

Good morning I am Josh Burnham and I'm the lead pastor here at Bethel. For all our guests, those watching online, and all our covenant members, welcome! Why are days like today so important? Because we stand in the tradition of the Lord's community who have gathered regularly to worship for thousands of years. So, our gathering is a **sacred** gathering. It's sacred because where two or more are gathered in the name of the Lord, He is also here.

Today we conclude a sermon series in the book of Isaiah by reading the final passages of the prophet: Isaiah 66:18-24 – Over the last several weeks we have rallied around the one central truth of Isaiah--**Yahweh saves**.

How do you wrap up one of the longest prophetic books in all the Old Testament? A book that many have called the "**greatest Book in the OT**" and the "**5th Evangelist**." Endings and final words matter. This is the last ringing truth that Lord wants you to hear from the prophet. The **writing center** says this about a conclusion: **it allows the author to have the final say on issues raised, to synthesize thoughts, and demonstrate the importance of ideas.** The conclusion "**should make your readers glad they read your paper.**" I once had a literary professor who encouraged us to write the conclusion first, because they felt the final word was vital!

Today we read the conclusion of God's Word through the prophet Isaiah. This passage carries much weight as it is the lingering word and reveals the heart of Yahweh for His people.

"The Lord's Heart for the Nations" (Isaiah 66:18-24) pg # ???

As we seek God through His Word, it's wise for us to observe the context. In the NT perspective, these scriptures span the 1st (sign v.19) and 2nd coming (new earth v.22) of Messiah.

God's Heart for the Nations (66:18) How does Isaiah end. Ten times in the first several verses, Yahweh references in some way the nations, all nations. I believe that we should love that which God loves, and I am bold enough to say that our **hearts should beat as His beats (Thump, thump, thump).**

What is God's heart for the nations? He loves them and has come to **gather** them. He loves the over **155,252** people dying daily without Jesus. There is a **continual pattern** in Scripture that the Lord loves the far off, the marginalized, the outsider, and the untouchable.

Christ had the audacity to touch and heal the man with a devastating skin disease leprosy who knelt before him (Mt. 8:2). Messiah went to the other side of Galilee and drove out the demons from two demon possessed men (Mt. 8:28) and leaves the 99 sheep to gather the one. **In a world that attempts to divide (partisan news) and conquer you, God's heart is to gather the nations.** What a radical counter cultural message. Those who are a part of Yahweh's gathering, live to gather others—not divide. God want us to be "**Hey you**" people.

Isaiah has already used the idea of a **banner** being lifted up to summons the nation to Jerusalem, and the Lord as a **magnet**, now the Lord is a **missionary**, a loud voice crying out for all to gather to Him! So I don't know where you are today, **but Jesus is saying: come to me.** Don't run away from hope, abundant life, and eternal relationships. He came so that all (nations and peoples) may have eternal life. What is God's heart for the nations He loves them and gathers them.

But the Lord's heart does not end at the nations. **God's Heart for You (68:19)** Embedded within this narrative is how the Lord demonstrates His love in the world, through the establishment of a **sign** among them.

Now you might be thinking, God's shows us lots of signs: miracles, dreams, visions, health. But this **sign was different**. Listen to how one scholar put it, "How is the world-wide privilege to come about? Knowing as we do that this passage refers to the interim between comings of the Lord Jesus, the 'sign' can only be his cross."

The cross is the Lord's glorious permanent reminder that the Lord will gather and His glory will be displayed. Without the cross, you have killed the religion and hope of Christianity. Yet, in this sign we find a beautiful paradox. This sign of death, the Roman cross, brought life to all who believe. The cross of Calvary is the heart of God for you. **The cross is the lightning rod of grace that short-circuits God's wrath to Christ so that only the light of His love remains for believers. –A.W. Tozer** It was at Golgotha that the Lord established his permanent reminder of abundant life and mercy. Never forget the cross!

On a hill far away stood an old rugged cross
The emblem of suffering and shame
And I love that old cross where the dearest and best
For a world of lost sinners was slain

When the old rugged cross goes from information (on a hill) to transformation (and I love), the heart of Yahweh for you, becomes the heart of the Lord within you.

God's heart within you (68:19) Right after God establishes a sign, He immediately sends out. This might possibly be the *clearest Old Testament statement of missionary outreach*. Hear what Isaiah is saying. When you find the sign (Jesus) you will hurry to worship, sit, soak, grow as much as you possibly can for your own sake? No!

Isaiah says the distinguishing mark of God upon your life is **sent-ness**. This is an **extremely common word** used throughout the HB that means to send. Why would Isaiah use a common word to remind us that God's people are sent to the nations? Because **living sent should be as common as breathing in and breathing out**. If you can breathe you can go and live for Jesus. What does sent-ness look like? Are you a lawyer, teacher, nurse, doctor, mom, dad, or student? Live where you are today with all your heart and as an arrow being shot from a bow in war.

And where are they going? Where are we to go? To those who have not heard or seen His glory. We have nations, peoples, and individuals in St. Clair county who have never heard the gospel **I think about a local man who asked one of our covenant members if he would be allowed to walk through the church because he has only seen the inside of an American church from tv**. Will you go?

The missionary obligation of the church is to create a magnetic community and to share a saving message.

Who are these sent people? Mighty warriors, Bible smugglers, special forces of the church, super spiritual? The Word describes them as **survivors**. **To this day, I have an immediate connection with anyone living in New Orleans during Katrina because I was a survivor (although I evacuated).** The NFL game with the Falcons was a game like none other because it was filled with survivors. Many remember the tornado that destroyed this building in 1998, because you were a **survivor**. **Survivors** live with a sense of humble gratitude and urgency. They realize life is short and precious. They live with right priorities. **Others must see survivor proprieties in our lives.**

Missionaries are those who survive and have escaped the manifestations of the Lord in fire and sword (Isaianic images). “Sent ones” are those whom the day of vengeance is now the year of the redeemed.

The message of a survivor carries weight. It’s the same weight with which Peters spoke when he proclaimed **Acts 2:38** Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, each of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit... “Be saved from this corrupt generation!

Live sent! His heart within you.

God’s Holy Glory Among You (68:19) People are saved and people are sent because of the glory of the Lord. You can hear the urgency in Isaiah when it is revealed that there are nations and coasts, and islands that have not heard about the Lord or seen his glory. Even today, some estimate 6,900 people groups who have not heard about Jesus or seen the glory of the Lord. Why do we give? Why do we go? **Why do we serve? Not for the betterment of the hearer, but the glory of God alone.**

Three times Isaiah points us to the glory of God. This is not the first time that we have encountered the glory of Yahweh in Isaiah. In **Isaiah 6**, the prophet sees the very throne-room and the majesty of Yahweh, and he is awestruck. The hem/edge of his robe filled the temple. Seraphim (burning ones) were standing above God proclaiming to one another, “**holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Armies!**” But their message doesn’t stop there. You might expect the Seraphim to declare, the earth is filled with his holiness, or majesty, or grandeur. Rather, the very next utterance declared, “**the whole earth is filled with His glory (Isa. 6:3).**” **But what is His glory?**

John Piper poignantly sums up the difficulty, if not impossibility in defining the glory of God because **it is more like the word *beauty* than the word *basketball*.** **If somebody says that they have never heard of a basketball — they don’t know what a basketball is — and so they say, “Define a basketball,” then that would not be hard for you to do. You can’t do that with the word *beauty*.** There are some words in our vocabulary that we can communicate with not because we can say them, but because we see them. **We can point. If we point at enough things and see enough things together and say, “That’s it! That’s it.**

The glory of God is the manifest beauty of his holiness. It is the going-public of his holiness. It is the way he puts his holiness on display for people to apprehend. So, the glory of God is the holiness of God made manifest. –John Piper

We must live to make the glory of the Lord known to all! Church, you are part of God’s “going public” with His holiness in the world! They **will (66:18) see!**

One lasting image (66:24) Because of God's glory, one day Jesus will return again and make all things new (66:22)—including a new heavens and a new earth. The church is ready to conquer the world for Jesus Christ!

Remarkably, here in the final verse of Isaiah, we see a cemetery beside the new city. It is as if when the redeemed come to worship, they deliberately see/look at the fate which they have been spared. **Never forget this image.** Those who were dead and have come back to life never forget (Lazarus).

This is Isaiah's way of saying those who do not tremble at the Lord or embrace his glory, they (you) will face a similar fate. Where the worm will never die and the fire will never go out. Jesus reminds and paints a similar picture:

Mark 9:47 And if your eye causes you to fall away, gouge it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell, **48** where **their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.**

Such, in brief, is the portion awaiting the lost – eternal separation from the Fount of all goodness; everlasting punishment; torment of soul and body; endless existence in the Lake of Fire, in association with the vilest of the vile; every ray of hope excluded; utterly crushed and overwhelmed by the wrath of a sin-avenging God! –A.W. Pink

God will never force anyone to worship and follow him. To those who rebel and choose not to follow Jesus as Lord and Savior, they are choosing an eternal road to destruction where the worm will never die and fire will never go out. Why is this the final image? Because Isaiah wants everyone to remember, this was each of you... but God.

So what—Response? Hearing the Gospel is not enough, we must believe.

Eph 2:8 For you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God's gift—**9** not from works, so that no one can boast. Don't live in the cemetery when God has prepared you for a new living city!

Now that you have heard this good news, God wants you to respond to Him. You can talk to him using words like this:

Jesus today I **recognize** it is because of my (sin) bad actions that I need you.

I **believe** Christ came to live, die and was raised from the death—to rescue me from my sin.

Forgive me. I turn from me and put my trust in You.

Know that Jesus is Lord and King of all and I will **follow** Him.

10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared ahead of time for us to do.

Good works? This is living sent. Having the heart of God in you in a way that the grace of Christ oozes out of you (living sent) so that we would display his glory among the nations.

Lord, go public with your holiness—in us today!

Notes

The spotlight in Isaiah swings back to the other group, those whom the Lord will gather into the new Jerusalem (Motyer, 540).

In the New Testament perspective, this final section spans the first and second comings of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jerusalem is not the literal city but the city of Revelation 21 (Motyer, 540).

Is. 66:18 “Knowing their works and their thoughts, I have come to gather all nations and languages; they will come and see my glory.

In verses 18-19 the Lord announces that the time has come to set his sign among the nations and to send emissaries to those who have not heard his message or seen his glory. The messengers will declare the glory of the Lord. In verses 20-22 the emissaries bring back to Jerusalem those who are called their ‘brothers,’ and they will be received by the Lord as full members of the cultic community. In 23-24 we see all flesh gathering in worship, enjoying the privileges into which they have been brought and aware of the fate from which they have been saved (Motyer, 540).

Gather

Isaiah has already used the idea of a banner being lifted up to summons the nations to Jerusalem, the Lord as a magnet, now the Lord is a missionary, the voice which cries out (Motyer, 541).

19 I will establish a sign among them, and I will send survivors from them to the nations—to Tarshish, Put, Lud (who are archers), Tubal, Javan, and the coasts and islands far away—who have not heard about me or seen my glory. And they will proclaim my glory among the nations.

Sign

Precise language here employed is also used in Exodus 10:2 (plagues) and Psalm 78:43.

How is the world-wide privilege to come about? Knowing as we do that this passage refers to the interim between comings of the Lord Jesus, the ‘sign’ can only be his cross (Motyer, 541).

I will send

Is the clearest Old Testament statement of the theme of missionary outreach.

The missionary obligation of the church is to create a magnetic community and to share a saving message (Motyer, 541).

Survivors

The missionaries are those who survive. In this text they are those who have escaped the manifestations of the Lord in fire and sword (Motyer, 541).

In terms of these chapters, they are those for whom the day of vengeance was rather the year of my redeemed (Motyer, 542).

Thus Peter, himself a survivor, pleads with his hearers to escape from that crooked generation (Acts 2:40).

Tarshish—Javan

The place-names are intended to be impressionistic rather than literal, creating a sense of world outreach.

Tarshish- Spain

Pul and Lud- southern territories. Pul is not mentioned anywhere in the bible. If we follow Codex Vaticanus and read “Put”, both Put and Lud were regions along the African coast of the Red Sea (Young, 533).

Tubul- probably northeast Asia Minor

Javan- Greece was in the far north.

Far away Islands

Glory

Whoever they are, they have this in common, that they have not heard a hearing message or seen the glory of Yahweh.

The primary aim in missionary and in all preaching is not the betterment of the hearer but the glory of God (Young, 533).

Defining the glory of God is impossible, I say, because it is more like the word *beauty* than the word *basketball*. If somebody says that they have never heard of a basketball — they don’t know what a basketball is — and so they say, “Define a basketball,” then that would not be hard for you to do. You can’t do that with the word *beauty*. There are some words in our vocabulary that we can communicate with not because we can say them, but because we see them. We can point. If we point at enough things and see enough things together and say, “That’s it! That’s it. —John Piper

Now when [Isaiah 6:3](#) says that one angel is crying to another, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts,” the next thing he says is this: “The whole earth is full of his . . .” You might have expected him to say, “holiness,” but he doesn’t say that. He says, “glory.”

The glory of God is the manifest beauty of his holiness. It is the going-public of his holiness. It is the way he puts his holiness on display for people to apprehend. So, the glory of God is the holiness of God made manifest. —John Piper

The glory of God is the infinite beauty and greatness of his manifold perfections.

20 They will bring all your brothers from all the nations as a gift to the LORD on horses and chariots, in litters, and on mules and camels, to my holy mountain Jerusalem,” says the LORD, “just as the Israelites bring an offering in a clean vessel to the house of the LORD.

Brother

Not fellow-Israelites—what an anti-climax that would be (Motyer, 542).

John 11:51 He did not say this on his own, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus was going to die for the nation, **52** and not for the nation only, but also to unite the scattered children of God.

Gift/offering

In respect of the missionaries, their converts are their holy gift to the Lord (Motyer, 542).

Animals

Horses- transportation for war

Mules- transportation on trade route

Camels- transportation in desert places

The breadth of animal mirrors the far reaching gospel message to the nations in v. 19.

21 I will also take some of them as priests and Levites,” says the LORD.

Under the law only one tribe was admitted to the priesthood, and the gentiles not only could not offer sacrifices, but were not even permitted access to the Temple. Under the Gospel, all without distinction are admitted to Zion (Young, 535).

If them = nations, this is the strongest statement in Isaiah that the election of Israel is not for Israel alone but for the entire world! (Oswalt, 697).

22 “For just as the new heavens and the new earth,
which I will make,
will remain before me”—
this is the LORD’s declaration—
“so your offspring and your name will remain.

To all this, verse 22 adds a guarantee of perpetuity.

Seed is virtually a technical term in a context such as this for the single family which is united in the common ancestor Abraham and the common salvation through the Servant (Motyer, 543).

23 All mankind will come to worship me
from one New Moon to another
and from one Sabbath to another,”
says the LORD.

Isaiah ends with the perfect keeping of the two feasts whose corruption distressed him in 1:13. They are feasts not fasts” the days of mourning are over (Motyer, 543).

New Moon

The celebration and hallowing of each month as it comes, increases the pressure to give first place to the Lord in the ordering of life.

Sabbath

The commandment which more than any other necessitates the submission of the practical planning of life to the Lord’s timetable, a searching test of practical holiness (Motyer, 543).

Is. 66:24 “As they leave, they will see the dead bodies of those who have rebelled against me; for their worm will never die, their fire will never go out, and they will be a horror to all mankind.”

Remarkably, there is a cemetery beside the city (Motyer, 543). Always as they come to worship, the redeemed deliberately make themselves face (go out and see) the fate from which they have been spared.

Such grimness is not out of place in these final chapters of Isaiah.

Those who do not tremble at the Lord, or embrace His glory, will face similar fate.

It’s fanciful to imagine that as they debated their choice they heard a voice which said, ‘Did God really say...’ (Gen. 3:1).

Mark 9:47 And if your eye causes you to fall away, gouge it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell, **48** where **their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.** **49** For everyone will be salted with fire. **50** Salt is good, but if the salt should lose its flavor, how can you season it? Have salt among yourselves, and be at peace with one another.”

If announcement of the Anointed Conqueror will not suffice, then maybe the unmistakably horrible rewards of disobedience will drive our wayward hearts to tremble at the word of the Lord (Motyer, 544).

The promises of God are yes and amen. On the other hand, whether any of us participate in those promises is strictly up to us, and Isaiah never wants that to be forgotten (Oswalt, 697).

Hell

Such, in brief, is the portion awaiting the lost – eternal separation from the Fount of all goodness; everlasting punishment; torment of soul and body; endless existence in the Lake of Fire, in association with the vilest of the vile; every ray of hope excluded; utterly crushed and overwhelmed by the wrath of a sin-avenging God! –A.W. Pink

To have God’s countenance not only turned from us, but turned against us, His eternal frown instead of His smile – this will be hell instead of heaven. –Charles Bridges

Illustrations

It is as if you were standing before a dam 10,000 feet high filled with millions of gallons of water. And in

Application
