

Isaiah 56:1, 6-8  
8/30/2020 Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost  
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Isaiah 56:1, 6-8 (NKJV)

**1        Thus says the Lord:**

**“Keep justice, and do righteousness,  
For My salvation is about to come,  
And My righteousness to be revealed.**

**6 “Also the sons of the foreigner  
Who join themselves to the Lord, to serve  
Him,  
And to love the name of the Lord, to be  
His servants—  
Everyone who keeps from defiling the  
Sabbath,  
And holds fast My covenant—**

**7 Even them I will bring to My holy  
mountain,  
And make them joyful in My house of  
prayer.  
Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices  
Will be accepted on My altar;  
For My house shall be called a house of  
prayer for all nations.”**

**8 The Lord God, who gathers the outcasts  
of Israel, says,  
“Yet I will gather to him  
Others besides those who are gathered to  
him.”**

### Gospel for All

If you turn on any kind of news today, you'd see that the world is divided. Some divisions are smaller and friendlier, such as sports rivalries (Vikings/Packers, Twins/Indians or White Sox, Red Sox/Yankees, Lakers/Celtics, etc.), while others are over much bigger things, such as race issues, politics, the pandemic, and a HOST of other things. No matter the issue, it seems that for every opinion someone has, there's someone who is there to vehemently disagree with it and cause a division. In this world where more and more people are throwing away some sort of objective truth or standard to cling to, it's causing everyone to split and divide and fight with one another. People with opposing viewpoints are viewed as “the enemy,” and instead of trying to dialogue with each other and love and respect the other person, “the enemy” is, at best, ignored, and at worst, vilified and “cancelled.” Which in turn leads to bitterness, resentment, and a need for revenge. Empathy and critical thinking become afterthoughts because of the pain of division, and reconciliation becomes nigh impossible due to passionate hurt feelings. In today's world, we need something to unite us. And that thing to unite us is the thing that unites all of

Christendom, even when it is split into different denominations. And that ultimate unifier is the Gospel. In this text, the prophet Isaiah is telling us that **the Lord has called all people to believe the Gospel**. He tells us that there is no one who is excluded from the offer of the Gospel; that we all become partakers of the covenant through faith in Jesus Christ; that until the final ingathering of all of God's people, we have work to do, namely justice and righteousness

So to begin, there is no one who is excluded from the offer of the Gospel. There is not a single person on this planet who has ever lived that God did not think of when He sent His Son Jesus to save us.

We see here that God now invites eunuchs and foreigners (vs, 3, 4, and 6) to come be part of His people. Do not miss the significance of this. This is a big deal that eunuchs and foreigners now get to be part of God's people.

One of the reasons that all the laws we read about in Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy were given was so that Israel could be set apart. They would be different people than the nations who surrounded them. Among those laws were laws regarding who could enter the Temple. In Deuteronomy 23:1-4, both eunuchs and foreigners are forbidden from entering "the assembly of the Lord". Both classes of people were ritually unclean to enter the Temple. As such, they were essentially cut off from God and His promises.

But now, they are invited. Thanks to the work of the Suffering Servant, detailed for us especially in 52:13-53:12 (one of my favorite Good Friday texts), and the call for all to come in chapter 55, all people can now become part of the people of God

The promises are not just for the Jews, the people of Israel, any longer. Thanks to the work of Christ, the Suffering Servant of God prophesied about in 52:13-53:12, everyone who hears the Word, who hears the promises of God of salvation in Jesus Christ, can become part of God's people.

To borrow a word picture from Jesus, all are invited to the wedding banquet. Christ has completed the work of salvation, and all are invited to partake. There is no one greater, there is no one lesser. Everyone is on the same level. Everyone has received the invitation. Just as all have sinned and fall short of God's glory, so are all purchased and redeemed by God in Jesus Christ.

So how do you, how do we, partake of this great wedding feast? How do we become part of God's people? How do we reap the benefits of this glorious offer? Faith in Christ.

We all become partakers of the covenant by faith in Jesus Christ. The Gospel is for all people, and all who trust in it will be saved and become part of God's people. They can enter His "house of prayer," as verse 7 says, for it is a "house of prayer for all peoples".

This phrase "house of prayer" basically means being in and enjoying the presence and fellowship of the Lord. In the Old Testament worship system, that place was in the Holy of Holies. Only the priest could go in there, and only after sacrifices had been made. In fact, the only way anyone could enter any of the holier places of the Temple and remain ritually clean was through sacrifices.

Now, thanks to Christ's sacrifice on our behalf, we Gentiles can now come into God's "house of prayer". Our "burnt offerings and sacrifices," as verse 7 says, are acceptable to God. Those "burnt offerings" and "sacrifices" are our faith in Christ for the forgiveness of our sins

Our faith is also how we, as verse 6 describes, "love the name of the LORD" and "keep the Sabbath" and "hold fast to my covenant." In fact, those phrases sound very similar to the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Commandments. We "love the name of the LORD" by fearing, loving, and trusting in it above all things (1st Commandment), and by calling upon it in prayer and worship (2nd Commandment). We "keep the Sabbath" by regarding God's Word as holy, believing it, and learning it (3rd Commandment). And we fulfill all these commandments by faith.

When we repent and trust in Christ for the forgiveness of our sins, when we "hold fast to His covenant," we are trusting in God and His name above all things, and we are believing God when He says that we are forgiven in Christ. That promise, as well as every other promise of God, extends to all people and applies to all who believe.

And these promises will all culminate on the last day when Christ returns, and God gathers all His people together to dwell with Him in the new heavens and new earth. However, we do not know when the glorious day will come exactly, so...

Until the final ingathering of all of God's people, we are to do justice and righteousness for the sake of our neighbor

We are now people of God. As a chosen, forgiven, and redeemed people, we have work to do. Not work to get us into heaven, but work to do to serve our neighbor while we wait for God to "gather yet others to him," as it says in verse 8.

And our instructions are found in verse 1. We are to "keep justice, and do righteousness" while we wait for God's salvation to come and His deliverance to be revealed.

To do justice and righteousness is a common command throughout the Old Testament. It was how God commanded his people to live. To do justice and righteousness meant to (and this is Dr. Brent Olson's definition he beat into our seminarian heads) respect everyone's God-given rights, especially those of the vulnerable.

So while we wait for the glorious return of Christ, we are to seek justice and righteousness here on earth for the sake of our neighbor. We dare not fall into the trap of seeking justice and righteousness in place of the Gospel, as some are want to do nowadays. When we seek justice and righteousness instead of the Gospel, or we turn those into the Gospel and the mark of true faith, we are exhibiting unbelief. We are not taking God at His word that we are saved purely on account of grace. Rather, we are trying to save ourselves by doing good works of social justice.

Justice and righteousness should and must be motivated by the Gospel. They should be kept in their proper place, which is, and you probably aren't going to be surprised by this answer, our vocations.

We seek to be good and fair parents, raising our kids in the faith. We seek to be faithful spouses, always showing love and grace toward one another. We seek to be love and serve the

congregation using our various gifts. We love and serve our neighbors at our jobs, in our neighborhoods, and elsewhere in society by showing them love and grace. We do our best to protect the vulnerable, such as our children, or the elderly, or the sick, or the widowed. We put the best construction on our neighbor's actions, no matter how bad their motives seem. We do not look down on other people for various reasons, remembering that we are all equally made in the image of God, all equally sinners, and all are forgiven in Christ. If we begin doing such a thing, we are no better than the Pharisees that Jesus rebuked. We dare not pray like the Pharisee "Lord, thank you for not making me like them"

But when we do fail to do those things, or we begin to think like legalists and Pharisees, we repent and turn to Christ in faith, trusting that we are forgiven by His shed blood, not by our works.

All the while, we wait for that glorious day when Christ comes again. When our salvation and our deliverance is fully realized. We certainly have a taste of it now. Our salvation and deliverance was revealed to us in Christ. When Christ comes again, it will become fully realized. No more will there be divisions, as I mentioned earlier. There will be no more strife, no more fighting, no more pandemic, no more anything evil. There will only be the restored creation, and our restored bodies, and eternal dwelling with the Lord on his holy mountain, the new heaven and new earth.

So to conclude, Isaiah tells us three things in today's text. First, he tells us that there is no one who is excluded from the offer of the Gospel. It is for all people, not just the Jews (or just the Christians). Second, he tells us that all who trust in Christ will become partakers of the covenant. And finally, until that day when God gathers all his people together, we are to do justice and righteousness for the sake of our neighbor.

**For The Lord has called all people to believe the Gospel**

And that is why the Gospel is the great equalizer and unifier. In a world torn between Republican and Democrat, conservative and liberal, black and white, mask wearers and non-mask wearers, and a host of other splits, let us, the Church, show the world that we are united in the Gospel. Let us show the world that true unity can only be found in and with Christ, not in politics, government, or any other cause that the world tries to champion to us today, Amen.