

For Zion's Sake

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 01 September 2013

Preacher: Jon Hueni

[0:00] Isaiah chapter 62. We will be reading the chapter in its entirety.! For Zion's sake, I will not keep silent.

! For Jerusalem's sake, I will not remain quiet.! Till her righteousness shines out like the dawn.! Her salvation like a blazing torch. The nations will see your righteousness, and all kings your glory. You will be called by a new name, that the mouth of the Lord will bestow. You will be a crown of splendor in the Lord's hand, a royal diadem in the hand of your God.

No longer will they call you deserted, or name your land desolate, but you will be called Hezboallah, and your land Belua, for the Lord will take delight in you, and your land will be married.

As a young man marries a maiden, so will your sons marry you. As a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so will your God rejoice over you.

[1:03] I have posted watchmen on your walls, O Jerusalem. They will never be silent, day or night. You will call on the Lord. You who call on the Lord, give yourselves no rest, and give Him no rest, till He establishes Jerusalem, and makes her the praise of the earth.

The Lord has sworn by His right hand, and by His mighty arm, never again will I give your grain as food for your enemies, and never again will foreigners drink the new wine for which you have toiled. But those who harvest it will eat it, and praise the Lord, and those who gather the grapes will drink it in the courts of my sanctuary. Pass through, pass through the gates, prepare the way for the people, build up, build up the highway, remove the stones, raise a banner for the nations.

The Lord has made proclamation to the ends of the earth. Say to the daughter of Zion, see your Savior comes, see His reward is with Him, and His recompense accompanies Him.

They will be called the holy people, the redeemed of the Lord, and you will be called sought after, the city no longer deserted.

[2:23] Isaiah is fixated on this glorious transformation that's coming for Zion, the people of God.

He speaks of this makeover that's coming, and He does it throughout His book, but especially as He comes to the end, He talks about it more and more.

And He gives us before pictures. This is what Zion looked like before, and this is what she will look after when Messiah comes. Now, Isaiah and his contemporaries were living in the before picture. It was a sad state that they were living in. And so, Isaiah emphasizes the after picture. Though this is the way you look now.

Look how you will look after Messiah comes. This is the great transformation of Zion. Again, just to remind you, who is Zion?

[3:24] In the Old Testament, Zion was chiefly the physical descendants of Abraham. They were mainly Jews. And it was a mixed multitude, Zion was.

You had true believing Jews, and you had other Jews that didn't believe. And they were together in Zion. But in the New Covenant, under the Messiah, Zion is wondrously transformed, transformed, and in many different ways.

One of the ways is that all Jewish unbelievers in Jesus will be pruned out of Zion. That was the prophecy that a prophet like Moses is coming, and whoever does not listen to him must be completely cut off from my people.

Well, many of the Jews have not believed on him and have been pruned out of Zion. And at the same time, many Gentiles, dare I say you and me, have been grafted in.

We Gentiles who believe on Messiah have been grafted into Zion. So the resulting Zion of the New Testament is comprised of Jews and Gentiles together in the church of Jesus Christ.

[4:44] She is the Zion, the Jerusalem from above. Now it's important for us to see that Isaiah's promises about a renewed Zion then.

And these after pictures of what Zion will look like in the future are not fulfilled in some modern-day Israel or modern-day Jerusalem, but are rather fulfilled in the church of Jesus Christ.

The reason this is important is that we need to know that in studying these chapters, we're not watching some other family's home videos. This is our story.

This is our future if we are the church of the living God. That makes all the difference in how we come to a chapter like Isaiah 62. In 1 Peter 2, 9 and 10, the Apostle Peter is addressing the church of Christ, believing Jews and Gentiles together in the church.

And this is what he says to the church, 1 Peter 2, 9 and 10. You are a chosen people. You are a royal priesthood.

[6:04] You are a holy nation. You are a peculiar people. A people of my own. You. You were once not a people.

But now you are the people of God. Who? The church of Jesus Christ. The believers worldwide. Well, he does it again here in chapter 62.

Isaiah is telling us once more about Zion's transformation. The glorious future coming with the Messiah. And I want to say that though Isaiah is covering familiar ground and we are going to see it more as we come to the end of this chapter, yet it is not exactly the same.

There is a different focus, a different emphasis, and different lessons for us to learn. It would be like if you were taking a trip down to Indianapolis and you took your camera along, your video camera, and all the way down you focused on animals that you saw along the way.

And so you come back and you say, would you like to see my video of my trip to Indianapolis and back? And there I would see birds and pigs and sheep and dogs and cats and maybe some zoo animals if you went to the zoo.

[7:26] And so the next time you go to Indianapolis, you take your video camera along again. And you get back and you say, you want to see my video of my trip to Indianapolis? And I say, well, I've already seen it.

Don't need to see it again. I know what's on. Oh no, this time I focus the camera upon faces of people. And there's the faces of people in the car, faces of people going by you in cars, faces at the gas station, the places you went.

And I say, well, that's a little different. The same road, same highway, same landscape, but a different focus. And that's how Isaiah is coming to us over and over with this great transformation of Zion.

What she's going to look like. It's the same landscape we're going to see this morning, but it's told with a different slant and a different focus, a different purpose.

We've seen different reasons we've been shown this coming glorious future of Zion. It exalts the grace of God. Why would God ever want to go after a wandering people who turned their backs on Him?

[8:35] Why would He ever go and restore them at all? What grace? Or what power they were held in the chains of their sin and captivity. They'd ruin their lives. How can they ever be set free?

But what is the power of God to take them from such a miserable state and to set them free? Or maybe it was told to encourage us. Listen, as hard as it is now, look what's coming.

Don't quit. Chapter 61, last week, we saw that this whole story was told to point out to us and focus on who the transformer is.

Who is it that's going to make over Israel? It is Messiah, the anointed one. And so we were taught, weren't we, that we are to see these things fulfilled in the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ between his first coming and his second coming.

This is what Isaiah is talking about. And now this morning, the same territory being covered, but now with a focus upon the responsibilities of the faithful in Zion.

[9:46] Pointing out the work of Zion's faithful. And here's the point. Zion's transformation will come, but it will come in answer to the prevailing prayers of God's people.

The prevailing prayers of God's people. And it starts with Isaiah himself, doesn't it? Verse 1, For Zion's sake, I will not keep silent.

For Jerusalem's sake, I will not remain quiet till her righteousness shines out like the dawn, her salvation like a blazing torch. Now when Isaiah wrote this and spoke these words to Israel, Zion's cause was in shambles.

It was growing darker every day. But Isaiah refuses to shut up. Isaiah refuses to be quiet and to give darkness the last word.

Though there's no sign of a bright future anywhere, he still will go on proclaiming what God is going to do for Zion. That Israel might be encouraged, that they might not lose heart, that they might keep hope alive and trust in their glorious coming Messiah.

[10:59] Furthermore, he will not shut up in his prayer life. He will keep on praying to God to fulfill his bright promises for Zion. So he'll not be quiet to Zion or to God.

He'll go on preaching to Zion the good deeds that God will do for them and he'll go on praying for God to fulfill those good things. The end of chapter 61, he declares that only the Lord can bring forth righteousness and praise from the earth before all nations.

That's why I'm going to pray for him to do that very thing, to cause righteousness, to shine out like a blazing or like the dawn and cause Jerusalem's salvation to shine out like a blazing torch.

So can you see Isaiah's heart in this? For Zion's sake, I will do this. I'll give myself no rest. Well, isn't God the one who's going to have to transform Zion?

Yes, but he'll do it in answer to the prayers of his people. God is, wondrously woven together the prayers of his people with the fulfillment of his promises.

[12:16] And he will accomplish his purposes, but not without the prayers of his people. This morning, five new things will mark the glorious transformation of Zion.

This great makeover is marked by five new things. First, a new righteousness. Righteousness. Now, the people of Zion were anything but righteous as Isaiah prophesied.

They were unfaithful, unholy. They had done this to God. Turned their back on him, on his ways.

They'd gone their own way. But when Jesus saves his people, he will make their righteousness shine out like the dawn in such a way that all will see it.

verse 2, the nations will see your righteousness and all kings will see your glory. Righteousness in an unrighteous world cannot be hidden.

It will be seen. It can't be hidden any more than the dawn can be hidden from the night or a blazing torch can be hidden from darkness.

[13:33] No, by virtue of what it is, it must be seen and the nations will see the righteousness of God's people. When you, young person, tell the truth, when so many around you are telling lies, your righteousness will shine out.

when you honor your father and mother, when everyone else is trashing theirs, righteousness shines out. When you remain sexually pure in an unsexually, in a sexually impure world, righteousness shines out.

And when Jesus saves his people, righteousness becomes visible. You see, God, when Jesus saves his people, God not only changes our status in heaven, in the courtroom of heaven, Jesus' righteousness is put to our account, so we're right with God.

Yes, that's true, but even more so on earth, something else happens. And he puts his righteous law into our hearts and writes it there.

And then he puts his Holy Spirit into our hearts to give us a desire to keep those righteous laws so that the righteous requirements of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

[14:57] Romans 8 and verse 2. You see, our lives as Christians are reflecting the righteousness of God revealed in his righteous commandments.

For, the grace of God that has brought us salvation is teaching us to say no to ungodliness and worldly passions and to live self-controlled, righteous, and godly lives in this present age while we wait for the blessed hope, the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us.

Why? To redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good. And so we see there is a new righteousness in an unrighteous world, the work of God in his people.

And so we need to be encouraged with the fact that the more unrighteous the world becomes around us, the more our righteousness will be visible. It will be seen to the glory of God.

And what will it be in the last day? When we will appear in the very likeness of Jesus, when our righteousness will be perfected and we will shine and our righteousness will shine like the stars forever in a new heavens and a new earth, the home of righteousness.

[16:35] So that's what's coming for unrighteous Zion. A new righteousness that is visible and seen by the nations. Secondly, a new beauty.

Verse 3, You will be a crown of splendor, a crown of beauty in the Lord's hand, a royal diadem in the hand of your God. Now we don't have kings and queens in our country so we're not as familiar with crowns of beauty.

But if you go to the London Tower you can see the crown jewels of England. There are crowns and scepters and swords and rings, the things that royalty wears to state functions of importance. And there are crowns of splendor. For instance, the imperial state crown is made of gold and it's studded with precious stones, lots of them, 2,868 diamonds on that crown, along with 273 pearls and 17 sapphires, 11 emeralds and 5 rubies.

You may need the neck of a rhinoceros to wear it, but it is a crown of beauty. It's a glorious crown. And so Zion will be a crown of beauty in the Lord's hand.

[18:03] Now she was anything but a beauty. She was anything but beautiful as Isaiah prophesied. She was ugly. Kids, you know what makes you ugly?

Sin makes you ugly. Nothing uglier than pride, is it? To see a man boasting of himself. Nothing uglier than self-love and selfishness.

Sin had made Zion ugly. so that she was an embarrassment to God. She was a shame, a disgrace to the Lord.

Oh, but she's to have a makeover. You've seen makeovers. The before and after pictures where they tuck and suck and lift and trim and paint and poof.

And a new beauty. But it's all external, physical, shallow beauty. beauty. That's not what God's going to do for Zion. No, he's going to beautify her from the inside all the way to the outside.

[19:14] Through and through, the people of Zion will be made beautiful. Church, you know, don't you, that your beauty is your likeness to Jesus Christ.

that's what makes you beautiful. Those whom Jesus saves receive a new beauty as they're being transformed into his likeness.

And each growth in grace is a beauty treatment. As the spirit of God is making his people more and more like Jesus from one stage of beauty to another, we are being beautified by Christ through his spirit.

it. You've been around Christians before. Maybe you just had five to ten minutes with a Christian. And you come away impressed with something attractive about that person.

And you say, I just saw something of Jesus in her. There was something about her selfless sacrificing love that reminded me of him. There was something about him that had the peace of Christ in the midst of trouble.

[20:25] something about her joy in the midst of sorrow. Something of Christ's patience and kindness and goodness and gentleness and faithfulness and self-control.

That's what makes God's people attractive. Not that which comes from outward adornment of hair and clothing and jewels, but that of the inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight.

That's the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful, and that's the way Zion will be made beautiful as well. That's what makes you, Church of Christ, a crown of beauty in the Lord's hand.

You're being made like Christ. Now, Zion was a mess, but Jesus saved her and made something beautiful of her life. And that's what Jesus is doing over and over again in the lives of sinners he saves and brings into Zion.

He makes something beautiful out of what was so ugly. But then why this phrase, a crown of beauty in the Lord's hand?

[21:44] Why is Zion seen as a crown of beauty in the Lord's hand? Well, because Zion is his, but even more so, Zion's beauty is the work of his hand.

That's why she's beautiful. It's his hand. It's his work, his power. Every bit of your righteousness, every victory over sin, every thought of holiness, every virtue in you is his work in you, making something beautiful of your life.

And so a man was retiring from his life's work, and an artist was hired to paint a portrait of him. And at the retirement ceremony, the veil was pulled off the portrait and it was a splendid portrait.

The man who was retiring got up to give thanks to the crowd and to pay special honor to the artist. And this is what he said. In the future, people looking at my portrait will not ask, who is this man, but who painted this portrait?

And when the church is shining with the beauty of Christ, the question will not be, who are these people? But who made them so beautiful? I remember her.

[23:02] I remember him. And it will be him in whose hand we are a crown of beauty. Jesus is who made something beautiful of Zion.

Something beautiful of his people. Yes, a new righteousness, a new beauty, and thirdly, a new name. Verse 2b, you will be called by a new name that the mouth of the Lord will bestow.

Now, a new name is to match the new reality. You remember Abram? He got a new name, didn't he? God called him Abraham, father of many.

So when he was childless, he got a new name, father of many. Why? To match the new reality that was coming. For he would be a father of many nations.

And father of him who would bring salvation blessings to the nations. So a new name for Zion is to reflect the new reality. Something's going to change with Zion.

[24:09] She needs a new name. No longer, verse 4, will they call you deserted, forsaken.

You see, the new name is to reflect the drastic change that is to happen between old Zion and new Zion after Messiah comes. And no longer will they be called deserted, forsaken, or name your land desolate, because these names will not fit you anymore.

Oh, they fit you to a T. As Isaiah is writing, they were forsaken and hated with no one passing through. Chapter 60 and verse 15.

You remember when Isaiah was called to preach to this nation. He was told that he must preach to a stubborn, unbending people. How long, O Lord? How long? Well, until the cities lie ruined and without inhabitant, until the houses are left deserted and the fields ruined and ravaged, until the Lord has sent everyone far away and the land is utterly forsaken.

That's why Zion would indeed be called deserted. She was forsaken. That's what she would be, and it's why her land would be called desolate, because that's what it would be.

[25:30] Can you remember the pictures of Sarajevo, Yugoslavia? The site of the 1984 Winter Olympics and some eight years later, a city of almost a half a million people was held under siege for four years in the Bosnian War, and enemies occupying the surrounding mountains were just lobbing their mortars into the city for four years.

There was no place that was safe in the whole city. Nearly every house suffered damage. Some buildings were completely destroyed. Do you remember the pictures of the bombed out buildings, the burnt out cars in the streets, and the abandoned neighborhoods?

That's the picture of Zion. That's the before picture. She's desolate. She's abandoned. She's deserted. And that's the way she looked after Babylon.

Tore down her temple and burned her, tore down her walls and burned her temple and her houses under God's judgment. But she's to outgrow such names because of the future reality.

It will no longer fit with such names, so they'll no longer be used. Instead, instead of deserted, you'll be called, my delight is in her. That's what Hepsibah means in Hebrew.

[26:52] No longer deserted, now my delight is in her. for the Lord will take delight in you. And that's why she'll have a new name because of the new reality.

That as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so will your God rejoice over you. If you belong to Zion, I want to ask you, do you think of God as rejoicing over you like a bridegroom rejoices over his bride?

If not, you need to think again, Isaiah says, bring your mind into line with reality as God defines it because this is the new reality for Zion, for the church.

Remember what Ephesians 5 says? The church is the bride of Christ. She's not only redeemed and restored and forgiven, she's delighted in as a bride.

So the next time you see a bridegroom standing up at the front of the church beaming from ear to ear as he looks at his bridegroom coming down to meet him, remind yourself that's the way that God delights in his church.

[28:12] A new name. And instead of the land being called desolate, uninhabited, burnt out and barren, it will be called Beulah, married, because your land will be married, it will be fruitful, it will be populated once again.

So these are the new names for Zion reflecting new realities in Jesus the Messiah. Let me personalize it for you, if you're a part of the church.

Doesn't matter what you were before Jesus saved you, your past no longer defines you. A new reality defines you, a new name, a new future forever.

You're now defined as the Lord's delight is in you. You are married and fruitful. And what will be his joy when his bride appears complete, without spot or wrinkle, standing before him?

The king is enthralled with your beauty. Honor him for he is your Lord, Psalm 45 11. Yes, they'll have a new name and they'll be called, verse 12 says, they'll be called the holy people.

[29 : 28] They'll be called the redeemed of the Lord. And you'll be called sought after, the city no longer deserted. Again, why call them this? Because that will be the new realities. The holy people.

Notice it's one people. There's not two people of God, Jews and Gentiles. There's one people. They're called the holy people. It's Jew and Gentile in one fold of Jesus.

And notice the main dominant characteristic that describes these people. It's holiness. Holiness. That's what Zion was called to be in Exodus 19 6.

But it's what she failed to be. And it's what newly constituted Zion is called to be and by Christ's work will be. You are the holy nation.

First Peter 2 9. So they'll be called the holy people. They'll be called the redeemed of the Lord. Why? Because all of Zion will be redeemed from sin. Because the Lord has paid all their debts to set them free.

[30 : 30] They'll be called sought after. Sought after by the Lord who sought them when they weren't seeking him. And sought after by men who are attracted to the righteous salvation that's shining out from them.

They'll be called the city no longer deserted. Because on the cross the Lord Jesus was deserted for them. That they might never be deserted. and that city will not be abandoned but will be teeming with a multitude that no man can number from every tribe language and nation.

The sought after city of God. The people no longer forsaken. Redeemed and holy. Made so by the blood of Jesus. A new righteousness.

A new beauty. A new name. And then a new covenant. Verses 8 and 9. For the Lord has sworn. Covenants were promises that were secured by a sworn oath.

And here God is swearing. The Lord has sworn by his right hand and by his mighty arm never again will I give your grain as food to your enemies. And never again will foreigners drink the new wine for which you have toiled.

[31 : 45] But those who harvest it will eat it and praise the Lord. And those who gather the grapes will drink it in the courts of my sanctuary. Now what's this all about? Well you remember God entered into a covenant.

A covenant relationship with Israel. He said I will be your God and you of all the nations of the earth will be my people. Now I have some rules in this relationship.

Covenant stipulations. And he spelled them out at Mount Sinai in Leviticus 26 and repeated them in Deuteronomy 27 and 28 as they were entering the promised land.

And this basically was the way it went. As long as you remain true to me as your God and follow in my commandments here are the blessings you will receive. And they're listed.

But if you turn your back on me and my commands here are the curses that will inevitably follow. now one of the curses for covenant breakers mentioned in Leviticus 26 16 is you will plant seed in vain because your enemies will eat it.

[32 : 56] That's what Isaiah is talking about here. Deuteronomy 28 you will plant a vineyard but you will not even begin to enjoy its fruit and you will have nothing but cruel oppression all your days.

Now these curses of the covenant had fallen upon Israel not once but over and over again. Many times over hundreds of years of their history.

It was like a broken record. Now that's a phrase that needs explaining in our day. Kids your parents may have records at home that came before the CDs and the cassettes and eight tracks.

There were records. Discs with grooves in it that had a needle that ran in that groove and made music. But if there was a scratch across the grooves of the record deep enough and pushing up plastic high enough to block that groove every time the record came around to the needle where that was at it would jump back and play that groove again.

So it would be called a broken record and happy birthday would go like this. Happy birthday to you to you to you to you to you.

[34 : 14] It was broken and it kept repeating over and over. That's what we mean by a broken record. And that was Israel's history. God blessed them.

And then they turned their back on God and went after other gods and went their own way. And so God brought the curses of the covenant upon them. He whistled for the nations. Come and get it. And they came and they took the crops and ruined their land and killed their people. And then they cried out of their misery, oh forgive, help us. And God sent a deliverer and blessed them.

And then they turned their backs on him and went their own way. And the curses came and they cried for help and God saved them, raising up a deliverer. Curses, blessings, curses, blessings. It was the broken record of history of Israel for hundreds and hundreds of years. But this endless cycle of suffering God's curses is to end when God transforms Zion.

[35 : 21] Never again. I don't think we appreciate that. Never again. After repeating that cycle so many times, never again will I give your grain as food for your enemies.

Never again will foreigners drink the new wine. But you who work for it will eat and drink it. And so what has happened to Zion for hundreds and hundred years of their history will never happen again.

My new covenant people of Zion will never come under my covenant curses again but will only and always be under my covenant blessings. How is that to happen?

Well I promise it. I swear to it God says I swear by my mighty right hand. Well you know how it's going to happen because you've read Isaiah 53 and you saw him who was anointed as the suffering servant to go to Calvary and to take the curses that his people deserved upon himself and to be punished with those curses that his people might know nothing but the blessings that he deserved. Yeah that's how never again will God's people ever suffer the curses of the broken covenant. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us and cursed him.

[36 : 55] Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law. How? By becoming a curse himself. And so never again will God's people know what it is to come under the curse of a broken covenant.

That's the new covenant where Jesus the Messiah provides for the obedience that's required. He's the great covenant keeper and he suffers the covenant curses that we deserve and then he puts a new heart.

A new spirit in us so that we will be careful to keep his law and he inspires us to fear him so that we will never again turn away from him. Never again repeat that cycle of saying I'm done with Christ. I've had enough of him. No we'll fall. We'll fall miserably but we will never again walk away turn away finally from the Lord Jesus.

You see the new covenant brings a new security. A new peace and a new assurance because it rests on better promises that God swears to keep and then fulfills through Jesus Christ.

[38 : 09] That's what Jesus does for his new covenant church. This is the glorious future in store for a transformed Zion. A new covenant, new security, no curse.

Jesus. And then it concludes with a new influx of converts from the ends of the earth pouring into Zion. Verses 10 through 12. The Savior's coming and he's bringing salvation with him.

That's the good news as they're looking forward to this one who is coming. The Savior's coming. He's got salvation in his arms so the church is to get ready for this new thing that God is going to do.

They're to prepare for this great gathering from the nations. The gospel is being proclaimed notice to the ends of the earth inviting all from the nations to come to the Savior.

So Zion open your gates. Get ready to receive them. Pave the new highway on which they can travel. Remove all obstacles in the way. Raise a banner.

[39 : 08] We sang of it. Lift up your festal banner. The cross of Christ our king so that they may rally around that banner and come streaming into Zion. These promises of Zion's future glory include the end gathering of the nations.

Have you answered the gospel call? You know we're not over in Israel. The gospel has come to us. We're one of these nations. The gospel has come to us.

The Savior has come the first time. He's coming the second time. Not to suffer but to bring salvation to all who are waiting for him.

Have you answered the call to come to Christ? If so then this is your future. Isn't it wonderful? This is your future.

It's what you have to look forward to. It's already begun in the church but it's to be fully enjoyed at Christ's return. And if you've not answered the call, why not?

[40 : 21] This could be your future. Instead of the one that you were writing by your sin. Well, why has Isaiah taken us over this familiar turf again?

Why this before and after? Why this transformation? What's his camera especially focusing on? I think it's clear by the very heart of the passage, the very center of the passage in verses 6 and 7. It's to stir us up to pray for these promises to be fulfilled. Notice it in verses 6 and 7. I have posted watchmen on your walls, O Jerusalem.

They will never be silent, day or night, just like Isaiah. You who call on the Lord. Is that you? Do you pray to the Lord? You who call on the Lord, here's a word for you.

Give yourselves no rest and give him no rest until he establishes Jerusalem, his bride, and makes her the praise of the earth. So these promises of Zion's glorious future are not reasons to sit idly by and say, well, isn't that wonderful what God's got in store for us as a church?

[41 : 33] No, they're meant to stir us up to action. And notice the action. It's pray. Pray. They're meant to move us to pray, to pray again, and to pray some more.

To not rest yourself nor to let God rest until he brings to completion all that he has promised concerning his church. Till he establishes her and makes her the praise of the earth.

She's right now a disgrace. But she's going to be the praise of the earth. That's Isaiah's message. So pray for the promises to be fulfilled.

You see this glorious transformation that we've read of, these five new things, though some of them have begun, they are not complete, are they? So we can't quit praying.

The church is not yet the praise of the earth. The last I checked, the world is still scoffing at her, saying she's a joke. Her righteousness is not yet shining out like the dawn.

[42 : 40] I find that the statistics for sin among the professing church are not all that different from the world. She's filled with heresy and division and sin and worldliness and ungodliness and apathy and all that the new covenant promises concerning her has not yet been fully accomplished and there are still far more from the nations to be gathered into the church.

So don't stop praying until the Savior comes again and this transformation is complete. These promises are given that we might plead them in prayer.

You say, if God has promised it, then why pray it? That's exactly wrong. You have the most encouragement to pray when you have a promise in your hand and you come to God with his promise in your hand and you say, Lord, do as you promised.

Read the Bible. You'll find that's the way David prayed. That's the way Paul prayed. That's the way Jesus prayed. Do as you promised. You Make the church's righteousness.

Make her righteous and holy lives to shine out so brilliant that it will be like dawn breaking the darkness. Make us a crown of beauty in your hand because we so reflect the beauty of Jesus Christ in our lives that it will attract others in.

[44 : 19] Bring in those everlasting blessings promised for us on Calvary and give us to live up to our new name, the holy people, the redeemed of the Lord.

And gather a great influx of converts from Kenya, from the Middle East, from France and the Philippines and from this nation into Zion. Pity the nations, O our God.

Constrain the earth to come. Send thy victorious word abroad and bring the strangers home. Don't give yourself rest from such praying.

You know, in wrestling we used to wrestle three two-minute periods, but in between each period you had a brief rest, just enough time to catch your breath and rest before the next whistle and the next period.

What does it look like to pray without resting? Well, it's like Jacob when he wrestled with God. And there were no rest breaks, were there? He wrestled all night until morning.

[45 : 25] And he just latched hold of God and he said, I will not let you go until you bless me. I'm not going to give you any rest or my self-rest. What does that look like in prayer?

It looks like that Syrophenician woman that came to Jesus one day and said, Lord Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me. My daughter is possessed by a demon. woman. And Jesus answered her not a word.

And she gave him no rest. She kept crying out after him. I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel. And she cries out after him. She's prostrate on her face before him.

It's not right to take the children's bread and to toss it to the dogs, Jesus says. Oh, but Lord, even the dogs get the crumbs from the children's table.

That's what it looks like. She gave Jesus no rest and gave herself no rest. And she was answered. Give yourself no rest.

[46 : 38] Give him no rest. You know, Jesus is enthroned in heaven, but he's not there to rest. He's there to answer prayer. He says it in John 14. I'm going to my father and I will do whatever you ask in my name so that the son may bring glory to the father.

So ask me whatever you ask in my name. I will do it. Can you see his heart toward us? He's got blessings to pour. So ask, so ask, so ask. Don't give yourself rest.

Don't give me any rest, he says. So what are you doing for Zion's sake? That's where we began. Verse 1. For Zion's sake.

And we saw what Isaiah was doing. He was not giving himself rest. And we see that the faithful are told to give themselves no rest. For Zion's sake, I will not keep silent.

Isaiah loved God's people, and his heart was deeply moved to see the sad state of condition that Zion was in. He hated to see her unfaithful. He hated to see her unholy. A joke, a laughing stock to the world, a disgrace to Christ with no beauty to attract the nation.

[47 : 44] So what did he do? He prayed, and he prayed, and he prayed some more. Lord, do what you said you'd do to Zion. Remake her. Make her righteousness shine.

What does the church mean to you, dear friend? How much of your life is taken up with Zion's sake? For Zion's sake, I fill in the blank.

For Zion's sake, I fill in the blank. What place does the church have in your life? Is your life oriented around the church, or is it detached from the church?

Is Christ's church a mere side interest, or is it front and center in your prayers, your finances, your endeavors? Are you indifferent to her cause, neglectful of her meetings and her mission?

The church is God's plan for blessing the nations today. And the church is God's plan for blessing you today, dear brother and sister.

[48 : 49] It is his plan for bringing glory to him. I heard again this week of a woman who was deeply wounded in the church. It happens all the time, and what happens often is this.

People get wounded in a church, and they give up on the church. They just walk away, and no longer have time for the church.

Why should you go back? Why should you not give up on the church? Because Jesus loves the church, and you should too. He gave his blood for her.

Why should you go back? Because Jesus is committed to his church, and you should be too. because it's his number one priority on earth, and it should be yours too, to seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these other things will be added to you as well.

Why should you not give up on the church? Because God has not given up on the church. Has he? Why should we settle for present mediocrity and status quo when such glorious promises of Zion's future glory have been sworn to us and lie on the pages of our Bible, just waiting for the church to pray them, plead them before the throne of grace?

[50 : 17] Listen to Jesus praying for the church in John 17. Follow him into Gethsemane and see how he prays, for Zion's sake, I will drink this cup. Follow him on to Golgotha and see him cursed, for Zion's sake.

Learn from Jesus what it is to live and die for Zion's sake. Learn from Isaiah what it is to pray unceasingly for Zion's sake. We'll be meeting right here Wednesday night to do just that, to pray that God would bless his church around the world and bring more into her.

Give God's church priority status in your lives. There's nothing bigger happening. There's nothing better happening. There's nothing more important happening than God's transformation of Zion.

So pray for it. That's the message this morning. With the picture before us, let's commit ourselves again this morning to live and pray for the fulfillment of the church's destiny.

let's pray. Glorious things again, our Father. Glorious things have been spoken about Zion, the city of God, about your church and things that take a lot of imagination because she doesn't look like that now.

[51 : 52] And yet we thank you that we have your sworn word. oh, that it would affect us more. We expect the world to scoff at the church and our Savior.

But don't let that climate dampen our spirits. Give us to see the glorious destiny ahead of us and to pray unceasingly for it. Gather people into your church all around the world, even this day, as the banner of the cross is being lifted up on the field.

bring sinners to Christ. Do it in this place, that we might be a beautiful crown in the hand of our Lord. We pray in his name.

Amen. Amen.