
Good morning I am Josh Burnham and I'm the lead pastor here at Bethel. For all of our guests, those watching online, and all our covenant members, welcome! Why are days like today so important? Because God's people have always gathered. We gather to rest. We gather to worship. We gather to encourage. We gather to glorify the only one who is worthy to be praised.

Today we continue a new series in the book of Isaiah entitled "Yahweh saves." Isaiah was a man in the Old Testament who lived in the 8th c. BC and has come to be known as the **prince of the prophets**. This book in the OT contains an unparalleled sweep of theology and His view of Yahweh is comprehensive. Above all, Isaiah champions the **promise that the Lord saves**. If you have your Bible's with you please join me in Isaiah 1:1 with a message titled: "Listen to This."

"Listen to This (Isaiah 1:1-6)

Your Fallen Condition (1:4)

The Lord, speaking to his covenant community, through the prophet Isaiah, unveils His revelation steeped in familial and fatherly language. "I raised children and brought them up." You can hear the patristic heart towards a people who are loved, cared, and protected. This is the heart that Isaiah reveals. **The condition of your heart matters because of the Holy heart of the Father towards you.**

*This past week I had the great joy to spend a week in Bulgaria investing in the church and sharing the Gospel. One man, Rumen, would pray over young men putting his enormous hands on their cheeks, looking them in the eyes, and then speaking a blessing. This is what the Lord is doing to His people. To set the stage, God brings his children close and says, "listen." What does the Lord want you to listen to; he desires that you know to your heart (**Place hand over heart**). In every heart lies a deep dark root called sin.*

Sin (1:4) is eternal rebellion against an infinite holy and sovereign Messiah. Listen to how David, a man described as person after God's own heart (1 Sam. 13:14) describes his transgression: **Ps 51:6 Against You alone have I sinned, and done what is evil in Your sight; so You are just in Your sentence, and right in Your judgment.** When we diminish, ignore, or explain away our sin we attempt to suppress the majesty and the glory of the Creator. **If we never chop down the root of sin in our lives, it will continue to reign and grow.**

The words of the prophet are both shocking and horrifying. Isaiah commences to describe the qualities of our hearts with four nouns that describe privilege and four adjectives how it was corrupted.

Your heart is sinful: misses the mark. To sin is to willingly act contrary to the will and law of God and to move away from the standard that Yahweh has set. The Bible describes **us all this way:** all have sinned and fallen short. Brothers, we have missed the mark.

Weighed down. This is the same word, kabod, that describes the honor, majesty, and the glory of Jesus Christ. Here, it demonstrates the weight we carry because of our rebellion. My son you don't have to carry this weight.

Abandoned. We by nature have left rejected and deserted our heavenly father. *God, never walked away from you.* Even if he feels far off, know that it was you that created the distance.

Despised: to treat with contempt, revile, despise; be blasphemed, be reviled. It sounds like a hiss or spitting sound.

This is how we have treated our loving heavenly Father who raised us. This is the condition of our hearts. It's quite amazing that Isaiah "Yahweh is my salvation" begins with a difficult opening. The deep wicked condition of Israel was beyond repair.

Isaiah painted a dark picture of the community of faith., and our dark conditions. Have you ever been in a dark place? *I remember venturing down into the caves of the Carlsbad caverns and ruby falls. Deep inside the earth, when all lights are dimmed you cannot even see your hand in front of your face. It's hard to describe the darkness. It was so heavy you could almost feel it. In this moment, I longed for light. Even one ray of the sun would be welcomed. Those who understand their darkness most appreciate and long for the light.* Those who forget their need never live in the thankful joy of God's grace. Have you forgotten how dark your heart is? Never forget your **dark fallen condition!** Never forget his merciful light!

A Foolish Rebellion (1:5)

Through the prophet Isaiah, the Lord is looking down upon His people grieving at their current condition: living in rebellion and facing difficulty they were never created to receive or endure.

Listen to the heavenly question, "why, why?" God clearly demonstrates that sin leads us down a path we were never created to walk. Why?

Sin is not only unreasonable but also unreasoning. It makes you unable to draw proper conclusions and make appropriate responses. How often do we make foolish decisions when are living in sin and wonder why these sinful decisions lead to heartache.

The foolishness of individual rebellion is often most easily visible corporately. None of the kings under whom Isaiah ministered were fools politically, economically, or militarily. It is not, however, these factors which make for national well-being or security. For all their worldly wisdom, the country sickened unto death under them. Like Israel, our nation and world is sick unto death. **We** glamorize sexual sin, **we** celebrate the death of abortion, and we kill ourselves for the sake of economic security as we ignore our families. From the sole to the head, no spot is uninured. Some of you are walking in sin today. Isaiah urges you to wake up: why, why?!

Sin will take you farther than you wanna go
Slowly but wholly taking control
Sin will leave you longer than you wanna stay
Sin will cost you far more than you wanna pay- **It's not too late to turn to the Messiah**

A Faithless Worship (1:11)

And sin ignored or left unchecked always leads to a faithless worship. Make no mistake about it, this is a deadly cancer that few see. Dangerously, no one can see your heart today, but God can.

What are all of your sacrifices? The ritual activity is described in vv. 11-15 is probably to be seen as Judah's reaction to the disaster. **The worship describes in Isaiah 1:11 is parallel to the full pews following 9/11.** Such disasters normally led to public fasts and additional sacrifices, to remedy the anger of God and so prevent further loses. **Israel did not desire relationship** with the Father, their faithfulness worship was an attempt for God to **relent from disaster and increase their comfort**. In essence, they didn't want covenant relationship, they simply wanted to avoid hurt and Hell.

These verses make three specific assertions about faithless worship:

1. Faithless sacrifices mean nothing to the Lord. **"What are all your sacrifices to me?"**
2. Faithless worship adds nothing for the Lord. **"I have had enough of burnt offerings and rams.** The quantity and **costliness of sacrifice are an insult** to the Lord if they are not being offered by people who truly acknowledge Him
3. Faithless worship and does nothing for the Lord. **I have no desire**

Outside the context of obedience, the law of sacrifice has no usefulness in our relationship. **God does not want your religious exercise if you have not given Him your heart.** Gospel= redemption (Exod 12), the giving of the law (Exod 20), and the institution of religious observance (Exod 25-Lev 27) followed each other in that order. **Listen, God hates (1:14) faithless worship,** and it is **heartbreaking to think that I can leave here today and God hate what I have offered.**

Why would Isaiah begin his prophecy with such a devastating picture of hopeless? Because these foundation sets the stage for the greatest story every told.

A Faith that Works (1:16)

God does not want you remain in a broken relationship with your Creator. He does not want you to languish in religious rituals that will **never satisfy and never bring you hope.** Instead, God wants you to have everlasting life that is abundant and allows you to live in His image.

A faith that works does not begin with you **dressing** up for church, it begins with a **washing of the heart and a cleansing** of your life. **"Wash yourselves. Cleanse yourselves."** The instructions to wash and remove to not point to the tidying up of the consequences of sin. Isaiah is **not asking Israel to apologize** or feel sorry.. Isaiah is commending the people to make a radical departure from their sin. This repentance an about face from where you are to where God is.

Washing is a purity before the Lord. Out of my sight- indicates that the Lord's appointed means of cleansing can be guaranteed to remove every uncleanness which he would otherwise see. *A gypsy story. One of the communities we served last week in Bulgaria were the Roma Gypsy people. This community is ostracized and kept on the outskirts of town. When we arrived to the first village, the first thing I noticed was that the shacks were built in the trash heap. But something amazing happens to those who have found Christ. One follower of Jesus invited us into her shack with pride, it was neat, clean, and orderly. See, with pride she had washed her life and cleansed her house because Jesus radically changed her life. A Faith that works displays:*

1. The decisive abandonment of the old life (1:16)
2. Development of a new mind (1:17). When you have hope for tomorrow you wash your life today.
3. Setting new priorities to the Lord's will (1:17).

Oh that the Lord would instill in us a faith that works

A Faithful Father (1:18)

In response to a community that was living a lie and “playing church,” God lovingly speaks. “[Come, let us settle this,](#)” says the LORD. This word has a legal background and refers to the arbitration of legal disputes. Yahweh offers to resolve his dispute with Israel on the basis of the change of behavior demanded above.

The choice is clear: life or death, the blessing or the curse. The choice of living in covenant with Yahweh or rejecting that fellowship

Are you willing (1:19)?

If you are willing—refuse requires a response of will and deed. *In these Roma villages, extremely poor and with little hope, two distinct lives were noticeable.* (Pad transition to response)

Some houses were small, dirty and falling in. As we listened to the people it quickly became apparent that these residents had no hope for tomorrow. And because they had no hope they had no desire to change their situation and were content to live in filth.

But there were other houses, still small and poor but these houses were orderly, clean, and purposeful. These were the houses of men and women who were loved and forgiven by Jesus. **If Christ visited your house today what would he find? Are you willing? Are you obedient?**

“Though your sins are scarlet, they will be as white as snow; though they are crimson red, they will be like wool.”

This is the promise of a faithful father. A forgiven life is a life that has found unconditional forgiveness through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. God does not want us to settle for faithless worship and live in the foolishness of our sin. Listen to this: *He is the Lord who saves!*

Notes

s. 1:1 The vision concerning Judah and Jerusalem that Isaiah son of Amoz saw during the reigns of Kings Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah of Judah.

2 Listen, heavens, and pay attention, earth,
for the LORD has spoken:
“I have raised children and brought them up,
but they have rebelled against me.

The reason for the appeal to heaven and earth is that heaven and earth were invoked as witnesses when God made his covenant with Israel (Roberts, 19).

3 The ox knows its owner,
and the donkey its master’s feeding trough,
but Israel does not know;
my people do not understand.”

Is. 1:4 **On** sinful nation,
people weighed down with iniquity,
brood of evildoers,
depraved children!

They have abandoned the LORD;
they have despised the Holy One of Israel;
they have turned their backs on him.

Here we find a fourfold description of the character of the people, each phrase combining a noun that designates privileged status with a qualifying term that negates it (Mackay, 51).

The vocative participle (hoy) has its closest English correspondence in the colloquial interjection, hey! It normally introduces a new oracle.

It's quite amazing that Isaiah "Yahweh is my salvation" begins with a difficult opening. The deep iniquitous condition of Israel was beyond repair.

Israel's behavior is sinful precisely because it involves a breach of contract; it is not the behavior God could legitimately expect of His people (Roberts, 20).

Sonship is a redemption concept. The picture of the attentive parent and the growing child covers the whole historical period from Exodus to Isaiah (Motyer, 43).

The charge continues as four nouns describe privilege and four adjectives describe how it was corrupted (Motyer, 43).

Only commitment to the Lord secures true values in life; when the commitment goes, values follow. To forsake the Lord is the opposite of to seek the Lord (Motyer, 43).

The words used by the prophet are both shocking and horrifying. Isaiah commences to describe the qualities of our hearts:

Sinful- חָטָא *ḥāṭā'* 240x

v. [root of: 2628, 2629, 2630, 2631, 2632, 2633]. **Q** to sin, do wrong, miss the way; **P** to purify, cleanse, to offer a sin offering; **H** to bring a sin upon, cause to commit a sin; **Ht** to purify oneself; "to sin," to willfully act contrary to the will and law of God, is a figure of missing or moving from a standard or mark

weighed- כָּבֵד *kābēd* 114x

v. [root of: 3878, 3879, 3880, 3881, 3883, 3884, 3885]. **Q** to be heavy; to be wealthy, honored, glorified; to be failing, dull; **N** to be glorified, honored, renowned; **P** to honor, glorify, reward; **Pu** to be honored; **H** to make heavy, make hard; **Ht** to make numerous; honor oneself. If the base meaning is "to be weighty or heavy,"

"seed of those who do evil." This is the same word used to describe the offspring of Abraham/righteousness.

Depraved- שָׁחַת *šāḥat* 152x

v. [root of: 5422, 5424, 5425, 5426; 10705]. **N** to be corrupt, be ruined, be marred; **P** to corrupt, destroy, ruin; **H** to destroy, corrupt, bring to ruin.

My response to the Lord will always reflect the condition of my heart.

Abandoned- אָזַב *ʾāzab* 214x

v. [root of: 6442, 6447, 6448]. **Q** to leave, abandon, reject, desert; **Qp** be left, be abandoned, be freed; **N** be abandoned, be forsaken, be neglected; **Pu** be deserted, be abandoned.

Despised- נָאֵשׁ *nāʾaš* 24x

v. [root of: 5541, 5542]. **Q** to spurn, despise, reject; **P** to treat with contempt, revile, despise; **Htpo** be blasphemed, be reviled.

Turned- זָרַח *zur* 6x

v. [root of: 2424; cf. 2302]. **Q, N, Ho** to go astray, turn aside, be estranged.

Is. 1:5 **Why** do you want more beatings?

Why do you keep on rebelling?

The whole head is hurt,
and the whole heart is sick.

6 From the sole of the foot even to the head,
no spot is uninjured
wounds, welts, and festering sores
not cleansed, bandaged,
or soothed with oil.

Through the prophet Isaiah, the Lord is looking down upon His people grieving at their current condition. Living in rebellion and facing difficulty they were never created to receive or endure.

Listen to the heavenly question, “why, why?”

Sin is not only unreasonable but also unreasoning, unable to draw proper conclusions and make appropriate responses (Motyer, 44).

Rebellion- sara- emphasizes stubbornness rather than willfulness.

None of the kings under whom Isaiah ministered were fools politically, economically, or militarily. It is not, however, these factors which make for national well-being or security. For all their worldly wisdom, the country sickened unto death under them (Motyer, 44).

Is. 1:7 Your land is desolate,
your cities burned down;
foreigners devour your fields
right in front of you—

a desolation, like a place demolished by foreigners.
 8 Daughter Zion is abandoned
 like a shelter in a vineyard,
 like a shack in a cucumber field,
 like a besieged city.
 9 If the LORD of Armies
 had not left us a few survivors,
 we would be like Sodom,
 we would resemble Gomorrah.

Lord of hosts- is one of Isaiah's favorite designations for God, occurring some 55 times in Isaiah 1-39, but its occurrence here is hardly by chance. Judah's devastating defeat could have been seen as Yahweh's defeat at the hand of more powerful Assyrian gods, but Isaiah suggests instead that it was Yahweh's own mighty that was behind Judah's defeat (Roberts, 22).

Is. 1:10 Hear the word of the LORD,
 you rulers of Sodom!
 Listen to the instruction of our God,
 you people of Gomorrah!

11 "What are all your sacrifices to me?"
 asks the LORD.
 "I have had enough of burnt offerings and rams
 and the fat of well-fed cattle;
 I have no desire for the blood of bulls,
 lambs, or male goats.

The ritual activity is described in vv. 11-15 is probably to be seen as Judah's reaction to the disaster. Such disasters normally led to public fasts and additional sacrifices, as well as more punctilious observance of the regular rituals in an attempt to placate the anger of God and so prevent further losses (Roberts, 23).

The quantity and costliness of sacrifice are an insult to the Lord if they are not being offered by people who truly acknowledge Him (Mackay, 62).

In the Mosaic deposit, redemption (Exod 12), the giving of the law (Exod 20), and the institution of religious observance (Exod 25-Lev 27) followed each other in that order.

Outside the context of the law of obedience the law of sacrifice had no utility (Motyer, 46).

This verse makes three assertions: these sacrifices mean nothing to the Lord (what are they), add nothing (I have more than), and do nothing (I have no pleasure).

12 When you come to appear before me,

who requires this from you—
this trampling of my courts?

It was an affront to his majesty and violated the sacred precincts to come with feigned expression of loyalty (Mackay, 63)

13 Stop bringing useless offerings.
Your incense is detestable to me.
New Moons and Sabbaths,
and the calling of solemn assemblies
I cannot stand iniquity with a festival.

Useless does not convey the idea that the animals were cheap, or of inferior quality, but rather that as religious symbols they were insubstantial and ineffective because they were offered on a false basis (Mackay, 63).

14 I hate your New Moons and prescribed festivals.
They have become a burden to me;
I am tired of putting up with them.
15 When you spread out your hands in prayer,
I will refuse to look at you;
even if you offer countless prayers,
I will not listen.
Your hands are covered with blood.

The hands stretched forth in prayer were full of blood. This is not the blood of the sacrificial animals but blood shed by violence

Ritual is meaningless until proper relationship is restored by a dramatic change in the people's behavior (Roberts, 23).

The purpose of the sacrificial ritual was to maintain the relationship with God, and that involved, among other things, seeking forgiveness for any sins that might rupture this relationship.

Will God accept my worship without faith?

Is. 1:16 "Wash yourselves. Cleanse yourselves.
Remove your evil deeds from my sight.
Stop doing evil.

What Yahweh requires is not in the first instance sacrifice in the sanctuary, but behavior that is the outward expression of inward loyalty (Mackay, 67).

The instructions wash and remove do not point to tidying up the consequences of sin. What is required is a radical departure from committing evil acts (Mackay, 68).

Wash- purity before God.

Out of my sight- indicates that the Lord's appointed means of cleansing can be guaranteed to remove every uncleanness which he would otherwise see (Motyer, 47).

- 17 Learn to do what is good.
Pursue justice.
Correct the oppressor.
Defend the rights of the fatherless.
Plead the widow's cause.

Faith that works

Unless the widow or orphan had an influential advocate, they had little hope of even having their case heard, much less decided in their favor (Roberts, 24).

The Lord gives three commands for the reordering of personal life. They are the decisive abandonment of the old life, development of a new mind, and setting new priorities to the Lord's stated will (Motyer, 47).

- Is. 1:18 "Come, let us settle this,"
says the LORD.
"Though your sins are scarlet,
they will be as white as snow;
though they are crimson red,
they will be like wool.
19 If you are willing and obedient,
you will eat the good things of the land.
20 But if you refuse and rebel,
you will be devoured by the sword."
For the mouth of the LORD has spoken.

Settle This יָקַח *yāqah* 59x

v. [root of: 9349, 9350]. **N** to reason together (in a legal case); to be vindicated; **H** to rebuke, discipline, punish; decide, argue, defend, judge; **Ho** to be chastened; **Ht** to lodge a charge

This word has a legal background and refers to the arbitration of legal disputes. Yahweh offers to resolve his dispute with Israel on the basis of the change of behavior demanded above.

The choice is clear: life or death, the blessing or the curse. The choice of living in covenant with Yahweh or rejecting that fellowship (Roberts, 24).

If you are willing—refuse requires a response of will and deed.

Illustrations

Crisis

. Once he hands the ball off, the entire focus of the opponent chances. Hand the ball of to Christ

Application

Tony Snow, former press secretary for President George W. Bush, has been battling cancer, off and on, since