God. Even in times of despair we can lean on the truth that someday all things will be made right according to God's plan. Sometimes we talk about planning for a blessing or making plans for rain. Now those of you who know me should know that I am not talking about "name it and claim it" foolishness. I am not talking about having enough "faith" so that you inevitably force the hand of God. That is heresy and unbiblical teaching. What I am talking about is moving forward with complete confidence in the promises of God. In other words, if He said it, then you can bank on it and real biblical faith is trusting God wholeheartedly at His word.

For example, in this chapter the Israelites are told to "enlarge the place of their tent, to stretch out the curtains of their dwellings, and to lengthen the cords" (that held down their tents). They are to do this because God has promised to bless them and to restore much of what they lost in the time of His judgment against them. You see, they are moving ahead with an umbrella in their hands pretending that if they believe hard enough it will rain. That is not true faith. They are to make arrangements for His blessing and favor because He said it was coming. The point I am making is this, if God told you that it was going to rain even though it hadn't for a while and there was no cloud in the sky and you begin making preparations for the rain, that would be faith. Ask Noah! He started building the ark – not to force God's hand but in response to what God had clearly said He was going to do. Faith is taking God at His Word.

Think of a time when things weren't going well for you or your family. Can you imagine what it would feel like if in the midst of your loneliness, confusion, doubt, or hopelessness the Holy Spirit speaks to your heart and mind and assures you He is still right here and will soon make things better. I have experienced that very moment in my own life. When it happened for me in the back seat of a rickshaw in Bangalore, India it changed my life forever. God was absolutely true to His word to me and slowly but surely brought me back to a place of assurance, favor, and blessing. This is precisely what He was doing with His chosen people, Israel, in chapter 54. Paul even makes reference to this promise in Galatians 4:27 where he writes that Israel will once again be fruitful and no longer barren.

Friends, let's end this devotion concentrating on verse 5. Here we read that they need not worry about past failures because the One who is their Husband, is their Maker. They need not fret because it is God who is stepping in. Then it says that their Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel. He cannot lie nor break a promise. Don't you see that we have every reason to believe Him – always. Now, please don't miss the next statement in this verse, "Their Redeemer (and ours) who is called the God of all the earth." Beloved, is there no doubt that Jesus Christ, our Redeemer, is God? This should settle it for you and silence the heretical teaching of Jehovah witnesses who say Jesus is not God. Indeed, He is and I am grateful for this comforting truth.

## Isaiah 55 – October 10

What a great reality to know that the Gospel is for all peoples. I am so thankful that we were grafted into the body of Christ. This chapter opens with a beautiful invitation to everyone who recognizes their need and their thirst. Praise the Lord that we need not worry about whether we have money or means to purchase this gift. The purchase price for this Living Water is simply our faith in and submission to the Lord Jesus Christ. We are told that they were not to weary themselves with what does not give true satisfaction (v.2). Why would anyone bother to do that? This admonition implies that some might be tempted to or already had looked for satisfaction in the wrong place. We might guess that this is a warning not to depend on laboring for material things for true spiritual satisfaction, not to weary themselves with worship that is just empty laborious ritual, or possibly not to try to find spiritual food for the soul from serving false gods.

Every person should “listen diligently” to what God advises and eat the “good” things that he provides (v.3). Since what God offers is “good,” what other sources offer must be bad or at least unsatisfactory and unfulfilling. The results of eating will not be a full stomach; instead, God promises that your soul “will delight” in God’s abundance and riches. At this point the imagery of eating food begins to fade away, and the spiritual reality of what the prophet was talking about begins to become clearer.

We will be able to partake of God’s blessings only if we make the effort to listen to what God says and come to him. The old ways of being stubborn with closed ears and blind eyes (6:9–10) must be a thing of the past. If we want to be part of God’s glorious kingdom “so that” we may live, they must listen to God’s offer and respond to God’s gracious invitation to enjoy his feast.

Dear friends, this morning would you call on the Lord to be saved or simply to take another step of obedience in surrender to the Lordship of Christ in your life? Seek Him this morning while He may be found (v.5). Call upon Him while He is near. Surely you know by now that you and I can’t continue to play games with God. His grace is indeed free but it is not cheap. Genuine, saving faith is a faith that is proven by obedience to Christ. If you need motivation this day simply keep reading and focus for a little while on verses 8-11. They are intended to encourage us today. Surely His thoughts and His ways are higher than our own. But we must embrace and believe with all of our heart and mind that His Word accomplishes all that He intends for it to accomplish. Just as the rain comes from heaven and waters the earth so does His Word go forth and does what He wants it to do. We are to stay the course and trust that His will is unfolding and cannot be thwarted.

As a pastor, I have often been encouraged by these words. There are times when I preach and wonder if it is doing a bit of good. Then the Holy Spirit reminds me of this promise and I know without a doubt that as I preach His Word then His will is being accomplished. I can rest in that promise. Think of the many promises that He makes for His children. You can rest in knowing that what He spoke will come to pass. Where He promised to protect, provide for, and preserve you need not fear that anything could stop Him from that promise – that covenant. What can separate us from the love of God? The answer is nothing! (Romans 8:38-39).

## Isaiah 56 – October 11

Verse 1 explains what God will do in the near future which provides a persuasive motivation for right living in the here and now. The hope of enjoying God's salvation should motivate people to live according to kingdom principles. Several things should be noticed about God's salvation. First this offer of salvation comes from God; it is God who brings it, and he is bringing it as a reality to be experienced by his people. He will draw Israel and the nations to his light, transform the heaven and the earth (51:5–6; 60:1–3; 65:17), and institute all aspects of his plan of salvation. This will be the time when God's victorious "righteous deeds" will become evident, when he vindicates his people and faithfully fulfills his promises. Thus, it is logical for the prophet to encourage the people of God who desire to be with God in that future kingdom to exhibit righteous behavior toward others now. It always puzzles me and frankly worries me when I meet people who have no passion for worshipping the Lord in church or any real interest in the things of God and yet they think they are saved. The knowledge that we have of God and more importantly the relationship that we enjoy with Him because of the Cross is supposed to lead us to godliness. After all dear friends, 2 Peter 1:3-5 tells us that everything we need for life and godliness has been provided to us through His divine nature.

Verse 2 functions as a blessing on the person who responds to the exhortation in 1a. There is not a great deal of difference between "keeping, maintaining" justice, "keeping, maintaining" the Sabbath, and "keeping, maintaining" the hand from doing evil. These characteristics are all part of the righteous lifestyle of the blessed person. The "it" that one should hold fast to is not identified, so one could argue from the context that a person is to hold on strongly to the promise of God's salvation (56:1b), to God himself (64:7), or to the covenant and its promises (56:4, 6). In reality, those who hold on to any one of these naturally hold on to all the rest. We should be careful not to interpret these instructions as legalistic requirements that set out to define a baseline of acceptable behavior. Instead, we should understand them as the natural, outward expressions of a heart that truly loves God.

The next subparagraph (56:3–7) assures all those who hold fast to the covenant that they will be fully accepted and included with all the other people who come to worship God at the temple. Two groups are mentioned, the foreigner and the eunuch. At that future time, they will join themselves with the Israelites just like the proselyte Egyptians who came up out of Egypt with the Israelites in the exodus (Exod 12:38, 48–49); Rahab, the harlot who lived in the Canaanite city of Jericho (Josh 2:8–13; 6:17, 25); Ruth, the Moabite woman who married Boaz (Ruth 2:10); Uriah the Hittite (2 Sam 11:11). Numbers 15:13–15 indicates that an alien who trusted God could offer sacrifices and that "you and the alien shall be the same before the Lord." Friends, there is no place for favoritism, racism, or prejudices in the family of God. We find it over and over in Scripture that we as human beings are all in the same predicament as far as having a sin nature and being depraved. We all need to come to Christ in the same manner and when we do we are all on equal standing before the Lord.

I cannot help but close this devotion today with an admonition to live today as you are in heaven. "His will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Today's devotion is a call to live like a child of the King now as we prepare ourselves for the day we will finally be at home in the Kingdom that is surely coming. Let's practice Kingdom living so that we will be ready when we get home.

## Isaiah 57 – October 12

I have to take a moment to look back at chapter 56 in order to make some of this chapter more understandable. As chapter 56 came to an end, Isaiah was condemning the “watchmen” for their failure to warn, teach, and rescue the sheep entrusted to them. Go back and take a look at 56:10 where it says, “His watchmen are blind: they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs, they cannot back; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber.” In light of the poor state of affairs amongst God’s people, what we read in chapter 57 makes more sense. This chapter begins by stating that the righteous perish, merciful men are taken away (v.1) and they are even dying while walking in their uprightness” (v.2). The very ones whom God had in place to lead His people were not faithful to their task. This was their God-given task – “Then I will give you shepherds after My own heart, who will feed you on knowledge and understanding” (Jer. 3:15). What happens when the shepherds don’t do this? You get what we read in chapter 57. God’s people are oppressed, taken advantage of, and ultimately die in an ungodly generation.

In verses 3-12 we have a high charge levied against this wicked generation. The righteous ones were being removed from them and the judgment of God was coming on those who remain in their sin. What were their crimes? Verse 4 says basically they mock God. They worshipped idols with their offerings (v.5-8). God says they had given themselves to another other than Him (v.8). They went to other sources for security and supply (v.9). In other words, friends, they had totally abandoned God and had run wholeheartedly after the things of this world. All the while this was happening there were few good shepherds trying to lead the sheep.

What I read today in verse 10 reminds me so much of people today. Here it says, “You were tired out by the length of your road and yet you did not say that it is hopeless.” This means that they knew they were getting nowhere. They were worn out from the pointless and fruitless life choices and yet they continued on that long road. Doesn’t that sound like people today. They are tired, they are frustrated, and they are feeling hopeless and yet they will not get right with God. Beloved, humble yourself today and know that God will dwell with you if you are humble in spirit (v.15). But look at what Isaiah says about the wicked, the ones who refuse to humble themselves before the Lord and all of His way, “But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, says my God to the wicked” (vv.20-21).

Now I must say that there is one beautiful thought here that I still have trouble wrapping my mind around. God describes the person who goes on in his sin in verse 17 but then says something amazing in verse 18. There is no question that in order for this to be so, the person whom the Lord heals will be the one who humbles himself under the hand of the Lord. God says in this verse that, “He has seen his ways and will heal him.” He says He will lead him and restore him. I cannot get over the mercy and grace of God. Even now God is going to remain faithful to His covenant and will make a way for the remnant of His people. Brothers and sisters, seek him while He may be found please. God is gracious and good but don’t take for granted His love. He will not wink at our sin and I would hate for any of us to miss out on the beauty and wonder of a loving relationship with Him now and for eternity. Pray for your shepherds that we might lead well and not be found asleep at the wheel. We all suffer when we live with a deaf ear to the Lord and His Word.

## Isaiah 58 – October 13

This chapter is a wonderful reminder of serving and sacrificing for the right reasons. If all we do in our religion is superficial and ritualistic, we are likely wasting our time. It can become so easy for us to simply go through the motions if we aren't careful. This is what is happening in this chapter. Notice Isaiah the prophet answers their questions from verse 3 in verse 4, "Behold, you fast for contention and strife and to strike with a wicked fist. You do not fast like you do today to make your voice heard on high." In other words, their fasts were half hearted at best. There was so much hypocrisy in their fasting revealed by the fact that it resulted in conflict, quarreling, and deception. It was nothing but an outward ritual with no connection to God at all.

Beginning in verse 6 we read what God is actually looking for in service and as a result of truly seeking Him through fasting and prayer. It says, "Is this not the fast which I choose, to loosen the bonds of wickedness, to undo the bands of the yoke, and to let the oppressed go free. Is it not to divide your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into the house; when you see the naked to cover him." Friends, I hope you see that what God is saying here is that a genuine walk with Him results in spiritual fruit that impacts people in our lives as well as ourselves. Don't miss that a part of what happens when a person truly fasts and prays is that the bands of our own sin are broken and the bondage to sin destroyed (Romans 6:14). If your "worship" or personal devotions aren't leading to a closer walk with the Lord and a more fruitful life in Christ, there is something wrong with your connection.

Take a look with me at the results of effective fasting from verse 8 and following. The Bible says here, "Then your light will break out like the dawn, and your recovery will speedily spring forth; and your righteousness will go before you; the glory of the Lord will be your rear guard." Don't miss this next part – "Then you will call and the Lord will answer; you will cry, and He will say, 'Here I am.'" This stuff is incredible. It goes on to say that if you do these things your light will rise and your gloom will be like midday. Then to top it all off it says, "And the Lord will continually guide you, and satisfy your desire in scorched places, and give strength to your bones, and you will be like a watered garden." Folks, these promises are incredible and amazing. Who wouldn't want such reward for seeking the Lord?

The key here is of course that these benefits are likely wanted by all. I can't tell you how many people I have met through the years who want and even expect all of this from the Lord and will get downright angry with God as they walk away from Him for not producing. Too many times I have heard, "This didn't work." The problem is not in God's promises nor His ability to produce these things, the problem lies in the person's failure to truly seek Him with their whole heart. These promises are not made flippantly by the Lord. Notice the conditions for these outcomes. It is obedience and self-denial. What Jesus said in Luke 9:23 was true in the Old Testament too, "If you wish to follow Me (and get the rewards), you must deny yourself daily, take up your cross, and follow." Friends, that is so much to be gained for the one who sincerely walks with the Lord. He desires today that your pursuit of Him be real.

## Isaiah 59 – October 14

Oh, what a great chapter this one is for us today. Isaiah jumps right into contending with us in regard to our faith. These bold statements are meant to shock us into a place where we once again consider the mighty hand of the Lord. He both hears us and can save us if we would but walk in His ways and trust Him. But we quickly find that something is preventing the mighty hand of God from reaching them. Something is hindering their prayers as they appear to fall on deaf ears. Surely God can hear so what is the problem? You may be wondering about this same issue in your own life today. Maybe this devotion and chapter is just what the “doctor” ordered for you today. Is the problem with God or is it with us?

Isaiah writes in verse 2 that it is their iniquities (sin) that has separated them from God. It is because of their sin that God seems to have hidden His face from them. That is symbolic for turning from them. Why would God do such a thing? Well verse 3 answers that by saying that their hands are defiled with blood (sin). Not only are their hands defiled but this has infected their mouths which speak wickedness and their lives produce death rather than life. Notice in verse 4b it says that they conceive mischief and bring forth sin and any one who eats of the fruit of their lives (adders’ eggs) dies! Be careful who you hang out with – they may be poisonous.

I thought of Matthew 7:21-23 as I read portions of this chapter. There Matthew tells us that not all who say “Lord, Lord” to Jesus are really saved. You remember this passage? In verse 23 Jesus tells the lost fakers to depart from Him and declares that they were actually workers of iniquity. Now if you go back to Isaiah 59, you will find that in verse 6 it says that these folks who don’t have the ear of the Lord and who are not experiencing His presence nor His saving grace are actually workers of iniquity. They run to evil and even their thoughts are sinful. Friend, these folks are not children of God to begin with. In order for them to have the ear of God and thus the saving grace of God, they must belong to God. Those who claim to know the Lord but actually aren’t saved may “hope for light but remain in darkness” while they “grope like blind men” (v.10) with “salvation far from them” (v.11). Folks this is a deliberate turning away from God (v.13). But praise God the story doesn’t end there. Let’s look at the beauty of this chapter now.

Beginning in verse 15 it says, “The Lord SAW.” He saw their predicament and helplessness. They could not save themselves so in their helpless condition God reached in and did what only He could do. Romans 5:6 says, “While we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.” That was them and it is you and me too. Look at Isaiah 59:16 – “And He saw that there was no man... no one to intercede; Then His own arm brought salvation.” This friend is where the Suffering Servant of chapter 53 stepped in. He put on the armor to get the job done (v.17ff) and we must likewise put on the full armor of God to ward off the devil too (Eph. 6:10-18).

Beloved today we can rejoice and worship our great Redeemer for what He has done to save you and me. He did what we could not and we can rest in the covenant (v.21) that He will never break. He who called us to justification will indeed sanctify us (Phil. 1:6) and will someday glorify us too. It is as sure as He is!

## Isaiah 60 – October 15

This chapter tells us what it is going to be like for the nation of Israel and particularly the city of Jerusalem during the millennial (1,000 years) reign of Christ on the earth. I don't want to turn this into an eschatological (end times) lesson but it is important to remember that during the 1,000-year reign of Christ on the earth, there will still be lost people on the earth and they will be having children. So, nations will be interested and even attracted to what is happening in Israel but at the same time nations will rise up in opposition to Christ and His Kingdom. According to verse 3 there will also be people who are drawn to the light of Christ which means some will be saved even at this point. While Gentiles are being drawn so will the remnant of Israel's faithful (v.4). This entire chapter is a beautiful forecast of what is to come. I love the promises of God's Word that give me hope and encouragement for my journey.

A few truths that we can take away for ourselves today in this chapter can be found scattered throughout. One such truth is that God can take unsaved people and utilize them to bless His children. In verse 10, it says that foreigners would build up the walls around Jerusalem. Not only did the former King of Persia, Cyrus, make a way for the rebuilding of the wall around Jerusalem, here we find that they hadn't seen anything yet. God can use people in your life and mine to aid us as He sees fit. Don't miss the truth also that there is a side of God that disciplines us in wrath as well as the side that extends compassion to us in favor (v.10b).

I think of how sad it is today that people think if they can just throw off the restraints of religion they would be free. People foolishly think that walking with Christ is a form of bondage or a loss of freedom. The truth is just the opposite. To live in a right relationship with the Lord in which He is the Master and we are the slaves is the absolute perfect road to freedom. Verse 11 says that we will not have to worry about locking a door day or night because there will be complete safety and freedom for His people. Godly living is freedom indeed. Another reality here with the gates perpetually opened is that we will have complete and unrestricted access to the Holy City.

All the while there will be safety and bountiful blessing for God's people, there will be judgment and devastation for those who reject Him. The "glory" of other nations will come to Jerusalem and will recognize Jerusalem as the city of God (v.14). The people who were for so long despised will now be exalted. Finally, God's own people will recognize and acknowledge Jesus as Lord, Savior, and Redeemer (v.16). I have to point out the amazing truth of verse 18. The protection and provision that Israel will enjoy is a direct result of God's salvation (walls) and gates. In other words, He Himself is their protector and shield. Isaiah is actually looking beyond the millennial kingdom to the future kingdom of the new heaven and earth (v.19). I don't know if he knew he was doing that but what he speaks of in this verse happens when Satan has been vanquished and all enemies defeated including death (Rev. 21:23; 22:5). The glory and majesty of the God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit will be our everlasting light and so there will be no need for the sun.

I did another funeral this very day. As I stood by another grave I am hopeful as I read, "All the days of mourning will be over." Friends, hang in there and don't grow weary in well doing, for you will reap a great reward if you faint not. This chapter is part of the reason why we should hold fast.

## Isaiah 61 – October 16

There are a number of wonderful realities that come to light in this chapter. First of all, it is important to know that it is Jesus Christ speaking in the first two verses of this chapter. These two verses are the very two that He spoke in the temple in Luke 4:18-21 where He declared this prophecy fulfilled. Isn't that amazing folks? From our viewpoint in history, we can read the prophecy from the sacred Text and read of its fulfillment in the Scriptures too. Isaiah didn't have that privilege. Oh, there is no excuse for our neglect of the Word or doubt in it. Now, what takes place from verses 2b all the way through verse 11 will not be fulfilled until the second coming of Christ.

What Jesus says in verse 1 concerning "liberty to the captives" is best understood as a twofold prophecy. Often in the Scriptures we read a verse that had an immediate fulfillment as well as one in the future. Here, Jesus is surely letting the Israelite captives in Babylon know that freedom is coming for them and we know that it did through Cyrus. There is also the prophecy that takes place and continues to do so even to this day that with the finished work of Christ on the cross, lost people are being saved and set free from the bondage of sin. With that freedom, the Israelites were to become a "kingdom of priest" (Ex. 19:6) and we are too according to 1 Peter 2:9. This is what is meant in verse 6 where Isaiah writes, "You will be called the priests of the Lord." Beloved, we are to serve the Lord today as priests offering sacrifice to God as well as interceding in prayer for others that they might come to know Him too.

This chapter is full of the blessings that are going to come to God's people because of His plan of redemption but we must not miss that even though we are going to benefit greatly because of the redeeming work of Christ, ultimately it is for His glory (60:21; 61:3b) that all of this is done. One of the most amazing and honestly breathtaking truths revealed in this chapter is that of the doctrine of imputed righteousness. I know that is a big word there but stay with me. Let's pick up in verse 10.

Isaiah writes, "I will rejoice greatly in the Lord, my soul will exult (rejoice or glory) in my God; For He has clothed me with garment of salvation, He has wrapped me with a robe of righteousness." Dear friend this is talk of imputed righteousness. This simply means that, like the prodigal son who had no righteousness or standing of his own, the Father has taken His own robe and wrapped it around our dirty and sinful bodies to cover us with holiness. Like Adam and Eve whom God clothed with the slaughtered hide of an animal to cover their shame and sin, so He has done the same for our wretched beings. Jesus, who knew no sin (never sinned) took our sin and in its place gave us His righteousness (2 Cor. 5:21). We often refer to this as the "Great Exchange." I am ecstatic as I type this morning. Thank you, Lord Jesus, for this gift that I cannot get over.

Friend, how can we not, like a bride in waiting, adorn ourselves as perfect as we can for our Groom – the Lord Jesus? That is what happens at the end of verse 10. God has called us, saved us with imputed righteousness (NOT OUR OWN) and won the day. Let's give Him our best in return. Worship our Great God today brothers and sisters.



## Isaiah 62 – October 17

This is yet again a chapter of hope and inspiration. The prophet is determined in this chapter to keep speaking until Israel grasps that the day of deliverance is coming and they need to hold on until it does (v.1). That is a good word for us today isn't it? Oh, how I long for the day when the church is no longer a reproach and people don't view the Bride of Christ as a joke or a mockery. This chapter is about the day when the church and the redeemed Israelites will reflect the beauty of God and what His favor looks like upon a people. It's about a day when we will be viewed in the light that we were supposed to be all along. Now this is a day still to come as we see in verses 6-7. But, it is a day sure to come in accordance with the promise of God (v.8).

It feels to me a little like sitting down to hear a story that one dreams of in the future. Not a tale of make believe but a hope that is someday going to come. Until it does can you get the picture of a group of people sitting around in less than ideal circumstances saying, "Tell me again of that place where all things are made new and everything is set right." Their minds drift off to a day when they will finally be home and experience the genuine favor of the Lord; a land where there is plenty and there is safety as we live in the very presence of the Lord. Yes folks, this day is coming!

The day is coming when the church will be made honorable in the eyes of the world (v.2). She will be honorable because it will be clearly seen that she is precious to God (vv.3-5). What a day when we will finally live in the reality that, "My (God) delight is in her" (v.4). The beauty and wonder of God rejoicing over us and delighting in us takes my breath away. One of the results of this favor is going to be bounty and plenty (vv.8-9). What a great time when the church will finally be viewed, and rightly so, as "the holy people" (v.12). To finally be known as the redeemed of the Lord. Oh, why can't we live today so as to demonstrate this truth in the here and now?

The description, the "sought out" delights my soul. I am moved by the reality that the God of all creation sought me out. I want to be known as one who was sought out by God. Friend, no one comes to the Father unless he did. How humbling it is to consider that He chose me. Sometimes when I think of the fact that Johanna chose me and stays with me willingly I am humbled. To be chosen to play on a team or work on a project because of some ability you have is one thing. But in the case of being sought out by God it is not like that. He didn't see inherent value in me. It is because of who He is that He made His choice. I didn't deserve to be sought out and yet I was. There is no room for pride in a believer's heart or mind. It was no merit of our own that caught His attention. But oh, what a difference His attention makes in a sought-out person's life. Read this chapter today and apply these truths to your life. Relax and rejoice in the amazing riches that are ours simply because we have been brought into the Father's family as full heirs with Christ. We have been invited to the banquet table where we can sit and eat as a child of the King. All of this is coming dear friends and I hope that today you can taste of heaven as you continue your journey towards home.

## Isaiah 63 – October 18

I think today the theme of this devotion has to be - “He alone is mighty to save.” Isaiah writes in verse 5, “I looked and there was no one to help, and I was astonished and there was no one to uphold; so My own arm brought salvation to Me” (59:16). Dear people, you do not want to be on the other side of God’s judgment. The imagery provided in the first 3 verses of this chapter are quite disturbing. As the last chapter ended we were told that salvation was coming. The beginning of this chapter is a look at how some of that is going to take place. The last enemies of God will be wiped out by the powerful hand of the Lord as written in Revelation 19:3,5. Our warrior king is going to reek havoc upon His return. As a matter of fact, the reason that His apparel is red in Isaiah 63:2 is because it is splattered with the blood of the enemies who have been destroyed in judgment. Like grape juice splattering in a wine press. That is actually quite gruesome. Don’t miss that this was at the hands of God and it was He alone who brought judgment and ultimate salvation to His people. Friend there is a beautiful side to how it all ends but there is an equally horrific side to the end times.

For those who belong to the Lord, for those who are His children (not everybody is) the Day of the Lord is to be a wonderful day that brings with it joy and rejoicing. For those who do not belong to Him, it is a day of judgment, fear, dread, and horror. It says in verse 4 that the day of vengeance was in God’s heart and it coincided with His year of redemption. He is both loving and just folks. There really does need to be a sense of urgency in our dealings with lost people in light of this future calamity that is coming. What should our response be to the One who saves us?

We are to make mention and much of His mercy and compassion for all that He has granted us (v.7). Verses 7-14 are actually a review of the amazing grace that God extended to His people even though they were so often rebellious. Note in verse 10 that it says, “But they rebelled and grieved His Holy Spirit.” In spite of all of this Isaiah pens the history of God’s strong arm of deliverance for His people through Egypt, the wilderness, and the Red Sea in this chapter and culminates it with this beautiful statement, “The Spirit of the Lord gave them rest. So You led Your people, to make for Yourself a glorious name.” There it is again folks, to make for Himself a great name. We must realize that His glory is more important than our happiness or comfort. He is good so we can trust that as He glorifies His name through us it is indeed great blessing to us too.

Now remember that at this point they are still in captivity and so as they call to mind these past truths, it translates into a prayer for His presence in the midst of their current circumstances (vv.15-19). It is a great comfort to know that because God is the same yesterday, today, and forever we count on Him to be the same loving Father in our day today. We can plead for His mercy from our position as His children (v.16) and our desire to honor Him. Talk to Him friends – He is good!

## Isaiah 64 – October 19

There are several verses in this short chapter that bless my heart and for a time long ago made me scratch my head. First of the heartwarming verses begin in the first one where we find Isaiah pleading with God to come down and dwell with them again. I am moved by this man's passion for the presence of God. One cannot help but think back to chapter 6 where Isaiah experienced that life changing moment in the temple when God filled the place with His glory and rocked Isaiah's world forever. It was there that He got a glimpse of God's glory, was cleansed, and drawn into serving God. Isaiah knew what it was like to feel the earth shake in the presence of God and longed for that again. Remember that God had called him to a stiff necked and rebellious people. People whom I am sure tired Isaiah out and caused him to long for better days.

Isaiah's prayer was that God would make Himself known so clearly that people would tremble at His presence. He asked God to do what He had once done in the past because he knew Him to be a God who "acts on behalf of His people" (v.4b). Look at what may be a prerequisite if you will for God to come down to a people. In verse 5 it says, "You meet him who rejoices in doing righteousness." Do you see that? God meets the one who is involved and rejoicing in righteousness. We should not expect God to come down to meet us when we are living in sin or hypocrisy. The one who remembers God and His ways is the one with whom the Lord meets.

Now let me clear up a misunderstanding of a long-abused verse. In verse 6 it says, "For all of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like filthy rags." I have heard so many people use this verse to say that even our attempts at righteous deeds are nothing more than filthy rags; that my friend is a ridiculous statement and very unbiblical. The correct interpretation of this verse is that because of their sin, of which they had continued in for a long time (v.5b), they were unclean and had been for quite some time. The fact is that the filthy rags spoken of here are true of those who are not saved. If you are unsaved even your righteousness remains rags. This is not the way God looks at His children's attempts to perform works of righteousness.

Think about it – can you imagine your little child coming to you at 3 years old with a picture that she had colored for you and you taking it and rather than putting it on the fridge you throw it in the trash and say, "That's garbage." So what if the legs she drew comes out of your head and there is no neck or torso. You would proudly display that artwork on the fridge and praise your little one for trying. So would God. The caveat is that you are a child of His and hence forgiven and clean. Don't you remember that when you were born again Christ took your sin and imputed His righteousness to you (2 Cor. 5:21)? Our Father created us for good works (Eph. 2:10). He surely isn't going to watch us carry out His will to do good works and then call them filthy rags. Verse 8 says, "Now, O Lord, You are our Father." He loves His children. Rend the heavens and come down to us dear Father once again.

## Isaiah 65 – October 20

When I think of what I read in this chapter, my mind quickly finds itself meditating further on Philippians 2:5-8 where we learn of the unfathomable humility demonstrated by Christ in order to save us. There we learn that He, being in the form of God, humbled Himself and took on flesh. There He allowed Himself to be beaten, rejected, and crucified to redeem me. How can it be that Thou my God would die for me? You know, this chapter in Isaiah reminds me that it has always been God's character to be humble. My throat literally constricts and I feel a bit nervous as I type that because it doesn't make sense to me. I am ashamed as I think of our Creator humbling Himself for me against my pride too often exemplified. In this moment I feel the need to pray, to repent, to get clean before my gracious God. I feel the need to ask Him to forgive me and to help me be more like Him.

Beloved, meditate on this chapter today. Look with me again and consider what it there. He allowed Himself to be sought, to be found by those who weren't even looking for Him (v.1). I picture a child almost standing in the presence of adults waving His arms to be noticed (v.1b-2). Can you see God standing there saying, "Here am I. Do you see Me? Look over here." All the while this is happening the people are walking along doing whatever they want simply ignoring Him (v.2). Not only are they ignoring Him, they are mocking Him and actually worshipping false gods (v.3). We see them here actually being so haughty that they consider themselves as more important than Him (v.5). Their actions were actually smoke in God's nostrils. No, not the pleasure of incense offered as worship but the irritant of smoke offered to idols. His response to Isaiah's prayer at the end of chapter 64 was not going to be deliverance but instead judgment (v.6) because of their sin.

As is always the case with God, the other side of the story is His grace and mercy. Verse 8 begins the story of the faithful few. Even though judgment is to befall the nation of Israel, within her ranks are those who have remained faithful to the Lord represented by the "new wine" found in the cluster. God promises that He will not destroy all of them but will save the chosen ones from among them. That certainly points to His servants in the future kingdom as well as believing Jews who will be returned to their land (Isa. 57:13). Friends please listen to what the Word of God is saying in this chapter. God says in verse 12, "I will destine you for the sword...for the slaughter because I called but you did not answer; I spoke but you did not hear. You did evil in My sight and chose that in which I did not delight." Look at the contrasting outcomes for God's people and those who are not in the verses that follow.

In the millennial reign and the future kingdom to come things will be different (vv. 17-24). Some of these verses apply to the millennium and others to the future kingdom. Don't forget that in the millennium people will still die but will certainly live longer lives than we do now (v.20). There will be prosperity and productivity. All because God will hear us and we will live under the protection and blessings of His favor. Choose this day whom you will serve.

## Isaiah 66 – October 21

What a wonderful way to end this prophetic, evangelistic book of Isaiah. The way this final chapter begins draws my mind to contemplate how God progressively reveals His plan. When you think of what took place in chapter 6 with the glory of God filling the temple and contrast that with what He is telling us in the beginning verses of chapter 66. Think on it for a moment with me. We find Him in a particular place in chapter 6. The nation of Israel had been taught that God would dwell in a tabernacle. We journeyed through the wilderness and the early years in Canaan as they put up and took down the tabernacle where the Lord dwelt. As the people of God took possession of the promised land we find them now worshipping God in a beautiful temple that God led Solomon to build as His dwelling place. The temple became God's house and the place where the people came to worship. But then we began to learn that God is not looking for a temple of stone. Now we find prophecy that points to the covenant that God would make with His people in which He would write His law upon their hearts and literally dwell within them.

In chapter 66, God is telling us that heaven is His throne and the earth His footstool. In other words, He made everything and there is nothing that mankind can offer Him that He doesn't already own. He is the God of heaven and earth but will willingly condescend to a person who is "humble and broken in spirit, and who trembles at His Word" (v.2). Isn't it fitting that God would look for a heart that is tender, gentle, humble, and accepts His Word as authoritative, inspired, and infallible. These are characteristics that fit with His character too as demonstrated in the life of Christ. I would do you a disservice if I didn't point out the fact that God will dwell with a person who takes His Word seriously. Oh, dear friends this is why we are working hard at keeping the Word in front of you and assisting you with this Emmaus Road journey (v.5).

The journey to the land where the Lord is taking us is surely laden with trials and tribulations (Acts 14:22). This truth was not a new revelation that Luke discovered when he wrote the book of Acts. We find here in chapter 66 that the Israelites were told that their brothers would hate them and exclude them because of their faith and walk with the Lord. Now the great news is that just as a birth does not come without the pains of labor (vv.7,8) and when labor begins birth will certainly follow (v.9). The point that God is making is that there is a point to all the suffering that our lives are laced with as Christians. The pain will produce life and in the end there will be great joy as we are born into the Kingdom that will be.

If you want to be encouraged, spend a little time today focusing on verses 10-14. The imagery of a loving mother taking care of her child will give you an idea of the love the Father has for us and the future that is ours. The Bible says that when we finally see this, "Our hearts will be glad" (v.14). This my friends is a gladness that will erase any of the trials that we faced through life. As Paul wrote, "Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day for momentary and light afflictions are producing for us an eternal weight of glory as we keep our eyes on the eternal not the temporal" (2 Cor. 4:16-18).

## Jeremiah 1 – Oct 22

There are many theories out there regarding what makes a “successful” or “fruitful” disciple of Christ. Unfortunately, our culture tends to glorify giftedness and charisma over and above all things. We celebrate the unbelievable communicator or the man of vision but the Scripture emphasizes an altogether different view of God’s servants. In today’s text we meet Jeremiah. As we know now, Jeremiah would be a prophet that would be used greatly by God in his generation. He would become known as the “weeping prophet” because of his brokenness over Israel’s sin and rejection of God. While Jeremiah was often overcome with anguish and despair at the condition of Israel, he was also a bold and faithful prophet. This man would stand before thousands in his life to unashamedly declare the exclusivity of the One True God while beseeching Israel to repent. Today’s text gives us a bit of insight into the beginnings of Jeremiah’s ministry. Among other things, the reader comes to understand the two major factors that contribute to the making of a faithful man of God, God’s Sovereign choice and man’s faithful obedience.

Jeremiah’s story begins in a familiar way. Like many other faithful men, Jeremiah is simply minding his own business when the Lord calls. The Scripture tells us in verse 2 that the “word of the Lord came to him”. Notice in this passage that God is the one who seeks out Jeremiah! God is always the seeker and we are always the sought. No man looks for God (Romans 3:11) instead God always seeks out those whom He has ordained for service. This is a demonstrable truth from both the Old and New Testaments. Abram was a pagan, David was a lowly shepherd, Joseph was one of many sons, Isaiah was a man of unclean lips, Noah was an unsuspecting man living in a perverse generation, Matthew was a despised tax collector and Saul was a persecutor of the very Church he would ultimately serve! While each of these narratives contain their own respective details all of them clearly show that it is God who finds and directs His servants. Likewise, it is God who found you! Just like Jeremiah, if you are a believer you can rest in knowing that before you were born God knew you and set you apart for His service. This ought to bring us comfort in knowing that we are a part of God’s Sovereign and eternal plan. Brother and sister, like Jeremiah, you did not earn your place in God’s kingdom and this is good news because whatever plan He has for you He will be faithful to complete (Philippians 1:6).

Now, we must balance the truth of God’s Sovereignty with an accompanying truth. Like Siamese twins, you will find that the doctrine of God’s Sovereignty is always connected with man’s responsibility. When God chooses us for service, He demands our obedience. In this text, we see that Jeremiah is given a very simple command, “you must go to everyone I send you to and do whatever I command you.” In short, Jeremiah’s role in ministry is to simply be faithful. He doesn’t have to be creative, he doesn’t have to be charismatic, he doesn’t have to “cast a compelling vision”, he has to teach and preach what God says! As one of your pastors, I must confess that this is a liberating truth. You see, I am far from the compelling visionary that is so often celebrated today in American Evangelicalism. I’m not very creative but I don’t have to be and neither do you!

Smyrna folks, if we are simply faithful to proclaim and obey all that Christ has commanded us in whatever role of service He has set you apart to accomplish you will be a successful and faithful ambassador of Christ. Like Jeremiah, many of us are quick to rebuff God’s call by throwing out all of the reasons why we are not qualified “I do not know how to speak, I am too young” (v. 6). Perhaps for some of you it is “I am too old” or “I am not good at building relationships”, regardless rest assured that if you are a child of His, God’s Word is the same for you today, “go where I send you and say what I command you.” Let us be faithful heralds of God’s Word today in faith that His power is unleashed through our feeble yet resolved obedience.

## Jeremiah 2 – Oct 23

Certain passages in the Scripture just stand out in my mind. Jeremiah 2:13 is one of those texts. In this chapter God, through Jeremiah, is bemoaning the fact that Israel has abandoned Him. With a high level of incredulity, God asks an insightful and penetrating question in verse 5 saying “what fault did you ancestors find in me, that they strayed so far from me?” The following verses provide example after example of God’s blessing and Israel’s rebellion. While God has given Israel the Promised Land, Israel has turned to other “gods” being led by their priests to worship worthless idols.

It is in this context that God offers a stinging rebuke of His people saying “My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and they have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water”. What a chilling text! While God was the demonstrable reason for their triumphal entry and possession of the Promised Land, Israel now believes they can maintain their status themselves. Instead of humbly relying upon God to provide them with water (a metaphor that stands for blessing and life itself) they have devised their own methods to provide. The problem of course is that Israel’s best laid plans will not ultimately provide for their greatest need. There is one source of life and that is God Almighty.

As we reflect on this rebuke for a moment today, it is imperative that we understand that the same propensity displayed by Israel to abandon God by replacing Him with false gods that served their own selfish and depraved desires is present in us today as well! How true is it that God’s blessing can actually cause us as men and women to swell up with pride and begin to believe that we can handle things moving forward? We need to be careful to ensure that God’s blessing results in our praise and adoration not our arrogance and pride.

Church, let us all understand that we are prone to wander! Our lives can be full of stories of us building our own figurative cisterns only to be crushed and convicted to the core that these broken vessels do not and cannot hold living water yet we are prone to rely on them again and again. As much as we might not like it, Israel is really a representation of the depravity of our own hearts. Time and again we abandon the God who saved us for our own agendas and predictably the result is poor at best. My prayer today for us is that we would examine our own lives to see if there may be any broken cisterns. Are you looking for living water in stagnant, worldly ponds or do you see your only hope and joy being in the water that only God can provide?

### Jeremiah 3 – Oct 24

Yesterday's devotion was a bit "heavy" wasn't it? It's difficult to think about our hearts and how sinful they can be at times in life. As believers, we know what its like to struggle with our own failures. After all, we have been enlightened by the mercy of God in a way that makes the true nature of our sin far more pronounced and vile in our own eyes than in the eyes of the world. I want to emphasize, it is not a bad thing to be broken over sin! In fact, if you are not torn up about the reality that you have sinned against God then I would be concerned for your soul! That being the case, it is important for us to remember that our God constantly reminds us that He is both just and gracious. Jeremiah's prophecy in chapter 3 is a demonstration of God's unbelievable and inexhaustible mercy. Today, lets consider two realities that frame our understanding of God's grace.

First, God's mercy is an informed mercy. Sometimes we are prone to forgive people based on the truth that we really don't know how bad things are beneath the surface. For instance, you might forgive your spouse based on their actions but what if you knew what they were thinking when they were committing their transgression? How often have we been grateful that those around us don't know what's going on in our heads? Furthermore, sometimes it is easier to forgive when we don't have the picture of the transgression in our minds. A few years ago, Ray Rice was an NFL running back. Rice was accused and convicted of assaulting his then fiancé in an elevator in Atlantic City. At the time, the NFL suspended him for a few games and the incident was more or less over in regards to media coverage. However, a few months later video tape was released of the incident. Keep in mind, none of the major players had attempted to really conceal what happened, in fact Rice had admitted to doing exactly what the video showed but the moment that footage hit the news the country reacted in outrage. Why? Because the visual of something so heinous was far more impactful than the knowledge that it happened without sight.

When we reflect on God's mercy we must remember that He is privy to everything we say and do! God has a visual on every moment of carnality in your life! This is part of the point Jeremiah's prophecy is driving home in v. 2-5, God is intimately aware of every sin that has been committed. Jeremiah uses the imagery of prostitution when he describes Israel's unfaithful ways in relationship with the Father. Not only has Israel abandoned their first love but they have actively solicited other false gods. What a sight to behold!

Second, God's mercy is an available mercy. Notice how the prophecy instructs Israel in verses 12-13 "I will not be angry forever. Only acknowledge your guilt." God does not need a confession for information's sake, instead all He is seeking from Israel is a true acknowledgment of their own transgression. God does not ask them to jump through unending hoops to secure His mercy He simply asks for acknowledgement and ultimate repentance. God's mercy is available today for those who would so likewise. In spite of the fact that He is privy to all of our thoughts, actions and beliefs that do not honor Him, He is still faithful to forgive those who would confess their sin (1 John 1:9).

This may seem too good to be true and it would be if it were not for Jesus. You see, our sin still costs something. The wages of sin is death and judgment. When you and I transgress against God we are truly committing cosmic treason! However, by virtue of God's matchless grace and love, those consequences were poured out on the head of Jesus Christ for you and I! We are offered God's love and mercy because Jesus took our pain and punishment! God knows what we've done but He offers us mercy that is available to all who would repent and believe in the sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice on our behalf. What a mighty God we serve!



## Jeremiah 4 – Oct 25

This is a hard-hitting chapter is it not? Frankly, there isn't too much in this text that would serve to uplift the original audience or the modern-day reader. Of course, the severity of the text is by design and appropriate. After all, Israel had forsaken God Almighty which is an absolutely horrifying action in and of itself. God speaks in this text primarily of His coming judgment. He would send an enemy from the north to severely cripple His people. In the midst of this text, Jeremiah mentions a group of people that at first glance seem to be out of place. In verse 9, the prophet mentions that in the day of judgment kings and officials would lose heart. This makes sense. After all, their kingdom is the one under attack and the coming enemy would absolutely overwhelm whatever resistance they might muster.

The rest of the verse mentions that the priests and prophets would be "horrified" and "appalled". As we think about this prophecy for a moment, we need to wrestle with the identity of these folks. The priests and prophets of course were implemented by God to represent Him. However, Jeremiah makes it quite clear in the preceding chapters that this was not the case in Israel at the time of his ministry. Instead of leading the people to God, the priests were leading the people to worship false gods and the prophets were affirming that this was indeed God's will! The context explains Jeremiah's assertion in v. 10 when he states that God had "deceived this people and Jerusalem by saying 'you will have peace.'" It is important to note that Jeremiah cannot be saying that God actively lied. We know this goes against His character and therefore it is impossible for God to lie (Numbers 23:19, Hebrews 6:18). Instead, what Jeremiah is referring to here is a judgment that is discussed all the way back in 1 Kings 22.

In this text, the prophet Micaiah speaks of God allowing deceiving spirits to inhabit and influence the message of the prophets of the day. God does not actively deceive but He does allow deception to take place as a judgment against the people. This serves as a reminder to us that one of the chief ways God judges is by removing instruments of His truth from amongst certain people. When there is a famine of the true Word of God in the land you can rest assured that there is much deception and wickedness that is taking place. One of the effects of this lack of revelation is a false sense of security that comes over the people. After all, if God's Word is not around to rebuke, exhort and equip the people will always be lulled into comfort with that which should make them very uncomfortable.

As I reflect upon the condition of our world today I can't help but equate this type of judgment with our modern times. To be sure, there are many faithful preachers, teachers, and believers who have studied and treasured God's Word but in reality, much of what passes today as "Christian" is nothing but weak psycho-babble at best and heinous heresy at worst. The result of this type of falsity fleshes itself out in the deception of many people. Unfortunately, many will be caught off guard on their day of judgment as well. What they thought was true and what they had been taught sense birth will be proven nothing but a fable. They will be deceived and their time will be up. This is one of the reasons why it is so imperative that we study the Word of God and we sit under the teaching and preaching of God's Word. Of course, there are times that it makes us uncomfortable but it is oh so much better to be momentarily uncomfortable and eternally secure.

## Jeremiah 5 – Oct 26

The wickedness of Jerusalem in the days of Jeremiah is absolutely stunning. Verse 1 in our text for the day should bring to our remembrance a similar text all the way back in Genesis. God says through Jeremiah that if just one person exists in Jerusalem who deals honestly and seeks truth then He will refrain from destroying the city. Of course we know that God is omniscient, this promise is predicated on the reality that no such person exists! There is not one man or woman in Jerusalem who is honestly in pursuit of truth! What a profound and saddening truth.

This text reminds us of another instance where God promised to spare a city on account of the righteous. We are speaking of course of the infamous account of Sodom and Gomorrah. In that passage, Abraham begs God to spare the city if only 10 people could be found who are living righteously. We know the result of that story and it is truly horrifying. In fact, the names Sodom and Gomorrah have been synonymous with sin ever since. That being the case, it is even more alarming that Jerusalem, a city built by God's people and meant to declare His power and preeminence to the nations cannot muster even one man or woman who are true to God's decrees. Oh how the mighty have fallen!

As we reflect on this text a bit more, the content should alarm us because it brings to our mind a truth that is oft repeated within God's Word, namely that false religion can still abound when sin and wickedness reign. Listen to God's description of the people in verse 2 "Although they say 'as surely as the Lord lives' still they are swearing falsely." God is here commenting on a ritual or routine whereby the folks in Jerusalem still evoke the name of God but their hearts are far from him in any substantial way. In essence, there is a shell of what used to be meaningful faith and religion but there is no longer any genuine belief.

This verse unfortunately reminds me of much of our culture today. Our nation evokes the name of God often (though less and less) but the vast majority of those both inside and outside of the church have long abandoned any meaningful faith. Before we go too far, I'm not primarily talking about "them". Whenever we talk about the decline of culture its easy to blame "those people" but I would argue that this text really should serve as a wake up call to God's people first and foremost. We may pray before meals and ask God to bless our land (neither are bad things) but do our lives reflect that we are evoking the name of God falsely? Is God really the Lord of our life? Is He the authority we live by? Are we concerned first and foremost with His glory and intimacy with Him? May our prayer be that our churches do not reflect the state of a godless, wicked Jerusalem.

## Jeremiah 6 – Oct 27

Sometimes what we need to hear is not what we want to hear. All of us have had experiences in life that serve as evidence to this truth. Often times, a message of rebuke or correction might sting in the moment but as we reflect upon it later in life we begin to see that it was both good and necessary. The momentary sting of rejection or pain is far better than the long lasting and deep pain that would have been incurred had we continued down a dark path. Furthermore, many of us look back on our lives and wish that we had someone to speak truth into our lives as we deal with consequences of poor decisions over the years.

While wisdom from those we respect is wonderful, we must understand that one of the chief functions of the Scripture is to speak truth into our lives. These truths can serve to encourage and strengthen, they can instruct or at times they can warn us of the potential pitfalls in our lives. If we study the Word long enough and if we sit under good teaching and preaching on a weekly basis, there will be many times that our lives are exposed and we are faced with the reality that what we are doing is not in accordance with God's Word.

This might seem like quite the burden, but in Jeremiah 6 we read of the result of the lack of this kind of teaching in the lives of those in Jerusalem. The Bible describes the prophets in verse 14 as assuring the people that what they are doing and experiencing is not serious. Instead of seeing the peril that they faced, the prophets of the day gave false assurances. Jeremiah says they utter the words "peace, peace" but there is no peace". Repetition in Hebrew is a form of emphasis meaning that the prophets were stressing to the people that their future was secure. According to these men there was nothing to fear but fear itself! All the while God's true prophet and His law is screaming "danger"!

The point is a very simple one today. God often corrects and contradicts our thinking but it is far better to suffer a small point of correction than to fall into severe judgment. It may be easier and more gratifying to surround yourself with "yes men" but in the end those folks are powerless to prevent the sure outcome of pain and suffering that befalls every man and woman who forsakes the pathway of God. Commit today not to be hardened in your sin but by God's grace to internalize and meditate on the truths of God even when they do not agree with your previously held assumptions and beliefs. As Tim Keller has wisely stated, "If your god never disagrees with you then you might be worshipping an idealized version of yourself."

## **Jeremiah 7 – Oct 28**

Words matter, we know this intuitively and the Scripture would affirm it over and over again. That being the case, the Bible stresses over and over again that our words do not ultimately determine the validity of our faith. Unfortunately, the human condition is such that we can talk ourselves into almost anything. Furthermore, we are quite adept at fooling others as well. In fact, our hypocrisy can be flagrant in one respect while totally unnoticeable to us simultaneously.

This is the condition of the people of Jerusalem in chapter 7. Apparently, the people of Israel had perfected biblical liturgy. According to our text today they were guilty of espousing true theology while living lives that were not altered by their stated beliefs at all. Verse 4 describes their “deceptive” words as they entered into the temple declaring “this is the temple of the Lord!” over and over again. They were of course speaking of the God of the Bible but God isn’t interested in hearing their words of praise. Instead, the message is quite clear, prove that I am your God!

God’s stated desire isn’t that the Israelites change their theology, instead He wants them to reform their lives to match their beliefs. This is where the rubber meets the road in our lives. We can say we believe anything but the way we live will ultimately testify to our convictions. God says in verses 5-8 that only if His people change His ways will He allow them to continue living in the land.

Unfortunately as we well know, people are ultimately unable to rid themselves of sin. In fact, the entire Old Testament serves as a testimony to this truth. God’s people would continue to sin and there is a fundamental reason why, all men are sinners! Try as he might, man simply cannot change his spots. He sins because he is a sinner at heart and this will always be save some supernatural intervention.

The good news of the Gospel is that God saw our inability to change our ways and sent His Son to live the right way for us. Jesus would live a perfect life yet He would suffer the consequence of sin for us. In light of His suffering He offers us His life in exchange for our filth! When we take hold of this truth and believe it by God’s grace we are fundamentally changed. God opens our eyes, changes our hearts and provides us with His Spirit and vitality to obey Him. This life change enables us to follow God faithfully and it works itself out in the “fruits of the spirit” as outlined in Galatians 5 (love, joy, peace, patience, etc.). Only when we accept God’s offer of grace through Christ can we truly change and honor God totally. It is by God’s grace that we are different, praise Him that we can live in a way that honors Him because of His Son!

## Jeremiah 8 – Oct 29

Today's chapter is another stinging rebuke. Jeremiah employs a litany of different metaphors and phrases to attempt to describe Jerusalem's sinful ways. While this text is obviously first and foremost aimed at the people of Jeremiah's day, we would be wise to learn from some of the commentary Jeremiah utilizes in addressing Jerusalem. Unfortunately some of what was true about Israel could be said about us and our culture today. Perhaps the most striking example of this is found in verse 12, the people "do not even know how to blush."

This phrase suggests that Jerusalem was so hardened by sin that they lacked even the understanding that their sin was wrong. Their wickedness had become so commonplace that it was nothing but normal anymore. What was once reason to be ashamed became nothing but a part of normal, everyday life. The indictment reminds us that our consciences can be hardened if we are not careful. In fact, one of the reasons why we should be quick to repent of our sin is that all of us have the propensity to allow things that should be vile in our own hearts to become commonplace and acceptable.

Perhaps this is nowhere more evident than in American culture. While we know that there have always been many lost people in our society, we are also aware that the biblical or at least biblical, moral ethic has been the predominant worldview shaper in our society for the better part of two centuries. However, over the past 30-50 years our once held convictions, particularly in the areas of family and sexuality have been toppled. There are certainly many reasons for this but perhaps chief amongst them are the desensitizing that happens by virtue of our exposure to these things through the media. Think about it, how many shows glorify the homosexual lifestyle or trivialize broken family situations as if they are both comical and disarming. Over time, a society that would once be appalled at homosexual relationships or rampant divorce has simply looked upon these things as if they are normal. We have forgotten that we should blush!

The slide is gradual but the effect is deadly. The pattern of sin in our own personal lives is similar. Sin rarely rears its head out of nowhere, instead it tends to gradually permeate our minds and lives to the point that we don't even recognize its presence anymore. We need the constant reminder of the severity of sin and we must constantly take our thoughts and premonitions captive to the glory of the Father. May we as a church ensure that we are always grounded by the Word. May we resolve to check our own lives for those things which should make us blush and may we stand compassionately but boldly for the glory of God in the midst of an increasingly perverse generation.

## **Jeremiah 9 – Oct 30**

It is because of verses like Jeremiah 9:1 and 9:10 that our prophet is known as the “weeping prophet”. As we have already seen Jeremiah had much to weep about! His people had fallen so dreadfully from their place of God’s favor and holy living. They were a people who were buried in their own sin and depravity. This was a man who was consumed with grief by virtue of his situation and today and tomorrow I want us to take a look at two reasons that contributed to this grief.

Today, we can see quite clearly in verse 1 that Jeremiah weeps because of the destruction of his people. He says in verse 1 that he weeps because of the “slain of my people”. It is obvious to Jeremiah that sin has not only harmed his people but it is systematically and finally destroying them. Sin represents itself as entertaining and liberating but in fact it is binding and torturous. What seemed to lead to joy and fulfillment has actually brought Jerusalem to despair and anguish and the prophet weeps because he sees this clearly.

This passage (and countless others) illustrate a powerful point that was made by an unknown preacher who said “sin will take you farther than you want to go, keep you longer than you want to stay, and cost you more than you want to pay.” In this case, the cost was the very lives of the people.

In our day, sin is rampant and our response should be similar to that of Jeremiah. It is this man’s heart for the glory of God and for the souls of the people that drives him to tears. I wonder if our hearts compel us to weep in the same way. Many in our churches are quite adept at cursing the darkness. We are prone to judge those who are dead in their sins and we often can be annoyed or even angered by their depravity. Of course, there is such a thing as righteous indignation but this disdain for sin ought not cloud our love and pain for the sinner.

There was no doubt in Jeremiah’s mind that the people have brought this on themselves but this truth does not change the sorrow he feels for those who are being destroyed. Do we react the same way today? When was the last time you wept over the brokenness of the world? Have you retreated to your “prayer closet” lately to groan and weep over the situations of those you know? Have you looked upon this dying world with compassion knowing that they are blind, like sheep without a shepherd? Have you like Jeremiah, boldly proclaimed the identity and power of the One true God in hope that these men and women will repent? My prayer is that we can be a compassionate and prophetic people in the mold of our weeping prophet Jeremiah.

## Jeremiah 10 – Oct 31

As we saw yesterday, compassion for the people was a major catalyst of Jeremiah's tears but I would submit to you that the primary reason for Jeremiah's weeping was found in his desire to see God glorified. Remember, the nation of Israel existed to be a beacon to the world of the wisdom and power of our great God. God established Israel for the glory of His name and His power and faithfulness was to be manifest to the world through the blessed state of these people. Unfortunately, the people wandered from the blessed law of God and in so doing forfeited the ability to enjoy God's favor. While this certainly harmed Israel, it also brought shame upon God. After all, many in the world looked upon Jerusalem now as a blight on the name of their God. Why would He not intervene in this judgment? Why is it that His people worshipped the same false gods as everyone else? Why was there no difference between their lifestyle and the lives of every other pagan country in the world?

The simple and painful fact that faced Jeremiah was that the people in Jerusalem were bringing God's name to shame amongst the nations. His great God that deserved eternal glory from His people was being betrayed. The sins of the people precipitated Jeremiah's prayer in verse 23 when he asks God to "pour out your wrath on the nations that do not acknowledge you on the peoples who do not call on your name for they have devoured Jacob." Of course, Jeremiah is referring to the pagan countries who have crept into the lives of those in Israel and have led them to worship false gods and abandon their faith.

Jeremiah's prayer is framed by jealousy. He truly desires glory for God and God alone. He understands that anything that would compete with God's glory should be cursed and he boldly asks for that curse to take place in his midst! As we look upon the sin of our society do we ever experience anger that comes from the realization that this sin is preventing God's people from bringing Him glory? Do you ever look at brothers and sisters in Christ who are mired in sin because of relationships with the worldly and experience pain and anger because of the negative effect their sin is having on the name of God? In short, are we the type of people who are jealous for the name of God?

If so, then we will weep with Jeremiah as we look upon God's people and realize that many of them bring virtually no glory to God's name with their lives. Folks, we are surrounded by people who are "members" of a church that they never attend. We are inundated with people in our own community who claim to be believers but manifest no fruit whatsoever in their lives. They have either been misled into believing that they are saved or they have been seduced by the world. Regardless, we as God's people ought to be jealous for the name of the Lord. Its not ok that those who claim to be God's people still live as if they are children of wrath. Its not ok that the world looks upon the Church and sees little to no difference in our lives over and against the lives of the lost. We need to be a jealous people, we must weep over the disservice mankind is doing to our great, glorious and merciful God.