

Practical Holiness

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Date: 26 May 2013

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[0:00] Isaiah 56. We're going to read this chapter in its entirety. Isaiah 56.! This is what the Lord says.

! Maintain justice and do what is right. For my salvation is close at hand, and my righteousness will soon be revealed. Blessed is the man who does this, the man who holds it fast, who keeps the Sabbath without desecrating it and keeps his hand from doing any evil.

Let no foreigner who has bound himself to the Lord say, The Lord will surely exclude me from his people. And let not any eunuch complain, I'm only a dry tree.

For this is what the Lord says. To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths, who choose what pleases me, and hold fast to my covenant, to them I will give within my temple and its walls a memorial and a name, better than sons and daughters.

I will give them an everlasting name that will not be cut off. And foreigners who bind themselves to the Lord to serve him, to love the name of the Lord and to worship him, all who keep the Sabbath without desecrating it, and who hold fast to my covenant.

[1:26] These I will bring to my holy mountain, and give them joy in my house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be accepted on my altar, for my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations.

The sovereign Lord declares, He who gathers the exiles of Israel, I will gather still others to them, besides those already gathered.

Come, all you beasts of the field, come and devour, all you beasts of the forest. Israel's watchmen are blind.

They all lack knowledge. They're all mute dogs. They cannot bark. They lie around and dream.

They love to sleep. They are dogs with mighty appetites. They never have enough.

They are shepherds who lack understanding. They all turn to their own way. Each seeks his own gain. Come, each one cries. Let me get wine.

[2:29] Let us drink our fill of beer. And tomorrow will be like today, or even far better. Why do we have God's word this morning?

Well, Martin Luther says, it's no thanks to the world powers. That's tongue in cheek. The world powers were often seeking to take the Bible away from the people.

No thanks to them that we have Bibles today, but thanks to him who in his providence has preserved the word of God so that today you and I might have our own copy and hear what is important to our creator, our keeper, and our judge.

Well, today we begin the third and final section of the book of Isaiah. Three parts to the book.

Chapters 1 through 39 were addressed to Israel before the exile in Babylon, preparing them for the judgment that was coming for their turning their backs on God.

Then chapters 40 through 55 were addressed to Israel during their exile in Babylon, an exile that lasted some 70 years, to give them hope of return back to their promised land.

[3:47] And now chapters 56 through 66 are addressed to Israel after the exile, after they've been delivered out of Babylon, have returned to the promised land.

And this is something that would happen long after Isaiah himself was dead. Now some liberal scholars come to a book like Isaiah and say, there's got to be three different authors to the book because Isaiah didn't live in these second parts during the Babylonian captivity and after it.

And yet he writes with such specificity of what's going on in Babylon and in Israel during those periods. Well, you see, there's no problem if we understand that the Bible is not man's ideas about God, but it's God speaking his ideas, his words, his thoughts to man.

So it's no problem for Isaiah living back here before the exile to write and to speak to his contemporaries about the coming exile, and yet to speak to them words that the people of Israel will need to hear when they are in exile for 70 years, and even able to speak words that the people of God will need to hear after the exile.

How can he speak to all three? Maybe because it's God speaking through Isaiah. So we thank God for his word that we have together.

[5:16] Now, what we find in this final section is that being saved from exile in Babylon did not cure the nation of their sins.

It didn't fix them. We might say this 70-year trip to the woodshed was not the cure-all, but rather we find they're still sinning against God.

They're still rebelling against his law. They're still doing what they please and turning away from him. That even after God had wondrously shown grace to them and bringing them out of bondage in Babylon, bringing them back to the promised land, the better part of the nation still continued to wander from God, breaking his covenant.

Well, that should give us this lesson, that it takes more than outward deliverances, outward things, good things happening to us, to cure the real problem, to mend our hearts, to heal our waywardness.

The effective change, that which would really make a change, would be the coming deliverance that the Lord's servant, that we've been reading about, that he would bring when the Lord Jesus would come and die for the sins of his people and would procure for them the Holy Spirit.

[6:50] Then we will see the people of God walking a new way. But even now, after deliverance from Babylon, we see same sins, we see same problems.

So Isaiah is addressing these returned exiles. They're back in the land and he's calling them to repentance and to the blessings of God's salvation in Christ.

Notice how it begins, chapter 56. This is what the Lord says, maintain justice and do what is right.

The first point is this, the call to repent is a call to practical holiness.

Now God saves ungodly people, Romans 4, but he doesn't leave them ungodly. Isaiah 56.

He saves those who do wrong, but he calls them to do right. And by his spirit working in their hearts, he teaches them to do right. Yes, he extends pardon, forgiveness to the woman caught in adultery.

[7:58] Where are your accusers, Jesus says? They've all gone, Lord. Neither do I accuse you, but go and sin no more. In other words, salvation is not a ticket to carry on your own sinful ways and to go to heaven at the end.

Salvation is salvation from your sinning. He will save his people from their sins and from the punishment and penalty of those sins, but from that power of sin in your present life.

He will save you from your sins and make you holy in life. Now, back in chapter 55 and verse 7, we saw the call go out in these words, let the wicked forsake his way and that the evil man his thoughts.

And let him turn to the Lord and he will have mercy on him and to our God he will freely pardon.

And there we saw that in the call to repentance, man is called to turn away from his way.

Man's turned his back to God and he's gone his own way. Turn from your way. Now, in chapter 56, God's way is what is set before them.

[9:20] You see, it's just two sides of the coin. Repentance has to do with going God's way instead of your way. And so in chapter 56 here, we have the flip side of what repentance, what turning to the Lord, what following his way looks like.

Stop going your way and go my way. Here we have it. God's way is to maintain justice and to do what is right.

Now, right away we can see then that Israel's really no better off in many regards than the Israelites in chapter 1. When Isaiah first started his ministry to them, he called them to repentance.

Let me read for you Isaiah 1, 16 and 17. Take your evil deeds out of my sight. Stop doing wrong and do right. Seek justice.

Now, here we have it. Many years later, the word of God to his people will be maintain justice and do what is right. So we see they've not been cured in their hearts from sin.

[10:32] Well, the call to repent is a call to practical holiness. Notice the call to repent is not left in general or vague terms.

It's not just turn to God. Turn to God's way. No, it's spelled out for us. What is God's way? It's put in very practical terms. The whole passage tells us what repentance looks like, what the holiness that he calls us to looks like.

We have at the same time then a picture of repentance and a picture of practical holiness. All true holiness is practical holiness.

You don't repent of sins in general. You repent of particular sins and particular sins are spoken of by the prophet. And so if it's real holiness, it will descend to particulars.

It will touch every aspect of life. It will invade all that you do. Listen to the way Peter put it in 1 Peter 1. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do.

[11:41] Be holy because I am holy. And be holy in all you do. That means the way that I spend my time, the way I spend my money, the way I do relationships, the way I do family, the way I do church, the way I work, my view of possession.

Be holy in all you do. That's practical holiness. Isaiah was preaching it. Jesus preached it. Peter preached it.

When Christ comes in, he cleans house. He makes his way into every room in the house. Even the closets and the little cubby holes and compartments of your life.

He makes his way through. He will be Lord of all, you see. And so we see this practical call to repentance, to holy living.

Notice the various expressions of the holiness we're called to throughout this passage, verses 1 through 6. It starts, maintain justice and do what is right.

[12:45] That's the first way that this holy life is described that we're called to. We're to turn from our way to it. Maintain justice and do what is right.

Notice holiness has to do with our deeds. Don't let anyone ever tell you holiness doesn't have anything to do with the externals of life. It has to do with your deeds. Do what is right.

What is right in God's eye. Do what's right in God's eyes. Do what is according to His standard. And what is right in God's eyes, we're not left to guess, but we find it throughout God's law.

God's commands. He's telling us what is right. So maintain justice and do what is right. That's the first description of what we are to turn to.

The practical holiness. The second is keep the Sabbath without desecrating it. It's mentioned three times in our text. Verses 2, 4, and 6. From creation, one day in seven is to be set aside from our common labors.

[13:59] So here's our seven days. Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday. And we're to set aside. Actually, God did this at creation. He set it aside and so we are to keep it set aside.

He set aside and made it holy and made it unique and said, this is to be for me in a unique way. You're to work the six days, but the seventh day you're to rest.

And it's to be a day in which you worship me and you acknowledge me as the creator. I'm the one that made everything. You included. I am the one that redeemed you.

Remember me as creator and redeemer. So, God set it apart. Now, you keep it holy. You keep it holy by doing on that day what I have set it apart to be.

As such, it became a sign of the old covenant between God and his people.

[15:01] It became a visible marker of those who belonged to the Lord. Those who acknowledged him as creation's Lord and Redeemer as the one who orders all our days.

and so, in keeping the Sabbath, as this text calls us to do, we organize our whole time around God. We organize our whole weekly schedule. What are you going to do this week? Well, it's all revolving around God. We're going to rest the first day and get our perspective right.

We're going to recognize who God is, create a Redeemer. We're going to delight ourselves in him. And then, we're going to work the six days. And then, we're going to stop again, call a time out, a huddle, and we're going to worship again.

And on and on we go through our life, patterning it after the Lord himself who created in six days and rested the seventh. Now, that became a marker, I said, as to who were his.

[16:04] And the Lord's day, the Christian Sabbath, is likewise a test of loyalty. Who are the Lord's people? Well, they are those who keep the Lord's day. Revelation, verse 1 and verse 10 refers to it as the Lord's day.

They have organized the whole of their life around God. God is the center. Christ is the center. And they, their lives spin off and rotate around him like the sun of the solar system.

Now, we're told to keep the Sabbath and not to desecrate it. Not to profane it is the, another word that's often used to translate it.

Now, we profane something when we take something that has been set aside for holy use and we use it for common use. So, it may be the name of the Lord and we're to keep the name of the Lord holy.

But when we use God's name for filler, OMG, and all the rest, we take what is holy and we use it as a common name.

[17:11] That's to profane the name of the Lord. That's to desecrate what is holy. And we can do the same thing with the Lord's day. Something he has set aside for special, holy use of worship and rest.

But if we treat it like Monday or Saturday or Wednesday, we take what is holy and we profane it. We desecrate it. And the call to repentance is a call to keep the Sabbath without desecrating it.

Well, further, our passage in defining this call to holiness says in the third place, keep your hands from doing any evil. This is the flip side of what he just told us earlier.

This has been verse two. Keeping your hands from doing any evil. In verse one, he says, you're to do what's right. And this is just the other side of the coin. Keep your hands from doing evil.

Notice the high standard to which we're called. Keep your hands from doing a lot of evil. Didn't say that, did it?

[18:21] It says any evil. I write these things to you so that you will not sin, John says. Be perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect. That's the standard we're called to.

Turn from our way to this way of keeping your hands from doing any evil. And also notice that the members of your body are involved as instruments in doing evil.

You see, when we talk about practical holiness, it gets down to the members of our body, what we do with our tongues, our eyes, our ears, our hands. And here it's our hands that are showing us just how practical holiness has to do.

It has to do with what we do with these two things all week long. What you use your hands for, the messages that you text with your hands, the internet that you access with your hands, the remote that you use with your hands, the fist you make with your hands, the doors you open and close behind you with your hands, the places you drive with your hands, the things you touch, the way you use them at work, the food and drink that you use them to put into your mouth.

Do you see how practical holiness is? It's keeping your hands from evil. Jesus was most serious about this matter.

[19:48] if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It's better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.

He said that to his disciples. He's dead serious about keeping your hands from doing evil. and if your hands are being used to come into evil, you need to cut off the occasions of even letting your hands touch those things.

There were better days when little children used to sing, Oh, be careful little hands what you do. Remember that song?

We need to revive it. Isaiah 56 revives it and says, The life of repentance, the life of holiness to which God calls his people is carefulness in keeping our hands from doing any evil.

But next, holiness means choosing what pleases me. We see it in verse 4. Again, these are scattered throughout this passage and they're explaining what it looks like when a foreigner repents, when a eunuch repents, when anyone repents and seeks the Lord.

[21:04] It's practical holiness. And now what is it? Well, it's choosing what pleases me, verse 4. This has to do with your will, with your decisions that you make, what you choose to do and not do.

Well, every decision is to be governed not by what you want but what God wants. Do you remember Jesus being in a situation where he said, I want this but it's not about what I want but what you want, Father.

And the Father says, well, this is what it's got to be. Then that's what I want. Now, that wasn't a one-time thing for Jesus. That's more like a motto of his life.

Or the Apostle Paul when he's on the road to Damascus and the Lord meets him and his response is, Lord, what would you have me to do? It's not about what I want to do. It's about what you want

me to do.

That's not a one-time thing. That's every day you get up out of bed, you meet and greet the Lord and you present yourself as his willing servant. What would you have me to do today?

[22 : 12] It's not my will, Lord, but yours be done. When we meet that temptation and everything in us says, oh, I'd like to have that but it's not that, Lord. It's not that. It's what you want and if that's what you want then I want that too.

That's a mark of a holiness to which God calls us. Choosing what pleases me and that means we need to find out what pleases the Lord.

It means we need to make it our goal to please the Lord and it means we need to actually choose what pleases Him. Matthew Henry says, whatever is God's pleasure should be our immediate choice.

Furthermore, the call to repent includes holding fast to my covenant. Holding fast to my covenant. You see that in verses 4 and 6 as a description of those who have repented repented are pursuing God's way.

They hold fast to my covenant. In a covenant there are terms and God requires certain things of us.

[23 : 20] God says, I will do this and I also require you to do that. It's the same word that's used at the marriage. The marriage covenant. And so we're being told to hold fast to God's covenant in which we gave ourselves up to the Lord.

Did we not? Did we not turn from all others and say, Lord, I give myself to you alone. Now to hold fast to that covenant is to live up to that commitment.

Husbands and wives, you made that promise at the altar once, but you have found that it's a daily commitment, isn't it? To die to self and to live for that other person God's given you, your closest neighbor.

And that's the way it is with the Lord Himself. We're to hold fast to that covenant. Holding fast to the promises of that covenant of what He will be for us, our God, and what He will do for us.

But also holding fast to our responsibilities of the covenant and the commands that He's given us. a mark of true holiness, of true repentance, is holding fast.

[24 : 30] We don't walk with the Lord for a day, a month, a year. We hold fast to Him all the days of our lives. Isaiah is showing us what the practical holiness is that we're called to from going our way to His.

And there's just three further aspects and they're all found in binding yourself to the Lord there in verse 6.

It binds Himself to the Lord. It's a word of commitment again, that word of marriage. And it's a commitment to do what? To serve Him, to love Him, and to worship Him.

And so this is a sign then of the one who's turned from His way and is going God's way. He binds Himself. He straps Himself with cords of love to the Savior to serve Him, to love Him, and to worship Him alone.

Jesus said, that's what God is seeking. Worshipers. Those who will worship Him in spirit and in truth. Well, verse 1 sounds this call to repent, which is then fleshed out in the rest of the verses, and it's all practical holiness.

[25 : 56] But then it gives the motivation for repenting. Notice verse 1 says, maintain justice and do what is right, for my salvation is close at hand and my righteousness will soon be revealed.

Here's the motivation. What is it that's to stir us and urge us to live this way that's just been spelled out for us? Well, it's this.

My salvation is close at hand. My righteousness will soon be revealed. He's not talking about captivity in Babylon. They've already been saved from Babylon.

That's already past tense. No, he's talking here about the coming salvation to be brought in Jesus Christ, the Messiah, the servant of the Lord we've been reading about in these previous chapters. It's coming. It's very near. It's the next tick on my calendar. The next tick on my clock. And the coming of Christ will be a working of salvation in a way that displays the righteousness of God.

[27 : 03] In Christ on behalf of men. And you will see that righteousness. It's coming. It's just around the corner. Now let that salvation urge you to live this way.

You see the motivating urging that flows from the gospel? The coming of God's salvation in Christ. So the point is Jesus' saving work is real motivation to repent and to live this holy life.

We've wrongly understood God's salvation if it does not move us to holy living. We've missed something huge. If the salvation in Jesus Christ doesn't move us to these things that Isaiah has just said.

Titus 2 says, For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all. It teaches us to say no to ungodliness, to worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in this present age while we wait for the appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who redeemed us from sin, that He might have a people who are zealous for good works, to do what is right.

Why did Jesus die? To have a bride that would be true to Him, zealous of good works. You see how the motivation of the cross, the motivation of God's salvation in Christ is to urge us on to godly living.

[28 : 35] What kind of lives should we live if we're looking forward to the coming of Christ for the final installment of salvation? 2 Peter chapter 3, you ought to live holy and godly lives. That's exactly what Isaiah was telling the people of God some 700 years before Jesus came.

As you're looking forward, you need to live holy and godly lives. You need to find in God the mercy that's coming in Christ and live for Him. Well, the message of John the Baptist, what was it? Repent for the kingdom of God is at hand. The message of Jesus, repent for the kingdom of God is at hand. The message of Isaiah, repent.

for the salvation, my salvation is at hand. It's coming. Same thing. We draw motivation for a life of repentance from the salvation that we find in Christ.

So, the call to repent is a very, is a call to practical holiness. The second, and we don't spend nearly the time on this, the call to repent is a call to the happy life.

[29 : 48] I've already sung of it and heard of it in the worship time, but look at verse 2. It says, blessed is the man who does this. This whole call to holiness, this whole repentance.

Blessed is the man who does this. The man who holds it fast, who keeps the Sabbath without desecrating and keeps his hands from doing any evil and so on. You see, the call to repent is a call to blessing.

It's a call to true repentance. Now, this is something that the sinner does not believe. He does not believe that the holy life is the happy life. He believes that the going your own way life is the way to happiness.

And Isaiah is saying, no, you got it all wrong. The call to holiness is a call to happiness. It's a call to the blessedness of God's heart showered upon us.

You see, the unbeliever doesn't believe that. They're still holding to the lie of Eve. The lie of the devil that he gave to Eve when he suggested to Eve that God's not very good and the life of true fulfillment for you will be found in transgressing God's law.

[31 : 01] He said, don't eat of this tree. You're going to have to do that if you're going to be blessed. God's trying to keep you back from blessing and happiness. And she bit. And every son and daughter of Adam has been biting sins.

It's the nature we've been given from our first father, Adam. The fallen father and mother of the human race gave us hearts that are more prone to believing the devil's lie that the happy life comes from sin than believing the truth of God that happiness comes from holiness.

Nothing has changed. Isaiah was preaching it. We're still preaching it. We're still trying to convince you of the goodness of God in the gospel. You will find in Christ that all who come to him to be saved will never be losers for having done so.

For having give yourself all together to him. To no more live for yourself and choose your way. Here I am, Lord. I'm yours. And you will be the gainer. The only thing he takes from you are the things that will destroy you.

It's the call to the happy life. God is not out to spoil your joy but to lead you into true joy and to save you from false, hallow, short-lived substitutes.

[32 : 20] It's the thief who comes to steal and kill and to destroy. It's Jesus who has come to give life and that to the full. He comes with His arms full of salvation's blessings to heap on anyone who will come to Him.

What fools we were to stay away so long and to push away such blessing when He came ready to bless us. What are those commandments that He calls us to walk in?

Well, they are righteous and they are holy and they are good. It's the very best way to live. Take all the options out there and choose the very best way to live and it's right here.

And this is defined in ten words, the ten commandments. And it's further boiled down to two words, loving God with all your heart and soul and mind and strength and loving your neighbor as yourself. That's the best way to live.

The devil says, oh no, it's not. You want a real good life, you've got to trample on those commands. Well, we have the call then. It's going out. But this is what's best for you.

[33 : 27] It's the blessedness and it's exploding with emotion the way that it's written. I'm not a Hebrew scholar but the commentary says it could be translated more literally, oh the blessednesses.

Oh the blessednesses of the man who does this. Well, that's the second lesson in this chapter. The third lesson is that the call to repent is extended to outsiders.

The call to repent and receive the blessings of salvation reaches beyond the Israelite nation to those who were considered outsiders in the old covenant, namely foreigners, Gentiles, that is, and eunuchs, those who had been emasculated.

They were excluded from the people of God because of their outward distinctions. Outward things disqualified them in the old covenant but they will not exclude them from sharing in the salvation that is around the corner that the Lord will bring.

In the new covenant, none will be excluded regardless of what their background, their outward distinctions. All who come in repentance and faith will be heaped upon with salvation blessings.

[34 : 47] That's the third lesson in this passage. The call to repent is extended to these who had been outsiders. And if they come in repentance to the Lord, they will enter the Lord's house.

They had to stay outside in the courts of the Gentiles. They couldn't come near to worship. But they will be brought right into the Lord's house, not as second-hand citizens, but on equal footing with the Jews who trust in the Messiah as fellow citizens sharing in all the same blessings of God's family.

And so God's true people are here being redefined. Gone are the old boundary markers, the middle walls of partition between Jew and Gentile. Now, in the new covenant, all are one in Christ Jesus sharing alike in salvation's blessings.

And so the Lord says in verses 4 and 5, to the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths, who choose what pleases me and hold fast to my covenant, to them I will give within my temple and its walls a memorial and a name better than sons and daughters.

I will give them an everlasting name that will not be cut off. Be brought right inside the temple to worship with everyone else. A lasting memorial and name.

[36 : 07] Tomorrow's Memorial Day. People like to build memorials to people and people like to build them to themselves. There's a franticness about people as they realize they're passing and they're going to die and that they're like a flower of the field.

And it grows up and the sun beats upon it and it withers and it passes away. And its place remembers it no more. Do you realize that two generations from now, hardly anyone will remember you?

And some people get nervous with that. If they don't have Christ and the hope of heaven, they get very edgy about that. I've got to do something so that I'll be remembered.

Maybe it's, I've got to pass my things on to my kids and hopefully they'll remember me and pass it on and pass it on and everyone will be remembered. I'm not saying there's something sinful about that, but there is this panic.

Some people like to donate large gifts in order to get their names on buildings so that they could be remembered on foundations. Building memorials to themselves. It's found in the scriptures.

[37 : 13] During his lifetime, Absalom had taken a pillar and erected it in the king's valley as a monument to himself. For he thought, I have no son to carry on the memory of my name.

He named the pillar after himself and it's called Absalom's monument to this day. Cheap memorial. Because he's remembered as a profane rebel.

But you see how people like to erect monuments to themselves. And here's the poor eunuch. He doesn't have sons to carry on his name. What good am I? And God says, no, if you're one of these who's repented and is one of mine in the covenant with me, why?

You'll have a memorial and a name that far exceeds what any number of sons and daughters could bring you. An everlasting memorial. Because you're going to live forever.

You won't be forgotten because you'll be here forever living eternally. For you will be raised from the dead even as Christ, your Lord, is raised.

[38:20] And so you will live forever a better memorial than sons and daughters. So there's that Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8.

He's got two strikes against him. He's a foreigner and a eunuch. He's double disqualified in the old covenant. And yet, he's riding along and he's reading the prophet Isaiah chapter 53.

And Philip is guided by the Spirit to come alongside and he preaches Christ to him and the eunuch trusts in the Lord Jesus and they stop and they baptize him.

And then suddenly, Philip disappears. God just took him away. So here's the eunuch. He's got to get all the way from Jerusalem back to Ethiopia.

Do you suppose that he quit reading the book of Isaiah? I mean, he's just come to faith in that servant of the Lord in chapter 53.

[39:20] Don't you think that he read on in chapter 54 and 55 and then he came to 56 and he might have been wondering, what am I, just a dried up old eunuch?

And he would come to our text, let no foreigner who's bound himself to the Lord. That's just what he's done. Let no one of them say, the Lord will surely exclude me from his people and let not any eunuch complain, I am only a dry tree.

And then to hear this promise from the Lord in his word, for this is what the Lord says to the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths, who choose what pleases me and holds fast to my covenant, to them I will give within my temple and its walls a memorial and a name better than sons and daughters and everlasting name.

And you see the encouragement that that brought to this foreigner who is also a eunuch. And as for the foreigners mentioned here, who bind themselves to the Lord, the Lord promises in verse 7, these I will bring to my holy mountain and give them joy in my house of prayer.

Their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be acceptable on my altar for my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations. I doubt we'll appreciate Isaiah 56 as much as we ought until we get it straight.

[40:40] That's you and me. We're the foreigners. We're not Jews. We're not part of the old covenant people of God. Will we be excluded if we come to the Lord and we repent of our way and trust in His Savior?

Well, do you see the encouragement that's being given to the foreigners? Yes, one time, at one time, we're told in Ephesians 2, we were separate from Christ. We were excluded from citizenship in Israel and we were foreigners to the covenants of the promise.

We were without hope and without God in this world. But now, in Christ Jesus, you who were once far away have been brought near through the blood of Jesus.

And now, through the gospel, the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, shares together in the promises of Christ Jesus.

Three times, Ephesians 3, 6. Together, together, together, the middle wall has been taken down forever, Jew and Gentile together in Jesus' fold. So let not the foreigners say, well, you know, I'm not born in the right family and I didn't have Christian upbringing and I didn't have, I didn't go to church all my life.

[41:59] Don't let anybody use any excuse. Jesus is saying to any who bind themselves to the Lord, you will be welcome into the family right along with anyone else who's in there, be he Abraham, David, Moses, or the rest.

And notice what they're promised. They're promised a place, an acceptance in the house of prayer.

Do you think of the worship of God and we're now the house of the Lord, the church, but do you think of the church as a house of prayer?

That's a very specific activity, isn't it? It says that it should not be a minor thing with us when we gather as the church that prayer ought to mark our lives of corporateness.

We're to be a house of prayer. Let that search your calendar. Do I partake in the corporateness of praying with the church?

My house will be a house of prayer. Do you know Jesus fought for that point when he came into the temple and he saw people selling animals and doves and tables exchanging money?

[43:30] Oh yeah, it all had to do with the temple so they could have the right kind of currency to make the offering and the right animal and all the rest. Well, Jesus didn't view it that way. He made a whip and he drove animals and money changers out of the temple and what did he say?

He chose Isaiah 56. to be the words he spoke that day. My house will be called a house of prayer but you've made it a den of robbers.

For the Lord says, and he quotes this passage, my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations.

And you see, it's that second part that we also learn. Not only is the church to be a house of prayer but it's also to be for all nations. Gone are the distinctions of Gentile and Jew.

Gone are those old distinctions. It's now for all peoples, all nations. And verse 8 simply underscores that fact.

[44:33] The sovereign Lord declares, he who gathers the exiles of Israel, I will gather still others to them besides those already gathered. Besides the Jews, I'll gather outsiders.

Jesus stood on the earth. The salvation was right around the corner and when Jesus came he said, I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. Them also I must bring.

They too will listen to my voice and there will be one flock and one shepherd over them all. You see, fulfilled in the New Testament church of Jesus Christ.

Well, we're not going to get to the fourth point. It's just simply the need for the call of repentance.

Why is this call in here? It's talking about those years after they get back from Babylon.

Why is there a need for a call to repentance? Well, because they were sinning. When do you need to repent? Every time you sin. That's why Martin Luther says repentance is not the thing of the day.

[45:35] of an experience. It's the thing of a lifetime. Until we quit sinning, we will never quit repenting. And Israel hadn't quit sinning. In fact, we'll see next week at the end of chapter 56 we'll see the sins of their leaders and then in chapter 57 we'll see the sins of the people.

Should we be surprised when the leaders are in the ditch that we would find the others in the ditch too? When the blind follow the blind Jesus says they both fall into the ditch.

That's why they need the call to repentance. The trip to Babylon had not been enough. Brothers and sisters to the extent that our lives do not look like Isaiah 56 1 to 8 we need to repent.

We need this call. we need to stop doing what we please and do what pleases him. We need to stop doing evil and do what is right.

We need to make sure that we keep our hands from doing any evil. We need to keep the Sabbath day without desecrating it. The Christian Sabbath. We need to bind ourselves to the Lord to serve and love and worship him.

[46:54] We need to hold fast to that covenant. Lord I will be one of your people and you will be my God. And all of it because just around the corner on God's calendar was the coming of the servant that Isaiah has talked about.

For to us a son is born. To us a son is given. The government will be on his shoulders. You see the whole problem of these bad leaders wouldn't be solved until he came to whom the scepter really belonged.

And the problem of bad shepherds will not be fixed until he comes who is the good shepherd who laid down his life for the sheep so that his sheep might be forgiven.

And who will speak with such a word of authority to his sheep that they will hear his voice and they will follow him. And where will they follow him? They will follow in his ways that we saw this morning.

it's all because of this coming salvation when God will bring his righteousness near in Jesus Christ. I invite you to that Savior.

[48:05] As I said this passage is saying it doesn't matter who you are and what you've done. It doesn't matter about your background. It doesn't matter about your church affiliation. The gospel has come to me.

All you who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest. Let's pray. Our Father in heaven we thank you for the gospel. We thank you for the gospel that we see in the book of Isaiah speaking of this coming Savior.

And just as they look forward to his coming and found motivation in that coming salvation we by faith look back to the same salvation in Christ.

And we ask that by your spirit you would stir us up to be a people of practical holiness who find great delight in your commandments in walking in your ways and keeping our hands from evil and keeping the Sabbath from desecrating it and laying hold of the covenant and not letting go of binding ourselves to the Lord to serve and love and worship.

So here we are. We would turn from all other claims to all other loves and we would offer ourselves up afresh to you. Take us. We're yours.

[49 : 24] Forgive us of our sins. Wash and cleanse us. Make us yours forever. Lead us in that blessed way that leads straight home to Jesus Christ.

We ask in his name. Amen.