

Citizens of Heaven

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[0:00] In Isaiah chapter 10, Martin Luther commenting on the word of God is living and active says it has feet that run after me and the Bible has hands that grab hold of me.

And this is one of the ways that the Lord Jesus holds his people fast. It's through his word that he grips us and he holds us may grab us tonight with his own word.

I'm reading chapter 10 in verse 6 and through chapter 11 in verse 3. The living and active word of God.

I will strengthen the house of Judah and save the house of Joseph. I will restore them because I have compassion on them. They will be as though I had not rejected them for I am the Lord their God and I will answer them.

The Ephraimites will become like mighty men and their hearts will be glad as with wine. Their children will see it and be joyful. Their hearts will rejoice in the Lord.

[1:05] I will signal for them and gather them in. Surely I will redeem them. They will be as numerous as before. Though I scatter them among the peoples yet in distant lands, they will remember me.

They and their children will survive and they will return. I will bring them back from Egypt and gather them from Assyria. I will bring them to Gilead and Lebanon and there will not be room enough for them.

They will pass through the sea of trouble. The surging sea will be subdued and all the depths of the Nile will be dried up. Assyria's pride will be brought down and Egypt's scepter will pass away.

I will strengthen them in the Lord and in his name they will walk, declares the Lord. Open your doors, O Lebanon, so that the fire may devour your cedars.

Wail, O pine tree, for the cedar has fallen. The stately trees are ruined. Wail, oaks of Bashan. The dense forest has been cut down.

[2:13] Listen to the wail of the shepherds. Their rich pastures are destroyed. Listen to the roar of the lions. The lush thicket of the Jordan is ruined.

There is a lot of bad news out there. Part of the problem is, and one of the reasons for so much bad news is that bad news sells.

Bad news catches people's eyes. And even good news can be shaped into bad news. I was listening to the radio the other day, and it said the employment numbers for August have come out. And the economy added 100,000 new jobs in August. Good news? Well, not so fast. I thought it was at first, but then I listened more closely.

It wasn't as much as they were hoping for. And the pay increase only rose a fraction of a percentage. Somehow the good news ended up feeling like bad news.

[3:24] But, brothers and sisters, we are good news people. We ought to be good news people. That's not sticking our head in the sand, and it's not whistling in the dark pretending there's nothing bad out there.

But we have good news that doesn't arrive or doesn't show up on our doorstep from earth, but we have good news from heaven. And so that should make a big difference in our lives.

John 1 says, There came a man who was sent from God. His name was John, and he came as a witness to testify concerning the light. So here comes a messenger from God, a mailman from God, and he comes with a message, and he's testifying to the light.

He's testifying to Jesus. He has something good to say to a dark world, that the light is coming. So it's light for a dark world. It's that thrill of hope that we sing about at Christmastime.

It's good news that says things are actually going to change. The world is going to be turned upside down. Maybe you remember, we haven't got there yet, but in a few weeks I think we'll get there in

Acts.

[4:41] But Paul and Silas' enemies said about them, These men have turned the world upside down. The gospel had so much power, they said it's turning the world upside down.

Well, the world does need turned upside down, doesn't it? It's not the way it should be. But the good news is that the king is coming, gentle and riding on a donkey, having salvation.

And so there's bad news. The world lives on that and feeds on that. And there's good news. The gospel of God's son.

Someone to trust in the light and the darkness. And so just let me ask you, what has more bearing on your heart? What has more bearing on your mood and your attitude?

The bad news out there or the good news that is from heaven, that is eternal? The things that Fox is saying or the things that God is saying? Well, last week in Zechariah, we saw that God was going to take care of Israel's leadership problem.

[5:51] He's going to take care of Israel's leadership problem. And it's a theme that we're going to see again in chapter 11 in a few weeks. But God's answer to the leadership problem was the same answer that he had for Israel's history problem and their sin problem and their future problem.

It was Jesus. God's answer to man's problems is his son. And so from Judah will come the cornerstone and from him the tent peg and from him the battle bow and from him every ruler.

And so out of Judah would come a shepherd after God's own heart. David's son, yet David's Lord. And with his coming, with his arrival on the scene, it was going to begin to turn this whole world upside down.

And he's going to turn the whole ship around. And so we see in verses 6 through, well, chapter 10, verse 6 through 11, 3, we're going to see three ways that Christ is turning and has been turning the world upside down.

And you see the first there in verses 6 and 7. And the heart of this is that those who are rejected are going to be accepted. The rejected are accepted.

[7:09] Rejected. Now, Judah, Ephraim, the house of Judah, the house of Joseph, that represented the southern tribes, the northern tribes.

God had sent them both into exile. They had been rejected. They had been cast out of the land. And it was a redo. It was another.

It was a recycling of what happened when Adam and Eve were rejected and pushed out of the garden. And that's where all of us are. That's where all of us are born.

We were born outside of the garden, rejected by God. Thrust away, unheard, unheeded. And that picture was repeated in the exile.

They again and again had chosen their idols. They had chosen to believe what was convenient to them. They suppressed the truth in their unrighteousness. Although they knew God's righteous decree that those who did such things deserve death, they not only continued to do so, but they approved of those who practiced them.

[8:12] And yet, the coming of the king opens the door for those who had been rejected to be accepted, to be brought in.

The king is going to bring them back. We have to remember that this whole chunk of prophecy, it had sort of its beginning and its high point.

Back there in Zechariah 9.9, where it talked about the king comes to you. And when he comes, things are going to begin to change.

And this is just playing out that theme. Now, there are several words here that describe salvation, that describe the good news for Zechariah's people.

Verse 6 says, I will strengthen them. I will strengthen them. The weak, the helpless, God is going to give new life to them. New strength.

[9:13] And so, brothers and sisters, where were we? What kind of spiritual strength did we have before Jesus came? We had none. We were dead in our transgressions. We were wallowing in the grave of our sin with no power, no strength.

We didn't know the way back to God. We didn't know. We didn't want to get back to God. We couldn't get back to God. Every part of us was fallen, was wounded, was dead to God.

And yet the good news is, God says, I will strengthen them. They're far away, far out there, rejected. And God says, I will give them strength so that they can come back to me.

And so God gives this new life. And then he says, I will strengthen and I will save. I will save. I will save the house of Joseph. The good news is about rescue.

It's about rescue. It's about rescue. It's about something that we are in desperate need of, and yet God does, of rescuing his people. And we have been rescued.

[10:16] Rescued from Satan's kingdom. Rescued from the eternal consequences of sin. So just think about where your sin would have taken you. So go in your time machine and back up to your pre-conversion days, to your pre-Christian days.

There you are in your sin. What would the eternal consequences have been? You go to Niagara Falls, and you can read about people who have fallen into the Niagara River, and then been swept over the side.

Well, we had fallen into the river. We had fallen into the river, and we were quickly being swept over. We were destined to plunge over the edge straight into the fiery lake of burning sulfur. And yet God saved us. He saved us. He saved us from eternal consequences. But he also saved us from the power and the clutches of sin, the dominion of sin, from the death that we just talked about.

So sin is eternally bad. A lot of people want to be saved from hell, and that is a good thing to want to be saved from. But sin makes your life bad right now.

[11:41] There's nothing more destructive. The most destructive power in the universe is sin. Given the choice between sin and AIDS, you should choose AIDS. Given the choice between sin and Ebola, you should choose Ebola.

Because Ebola doesn't separate you from God. Ebola doesn't ruin your family. It doesn't leave scars that last for decades. Ebola doesn't keep you from joy.

I'm not saying that it's pleasant. But Ebola won't put a hook in your conscience. And then slowly drip poison into your heart.

The worst Ebola can do is kill you once. Sin can make your very existence death. The second death. And that's where we were.

That's where we were. Sin was in our hearts. It was festering like a cancer. Sin was in our hearts. And God saved us. And that's the good news. We're no longer under sin, but we're under grace.

[12:43] A new power has come into our lives. We're no longer slaves to sin, but slaves to righteousness, which leads to life. So he says next, I will restore them because I have compassion on them.

So his heart moves. And he says, I will restore them. The picture is something that has fallen. A vase that has fallen and been broken. A picture that's been defaced.

And he's going to put it back right. And so Judah had fallen. Israel had fallen. With King David and King Solomon, they had been riding on the heights of the land.

They were prosperous. They were blessed. They were strong. They were free. And yet how far they had fallen. Now they're just a little tiny little thing, a little bigger than Marshall County with about the same amount of people as Marshall County.

With no power. Under the heel of the Persian Empire. Poor. And they're fallen from God. Fallen away from his blessing. And he is beginning to restore them with bringing them back.

[13:50] But he said, there's going to be greater restoration for my people. They had lost all their beauty. But God says, I'm going to restore them. And brush stroke by brush stroke.

He takes away their ugliness. And he's going to give them their beauty. Christian, that's what God's doing in your life now. That's what he's doing in sanctification.

He has compassion on you. And so brush stroke by brush stroke, like a magnificent artist, he's taking his ugly, his faded masterpiece. It's been ruined by sin.

And he's restoring us. He's giving us back our beauty. Putting us back into our place. Then he says, I will answer them. I will answer them.

That can seem so ordinary. Until you realize the alternative of asking and not being answered. Of calling out to God and him ignoring you.

[14:55] But here he says, the barriers, the separations is going to be all gone. And you're going to have my ear. So when is all this going to be fulfilled?

All this, I will, I will, I will, I will. Is it just for them? Well, it's for us. These things have come to us. Because we have believed in Jesus Christ.

These promises are ours. Romans 15 says that what was written in the past. And Zechariah was written in the past from Paul's perspective in Romans. What was written in the past was written to teach us.

This passage right in front of us is written to us to teach us. To teach us what kind of God we have. To teach us his promises. So that through the endurance and the encouragement of the scriptures. That we might have hope. This passage is one of those hope building passages in the Old Testament. That teaches us this is the kind of God that we have.

[15 : 54] This is what he is going to do. This is the good news that has come to us. And so Zechariah 10 is here for us to teach us. To give us encouragement. That we can have hope.

That's the opposite of the bad news that we talked about at the very beginning. To have a sense of hope. That there is good news. And so that's not the bad news that the world lives on.

But it's the scriptures that is teaching us to live on the good news. And so are you weak? He says I will strengthen. Are you trapped in some sin?

He says I will save. Have you fallen? He says I will restore. Do you desperately need God to answer? He says I will answer them. Do you need God to act?

I will answer them. So that's the world you live in. That's what Jesus has brought into your life. He has begun to turn the world completely upside down. You were all of these things.

[16 : 54] You used to be weak. And dead. And alone. And unanswered. Fallen. But God says I'm turning the world upside down. I'm changing the way that I behave towards them.

And so what should our response be? Verse 7. Their hearts will be glad. They will be joyful. They will rejoice in the Lord. We need to get rid of the sad faces.

The perpetually sad faces. Of the uncertainty. Put away fear. For he says I am. I am the Lord their God. And I will answer them.

What problem do you need to bring that promise to? In your life? What problem do you need to bring that promise to?

What sin? What difficulty? What trial? What thing in your life? Do you need to put away the fear? And instead embrace the promises.

[17 : 53] I am the Lord their God. And I will answer them. So. This is the reason we need to rejoice. Because this promise is ours.

Are you weak? Christ's power rests upon you. Are you trapped? Christ is gentle and having salvation. Are you fallen? Well the king is proclaiming peace.

Do you need him to act? His rule extends from sea to sea. There's no place. There's nowhere. There's no person. Where Christ's power cannot be felt.

And so. The result should be that we should be people of joy. We should be people of hope and expectation. Because look at what God has done.

And he is doing for us. We were without God. And without hope. We were. We were. But now God is ours.

[18 : 51] The present is ours. The future is ours. And Paul could write to the Corinthians and say. All things are yours. So the poor are rich.

The sad are comforted. The meek will inherit the earth. The hungry are filled. The cast down. The insulted and the persecuted. Will receive the kingdom of God.

But the rich. The well fed. The righteous. The laughing. The self-righteous. The laughing. Now. Jesus says.

Whoa. Whoa. Whoa. To you. Because the world is turning upside down. And what was on the bottom is going to be on the top. And what is on the top is going to be now on the bottom.

So the gospel has come. The rejected are accepted. Now secondly. The scattered are gathered. The scattered are gathered. Verse 8. I will signal for them and gather them in.

[19 : 51] It's a picture of a shepherd. Who has a pipe. Or some sort of musical instrument. And he blows on his pipe. And the sheep who are far out there.

All over the place. All across the field. Come streaming back together. Coming back together. That's the picture here. Some from here.

Some from there. Coming back to the shepherd. And right now. That's what is going on. God is calling. And his sheep are coming.

They're coming out of our country. They're coming out of every other country of the world. They're coming out of small towns. And they're coming out of big cities. They're coming from every racial

background. They're coming from every economic background.

And so the good news is ringing out. God's spirit goes into the world. He's calling his people in. And he's calling us all back together. God's spirit goes into the world.

[20 : 49] God's spirit goes into the world. So now. We were once not a people. But now we are a people. We are the people of God. So. Think of this. It's a wonder that what God has done here.

We have different personalities. Different backgrounds. Different jobs. Different hobbies. Different family situations. We were scattered. And yet. God has all called us together.

There was nothing to draw most of us to each other. And now we are a people. We are a people. We are a family. You. Understand me in ways.

That other people couldn't. And you care for me in ways. That never even occurs to others. You love. Me like others can't love me.

And the thing is. Is we find that spirit in each one of us. I find that same spirit in me. You are my people. We rejoice together.

[21 : 54] And we mourn together. We're in this together. And all together. We're marching to a different land. We're coming out of Egypt.

And we're going to Canaan. So God's calling is a picture. One picture of salvation. And another picture is the second exodus. Another exodus.

Another leaving Egypt and going to the promised land. A second escape. And that's what you see in verse 11. They will pass through the sea of trouble. The surging sea will be subdued.

And all the depths of the Nile will dry up. So think about the power that God used. When he subdued the Red Sea. And he split it. And he dried it up.

It was a troubled sea. A surging sea. And God puts forth his power. And his people walk through. So it's this redo. This is what is going on.

[22 : 53] It's a redo. It's another exodus. And that's what the life of the Christian is. God has rescued you out of Egypt. And we're journeying together through this desert.

But Canaan is up ahead. And so we're passing through the sea of trouble. That's this life. A veil of tears. A sea of trouble. The surging sea. But we don't have Moses in front of us.

We have Jesus Christ in front of us. And so when Jesus talked about salvation. And when he talked about himself. He often used terms and ideas from the Exodus.

So Hebrews tells us that he was the Passover lamb who was slain. He's the bread of life. Jesus said, I am the bread of life. I'm the true manna.

He's the rock that God strikes. And water comes out. Life comes out. He says, I am the light of the world. No man who follows me will walk in darkness.

[23 : 55] But will have the light of life. So remember the fiery pillar that the Israelites followed through the desert. It was a cloud over them in the day. And it was a fiery pillar at night.

So the manna. The water. The fiery pillar. The Passover lamb. Jesus was saying, that's me. That's me. And you are my people.

And I am going to take you from Egypt to Canaan. I'm going to take you through the troubled sea. And to the promised land. And so he leads us.

This is the good news. We're not a flock without a shepherd. We're not a people without a king. He leads us through every barrier. Every sea.

Every river. Every fiery trial. Until we safely arrive at home. So once we were not a people. Once we were scattered.

[24 : 56] And yet he is gathering us up. Leading us onward. We are the sheep of his pasture. Now third. The proud are humbled. The gospel turns the world upside down.

And the proud are humbled in the gospel. Verse 11. Assyria's pride will be brought down. And Egypt's scepter will pass away. So Assyria's pride.

Egypt's military and political power will pass away. Then at the beginning of chapter 11. You have this poem. About the cedars of Lebanon. And the lesser trees are mourning the destruction.

The cedars were what Lebanon was famous for. The cedars were the pride of Lebanon. And here now all the lesser trees are mourning the destruction of their pride.

The oaks are cut down. The rich pastures are destroyed. The lush thickets around Jordan are ruined. It's pictures of prosperity. It's pictures of human pride. So these cedars.

[25 : 54] These oaks. These rich pastures. They're all symbols of pride. And God is saying. All of it. I'm going to destroy all of it. Open your doors Lebanon. The fire is coming. So the gospel is God's

war on man's pride.

The gospel is God's war on the pride of man. Man thinks I don't need to be saved. The gospel says you desperately need to be saved. And if a man will say. Well I do need to be saved.

But I can save myself. The gospel says no you can't. Men think that it's all about their goodness. And their ideas.

And their strength. And their effort. And their thoughts. And it's all about them. And what they think. And what they can do. And the gospel says.

Undercuts it all. Says none of that will do. None of that will measure up. And in fact. That will drive you farther away. It's the pride of man in salvation.

[26 : 56] It's the pride of man in what he has done. Assyria was proud. Nebuchadnezzar said. Isn't this the Babylon that I have built? That's the heart of man. That's not just particular to Nebuchadnezzar.

How many people can look over their own little houses. And their jobs. And their businesses. And their companies. And with Nebuchadnezzar say. Look at what my hands have built. Look at what I have done with my life.

Look at my kids. Look at my business. Look at what I've done. It's the pride of the United States. It's the pride of Rome. And every other power. But in the end.

The pride of man. Of men. Will be humbled. So for us. Don't fret. Don't fret. When you see men prospering.

Don't fret. When you see people going on their way. Psalm 37. For like the grass. They will soon wither. A little while. And the wicked will be no more.

[27 : 53] Though you look for them. You will not be able to find them. James says. The rich should take pride in their low. In their humble circumstances. Their low position.

Because the sun rises. With its scorching heat. The plant withers. The blossom falls. And its beauty. Is destroyed. Psalm 73. Asaph says. How quickly.

Are they destroyed. Cast down to utter ruin. God is turning. The world.

Upside down. And so. In this new world. That God is making. The humble. Are exalted. And those who go the lowest. Are raised the highest.

And that's why Jesus. Gets the top spot. Because he's earned the top spot. Because he's gone the lowest. And those who are proud. Will be humble.

[28 : 51] God abhors the pride of men. So his salvation. Isn't like any salvation. That any person. Has ever dreamt up. The king didn't come.

Riding on a war horse. Magnificent. And glorious. He came humble. On a donkey. And he didn't win. Through a sword. He didn't win. Through political power. Political action. He didn't even win. By a long. Successful life. He was cut off. From the land of the living. He conquered through death. And that's the.

The epitome of human weakness. That we can't even keep the breath. In our mouth. But his death. Wow.

His death. It put. The powers and authorities. Of heaven to shame. And he conquered. And disarmed them. And he made a mockery. Of them. His death.

[29 : 47] He drew all men to himself. Remember in John. He said. When I am lifted up. I will draw all men to myself. What was God's whistle. To whistle the people out. Of. Of the places where they were.

Well. It was his son. Being crucified. It wasn't the miracles. That drew all men to himself. In a saving way. It was his humiliation. It was his death.

It was his cross. And when he comes again. It won't be. Lord. Lord. Lord. I prophesied in your name. And I did all sorts of great things for you.

And said it will be. When did I see you thirsty. And give you something to drink. When did I see you hungry.

And give you something to eat. When did I see you naked. And give you clothes to wear. If your eyes are on. What you have done. On that day. And you have your list.

[30 : 43] Of things that commend you to him. He will say. Depart from me. I never knew you. But if your eyes are all on him.

What he did. Then he'll say. Welcome. Come into the kingdom. That my father has prepared. So. The world has started to turn. He began.

It began at his first coming. But the world is going to make its full turn. When he comes again. Then. All the accepted. All the rejected.

Will be accepted. And he will gather his. All of the scattered people. And then the proud will be humbled. And so. My question. For myself. And my question. For you.

Is are you living. That way. Are you living. As a citizen. Of heaven. How does a citizen. Of heaven live. Well he lives.

[31 : 40] An upside. Down. Life. That doesn't make sense. From the world's perspective. It's a life. That puts others. Before myself. And it puts God.

First of all. In me. Last. It's. It's a life. That considers others. Better. Than myself. And their. Their. Goals.

Are higher than. Oh my goals. So husbands. Are you putting your wives. First. That's upside down living. Wives. Are you putting your husbands. First.

That's upside down living. Are you going to work. Not for yourself. And what you can get. For yourself. But are you actually. Going to work for others. To serve them. And to love them. For their good.

And for God's glory. That's upside down living. How do you interact. With your friends. Are you loving them. For your sake.

[32 : 36] That's easy to do. To love your friends. Because they. Love you. But instead of. Loving them. For your sake. But loving them.

For Jesus sake. Loving them. Selflessly. Serving them. That's upside down living. And you see. We either.

Start living. The upside down life. Now. Or. We're not going to have. Any part. In the upside down. Kingdom. That's to come. We either. We either.

Have to start living. Upside down lives. Here. Or now. Or we won't fit. In the next world. We won't belong there. That won't be the place.

For us. Because this kingdom. Is that upside down. Kingdom. Where to go. High. You have to go. Low. Down. And the only way.

[33 : 34] To get into that kingdom. Is to go down. You have to go down. To go up. You have to confess. Your sin. To be made righteous. You have to confess.

Your poverty. In order to be made rich. You have to confess. Your need. In order to be made. Whole. See. You can't bring. Your riches. And your. And your wholeness. And your health. And your.

And your righteousness. You can't bring that. Into the kingdom. You have to abandon it all. In order. And say. I don't have any of that. That's precisely. Why I'm here. At the door. Begging. And what you find.

Is when you come. To the door. Begging. Saying. I have no riches. I have no righteousness. All I have is need. That's when. He comes. That's when he saves. And so.

The question is. Is what world. Are you living for? This one? Because I have to tell you. The expiration date. On this one. Is very. It's going quick. This one's already.

[34 : 32] On its way out. Or are you living. For the next one. That even. Right now. Is on its way. In. In. And so.

For a brief moment here. They're overlapped. And so. I have to ask. Which one. Which one. Are you living for? What.

What. Describes your life? A citizen of this world. Or a citizen. Of the next. Let's pray. Our Lord. It can be so easy. Just to live for ourselves. So thoughtlessly. So naturally. We just do it. Without even thinking. Thank you.

Holy Spirit. That you come in. And. You begin to. Flip and turn. Our worlds. Upside down. And so. Instead of living for ourselves. We want to live for other people. And I.

[35 : 28] I pray. We want to live for you. And I. And I pray that. You would. Please do that. More and more. In our hearts. That you would align. Our hearts. And our lives. With the world.

That is to come. That it. We would. Abandon our pride. And abandon. Our self-righteousness. Abandon. Our love of status. And our love of ease.

Instead. To embrace the cross. Just as Jesus did. And so. To follow him. To follow him. Out of Egypt.

And into Canaan. To follow him. Through. The surging sea. Lord. We want to live. Heavenly lives. We want to live.

Happy. And hopeful. Lives. Cheerfully. With. With expectation. Of. Of what is ours. In Christ. And what is coming. To us. Pray. That you would.

[36:22] Make us. To know. And to feel. How good. You have been. To us. And how rich. We are. In Jesus Christ. And I pray. For those. Who are outside. That you would.

Make this message. To be a warning. To them. And that you would. Call them. That you would. Call them. Out of the city. Of destruction. And call them. To travel. To the celestial. City.

With us. Thank you. Lord. That. These things. Are the I wills. Of what you. Are going to do. And so. I pray. That you would. Call. That you would.

Gather your scattered. People. Even. Here. In this congregation. Help us. To be. A rejoicing. People. And a glad. People. For the gospel. Help us. To not live. On the bad news. Of this world. But on the good news. Come from.

[37:17] Another world. A better place. Where we are going. I ask this. In Jesus name. Amen. Amen. Thank you.