

# The Beautiful Branch

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[0:00] Isaiah chapter 3 and verse 16. We're going to read through the end of chapter 3 and chapter 4 as well.

! Isaiah chapter 3 verse 16. The Lord says, The women of Zion are haughty, walking along with outstretched necks, flirting with their eyes, tripping along with mincing steps, with ornaments jingling on their ankles. Therefore the Lord will bring sores on the heads of the women of Zion.

The Lord will make their scalps bald. In that day, the Lord will snatch away their finery, the bangles and headbands and crescent necklaces, the earrings and bracelets and veils, the headdresses and ankle chains and sashes, the perfume bottles and charms, the signet rings and nose rings, the fine robes and the capes and the cloaks, the purses and mirrors, and the linen garments and tiaras and shawls.

Instead of fragrance, there will be a stench. Instead of a sash, a rope. Instead of well-dressed hair, baldness.

Instead of fine clothing, sackcloth. Instead of beauty, branding. Your men will fall by the sword. Your warriors in battle.

[1:27] The gates of Zion will lament and mourn. Destitute, she will sit on the ground. In that day, seven women will take hold of one man and say, We will eat our own food and provide our own clothes.

Only let us be called by your name. Take away our disgrace. In that day, the branch of the Lord will be beautiful and glorious. And the fruit of the land will be the pride and glory of the survivors in Israel.

Those who are left in Zion, who remain in Jerusalem, will be called holy. All who are recorded among the living in Jerusalem. The Lord will wash away the filth of the women of Zion.

He will cleanse the bloodstains from Jerusalem by a spirit of judgment and a spirit of fire. Then the Lord will create over all of Mount Zion and over those who assemble there a cloud of smoke by day and a glow of flaming fire by night.

Over all the glory will be a canopy. Over all the glory will be a canopy. It will be a shelter and shade from the heat of the day and a refuge and a hiding place from the storm and rain.

[2:39] There are times in our lives when circumstances seem to mock God's promises. God promises to care for us and yet this painful trial that I'm experiencing never goes away.

Or God promises to never stop doing us good and yet this thorn in my flesh doesn't look good, doesn't feel good, doesn't taste good and in fact I don't see anything good about it.

And so we start doubting God's promises. Doubting His promised goodness and love, His promised wisdom and power to do all that He said He would do for us.

Now that's ever been the case with the people of God. We never get far in life before another trial comes to test our faith. And whatever that test is, the issue is this, will we trust God to keep His word when everything else around us seems to contradict it?

Will we cling to His goodness? Will we rely on His love? Will we lean on His wisdom and trust in His power?

[4:04] Now that was the test that faced Judah 2,700 years ago. The nation was on a collision course with circumstances that would mock God's promises to them.

Now God had promised amazing things to Judah. He promised them amazing things through their forefather Abraham. He said that He would bless them with a numerous offspring, more than the stars in the sky.

That He would bless them with a promised land flowing with milk and honey. That He would so bless them that all the nations of the earth would be blessed through them.

And then He had promised many more good things through their most famous king, David. God promised that He would raise up a seed from David who would not just reign over Judah, but over the whole earth and establish a lasting peace.

Many more amazing things were now being prophesied and promised through the prophet Isaiah. We think of His glorious vision over in chapter 2, at the opening of chapter 2.

[5 : 21] He had said that the worship of their covenant Lord would be honored all over, or would be honored above all the religions of the world.

That many peoples from all the nations would abandon their nations' gods and would stream up to Zion to worship the true God, their God, and to be taught His ways that they might walk in His paths.

And Isaiah promised that the Lord Himself would judge with justice and put right every wrong and establish worldwide peace forever. Glorious promises filling their ears, but mocking circumstances would soon fill their eyes.

what they would see would make them wonder about these promises. For Isaiah tells them that the day was soon coming when their numerous population would be drastically reduced by foreign armies.

So six out of seven, every seven men, would be gone. Only a tenth would remain and they would be decimated. Those were the prophecies of Isaiah. And as for the promised land, they would be driven out of it far from that land of promise.

[6 : 41] And as far as the nations go, they would not be streaming up to Zion to worship and to be taught by their God. But they would stream up to Zion to pray on them, to burn their cities, to destroy their temple, to leave the land desolate without food or water or leaders or beauty.

And there would come a time when there would be no Davidic king on the throne. Not ruling over the whole world. In fact, not even ruling over Judah itself.

But rather, they would be ruled by the nations of the earth. And all of this was soon to be the reality that Judah would live with.

Every day they would wake up to that world. And the promises would ring hollow in their ears. It all seemed so impossibly far from the promised glory of Judah.

And it left them with questions swirling in their heads. So what about this prophecy in chapter 2 that Isaiah gave them about the glory of Judah and her God?

[7 : 59] Was that just a pipe dream? Would that not be fulfilled? And had God gone back on his promises to Abraham and to David?

Had he given up on his people? Was he going to have to settle for a plan B instead of plan A? That's what these judgments sounded like.

And that's what they would look and feel like when they fell upon Judah. And chapter 4 shouts, no, no, and no. That's not what will happen.

Even with all these coming judgments, God has not forgotten his promises. He's not finally abandoned his people or his plan.

There is a coming glory for a renewed and restored cleansed Zion. And it will be brought about by the coming Messiah. through him, all the promises to Abraham, to David, to Isaiah and the prophets would be fulfilled.

[9 : 03] Not one would be left unfulfilled. But they would find that not one word of God would fall to the ground unfulfilled.

So, chapter 4 is as bright as chapter 3 was dark. And that's where we come this morning. Three points today. The first is that all real beauty and glory are in the Messiah.

All the real beauty and the real glory are in the Messiah. Now, you remember those haughty women of Zion with their outstretched neck, their flirting eyes, and their mincing steps.

They were proud of their own beauty. They were self-confident. And they were self-glorifying. And because of it, God says that He was going to snatch away all their beauty and instead of beauty would be disgrace.

Now, the whole nation of Judah was just like those haughty women. They were proud. They were self-sufficient. They were self-glorifying. They trusted in their own wealth, their own military, their own idols, their own leaders.

[10 : 15] And they thought that through their own efforts, they could make themselves as a nation very beautiful and glorious. The envy of the world, even as God had promised them.

But they would find that all their misplaced trust in man would only bring them destruction and disgrace because it would draw down upon them the curses and judgments of God. And so the entire nation would end up being like that woman that we read of at the end of chapter 3. Those women sitting there, stinking, bald, branded, ugly, desolate, begging for someone to take away their disgrace.

The whole nation of Judah will be brought to that point. But now in verse 2 we read, in that day the branch of the Lord will be beautiful and glorious and the fruit of the land will be the pride and glory of the survivors in Israel.

So beauty and glory are in store for Judah. But it will not be achieved by their own doings but rather by Messiah who is himself their beauty and their glory.

[11:30] So you see, they sought beauty their own way, it would be judged and they would be desolate. But God would bring them to beauty and glory His way through His Messiah.

Now the Messiah has two names in verse 2. First of all, He's called the branch of the Lord. And by the parallel phrase that follows, Messiah is also referred to as the fruit of the land.

The branch of the Lord will be beautiful and glorious. The fruit of the land will be the pride and glory of the survivors in Israel. Now the branch of the Lord is a name that we find elsewhere in Scripture and even in Isaiah, a reference to the coming Messiah.

Isaiah. Now He's also called the fruit of the land because He will spring up from this land of Judah. From this desolate, decimated land will spring forth this branch.

He is the fruit of this land. This land that was now a land full of stumps as we saw in Isaiah chapter 6.

[12:38] Cut down by God's judgment. And when the line of David had been cut off like a mere stump in the land in that day, Isaiah prophesies in chapter 11, verse 1, a shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse.

From his roots, a branch will bear fruit. That's this branch. That's the fruit of the land. Messiah is coming. The Lord will cause the land to produce this Messiah.

chapter 53 says, He grew up before Him like a tender shoot, like a root out of dry ground. Now, these are the most unpromising circumstances.

A stump in the land. There it is, a chopped off stump. Looks lifeless. A stump in the land, and now we're told in Isaiah 53 that it's dry land, like a root out of dry land, dry ground.

We don't expect great things to come out of stumps in dry ground, but it is precisely there from that stump that a shoot will spring up. You see, God doesn't need promising circumstances to do His works in.

[13:55] An old stump in a dry land will do. I wonder if things in your life are looking desperate. Are you at the end of your rope, at the end of your resources?

That's just the time for God to work. We saw it in Sunday school hour. True righteousness starts when you get to the end of yourself.

And that's what God would do. He would bring Israel to the end of themselves, and then He would work in righteousness and beauty. Now, it's in that day.

That's how verse 2 starts. In that day. We just see it in verse 1 as well. In that day. In fact, this is the seventh time we've read those words that Isaiah's talked about that day.

That day of the Lord. And just to read it, we almost shrink with horror. Oh no, now what? Because every time we've read about that day, it's been about God appearing in glory to judge.

[14:57] that He has a day in store for all that's proud and lofty when the pride and self-sufficiency of men will be brought low and the Lord alone will be exalted in that day.

Chapter 2, 11 and 17. And in that day, verse 18 of chapter 3, the Lord would come and snatch away all the beauty from Judah.

And now we read it's in that day that same day that the branch of the Lord will be beautiful and glorious and will be the pride and glory of the survivors in Israel.

So on the day when God appears in glory to judge some, He will also appear in glory and grace to save others. And that's the way with God's judgments. He saves people through judgment.

That day of judgment and exile will not be over until these gracious purposes of God in restoring a remnant to Himself have taken place.

[16:03] And in that day, not only will Messiah, the branch, be beautiful and glorious in His own person, but He will be acknowledged as such by the surviving remnant, by those survivors.

He will be their pride and glory, the thing they boast about. The fact that there are any survivors will be all of grace. We saw that in chapter 1 and verse 9, that unless the Lord Almighty had left us some survivors, we would have become like Sodom and we would have been like Gomorrah. No survivors. Oh, but here are some survivors and it will be all of grace. And in that day, the branch will be all their pride and their glory.

the one in whom they boast. I will not boast in anything, no wealth, no power, no wisdom, but I will boast in Jesus Christ, His death and resurrection.

The apostle says, God forbid that I should boast in anything but the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. It's because of Him that I have come through the judgment as a survivor.

[17:14] He was judged on Calvary in my place. He was damned for my sin that I might never be. That's the only way there are any survivors from God's judgment.

Now, here's our beauty. Here's our glory. Here's our pride. Not in anything we've done, but in Christ Himself, the branch. Where do we find such beauty? Think about the beauty of the Godhead.

All the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Him bodily. Think of the beauty of His holiness. Here He is in the same tempting world that you and I live in, only He's holy and blameless and pure, separate from sinners, in a class of purity, all His own.

No filthy pride, no wrong desires in Him. The beauty of His holiness. Think of the beauty of His humility. how meek and lowly and hearty is.

How He stooped so low to lift us so high. He came from heaven and He went to the hellish cross to lift us up to heaven.

[18:26] The beauty of His humility, the beauty of His self-giving love, refusing not to give His own life that He might save ours. The beauty of His patience. How slow to anger He has been with us.

How Jesus is not ashamed to call us His brothers still today. The sympathy, the beauty of His sympathy, how that there is today, though Jesus is on His throne and high in heaven, yet He has a sympathy in His heart with the most tempted and tried believer here on earth.

And He feels what we're going through. What is the beauty of this Jesus, this branch? the beauty of how perfectly He fits my every need for a Savior.

He's everything that I need to save me from myself, to save me from God's wrath. Beautiful Savior. And that's the conclusion that every survivor from judgment has of Him.

He's beautiful. He's the fairest of 10,000. He's altogether lovely. And their pride and their glory is in Him.

[19:40] In fact, we wonder how we miss that glory so long, don't we? Because we saw no beauty in Him that we should be attracted to Him. And we wonder, how was it? Was I so blinded by my own self-love?

So blinded and full of myself that I failed to see beauty in Christ? But in that day, all the survivors will glory and take pride in the branch.

There's yet more beauty to be seen in Christ when we see Him face to face. When He comes in power in great glory and we look upon Him who was pierced for us.

Oh, how beautiful He will appear when we see Him for the first time ourselves. The one who took the wrath for me. Yes, He will be all our beauty, our glory.

In that day, the branch of the Lord will be beautiful and glorious, the pride and glory of the survivors in Israel. Now, ever since 1990, Notre Dame students and fans have been wearing T-shirts that say, Return to Glory in the hopes that someday, somehow, that their football team will return to the glory years under Rockne and the Four Horsemen.

[21:05] The return to glory. Now, what have we learned in those ensuing 20 years? Well, we've learned simply that it takes more than T-shirts to return to glory.

That for all their wishing and cheering and hoping and hiring of new coaches and recruiting of new players, the glory simply has not returned. Now, Judah was year after year yearning for the glory to return.

The glory as they enjoyed it under King David and Solomon. But they thought that they could bring about that glory by their own efforts.

And so they were trusting in their wealth, in their business dealings, their alliances with the nations, their defense, their military, their idols, their leaders.

And Isaiah says, no, no, the glory will not return that way. And the all-surpassing glory that has been promised to you, Judah, will not come through man, but through Messiah.

[22:17] Get your eyes on the branch of the Messiah. He will bring glory and beauty back to Zion. He's the one who will make you glorious by giving you his glorious self. Now, there's true beauty for their fleeting, fleeting, and fading glory.

In Christ, she will be truly glorious and she'll find in him what she could never achieve by all of her efforts herself.

So stop trusting in man. Start trusting in Messiah. Abandon your self-righteous efforts to make yourself beautiful and be made beautiful by Messiah.

That's Isaiah's first point. Now, the second point is the remnant surviving judgment will be cleansed and made holy. You see this in verses 3 and 4.

[23:17] Those who are left in Zion, who remain in Jerusalem, will be called holy. All who are recorded among the living in Jerusalem. The Lord will wash away the filth of the women of Zion.

He will cleanse the bloodstains from Jerusalem by a spirit of judgment and a spirit of fire. Notice here the way that Isaiah further describes these survivors in Israel.

These are the survivors in Israel from verse 2. They're further described as those who are left in Zion. These are the leftovers. They're further described as those who remain in Jerusalem.

They're the remnant that remains alive after the judgments have fallen. They're also described as all who were recorded among the living in Jerusalem. They're written down, the survivors, are written down in a book of life.

And it reminds us that they survived the judgment not because they were lucky, but because they were chosen. They were written down in the Lamb's book of life before the creation of the world.

[24:27] Not all Israel is Israel, Paul says in Romans 9. There is an election of grace. There's a remnant chosen by grace. Out of all of Israel, there were those that God chose to show His grace, His saving favor through Messiah to.

And they were written down. And so they survived the judgment. And it's said of these surviving people that they will be called holy.

They'll be called holy. Now that had been their calling all along from the first day God called them as a nation to be His. He said, you be holy because I am holy. You be mine and manifest my holy character in your moral behavior.

The way you treat each other is to reflect my holiness. Be holy because I am holy. They were to be a holy nation.

Yahweh's holy bride and to show it by obedience to His holy laws. But Zion was not holy. She was an unfaithful bride, a sinful nation who turned their backs on God and His holy commandments.

[25:48] And that's why God's judgments were falling so fast and furious upon them. They thought themselves to be holy, but really all their righteousnesses were as filthy rags.

What they gloried in, God viewed as filth. But here's a bright word of promise for the surviving remnant. Though they were unholy people now, in that day and by that branch, they will be called holy.

They will be called holy because they will indeed be holy, made so by Messiah Himself. Notice, even those haughty women of Zion, so full of filthy pride, they will be cleansed.

The Lord will wash away the filth of the women of Zion. That'll take some real scrubbing. That filthy pride is in their bones, it's in their marrow. But there is some way to cleanse these haughty women of Zion and they will be washed.

No more self-confident, no more look at me, now made holy, washed, truly beautiful because of what the Lord does.

[27:09] And Jerusalem that was so full of murderers and the blood of oppression, oh, but look at the promise, the Lord will cleanse the blood stains from Jerusalem. And notice, this washing and cleansing would be by a spirit of judgment and a fire.

Judgment is part of the cleansing process for the surviving remnant. It would be through the fiery judgment of the exile and the destruction of the people as a nation that they would be humbled and brought low, brought to repent and to return to the Lord, to be cleansed by him, to be made beautiful again by him.

The same judgment that would destroy the impenitent will bring others to repent and to be cleansed by the branch in that day. But ultimately, this cleansing would come from Calvary where Messiah, the branch, would be abandoned by God, would be exiled by God for his people, and the fires of God's judgment would fall on him that they might be saved and made holy once again.

The people of God made holy by grace, by the Messiah, dying, being judged for them. This is the only way that Isaiah knows for cleansing.

He knows of no other cleansing agent for sin than the blood of Jesus. There's no other fountain open for sin and uncleanness wherein a man can plunge and come out clean of all his guilty stains. [28 : 59] And so Isaiah is again pointing us to the cross where God's judgment fell on our substitute, that it might not fall on us, where our sins were cleansed to make us holy, to make us beautiful again.

And that's the only way to survive God's judgment is to get into Christ where God's judgment has already fallen, where God's justice is satisfied and asks no more.

Sin must be judged either in you or in a substitute, and there's only one substitute that qualifies, it's Jesus, the branch, the coming Messiah as he was to Isaiah's day and who has come from our perspective.

Have you been washed in the blood? You've been cleansed of all of your self-sufficiency and self-righteousness and pride? Do you see how Messiah beautifies his people?

He beautifies these survivors of judgment by washing them and cleansing them from sin and making them holy. Sin is ugly, folks, and it makes us ugly, both to God and to our fellow man.

[30 : 19] But holiness is beautiful. It beautifies us. And Jesus died to take away our ugly sin and to cover us with his beautiful holiness.

Jesus, thy blood and righteousness, my beauty art, my glorious dress. It's the Messiah who will make us beautiful.

All of our beauty is the work of Messiah Jesus, Jesus, both for me and in me. So when I believe in Jesus, I'm covered and clothed with his beautiful holiness.

And God looks upon me as holy, as beauty, as beautiful as Jesus because his beauty covers me. His blood cleanses me from every ugly sin.

But there's more. His spirit comes to live inside of me and to make me more holy in heart and in life, to beautify me from the inside out, to make me like my beautiful Savior in my thoughts, my desires, my choices, my obedience to his holy laws.

[31 : 35] And for my daily sins, Jesus' blood goes on cleansing me from every sin, in 1 John 1.8. You see, it's the coming branch who will beautify his people.

Have you thought what ugly, filthy wretches we would be without our beautiful Savior? We have no beauty but what is found in him and but what he gives.

And he knows best how to beautify your heart and life. We would like it to be, as we heard in Sunday school, without any difficulties. If he would just make us holy and just make us beautiful. Just get rid of all that self-centeredness in my life. Just take it out. But no, he knows best how to do that.

And so he puts us into situations where we see our self-centeredness. And it looks ugly to us. And we come running to him and say, Lord Jesus, this is too strong for me.

[32 : 37] It's part of me. It's in my system. I can't save myself from my own self-centeredness.

Save me, Jesus. Forgive me. Help me. You see, he's ever bringing us to see our ugliness that we might flee to Jesus for his beauty to cover us and his power to sanctify us.

And so he knows how to get those rare beauties of thankfulness into our hearts. And he reduces us in areas to nothing that we might be thankful.

And he knows how to create love and joy and peace and patience and kindness and goodness and gentleness and faithfulness and self-control. And he's working, you see.

He's beautifying his people. Why do we come to the scriptures? Why do we come to the public means of grace? Why do we come and meet with our savior? I'm here for the beauty treatments. I'm here for the makeover. I'm here to have Jesus Christ wash me and cleanse me of my ugly sins and to make me more like himself.

[33 : 51] Well, God knows best how to create beauty and this was the purpose of the painful exile. Through it, the surviving remnant would be cleansed from their sins.

peace. Because only a purified people would be fit for the presence of the Holy One of Israel dwelling among them. You see, that's the big problem. In fact, it's the biggest problem we all have and it's the problem that keeps showing itself throughout the Bible.

How can me, a sinner, live together with the holy, holy, holy God? God? How can we live together in fellowship and enjoy communion and the life that is in Him?

And the Bible keeps saying it will be only as our sins are cleansed and atoned for by a sacrifice. And the New Testament puts flesh and blood on who that sacrifice is. Christ died for sins once for all to bring us to God, that cleanse from our sins, we might be fit for the presence of God.

[35 : 02] Now, Ezekiel was God's prophet during the exile of Judah. Isaiah prophesied before the exile. It's coming. And he gave them important information to be ready to face it and to prepare for it.

Ezekiel is the prophet of God who spoke to the people right in the midst of their exile. And it was through Ezekiel that God revealed through visions. To Ezekiel that was announced to the people that he was going to remove his presence from their temple.

That's where God dwelt. That was the place of his earthly dwelling, his glory, Shekinah glory in the Holy of Holies. And we have that vision where the glory cloud left the temple, left Jerusalem. God withdrew his presence. Why? Because of their defiling sins. Holy God can't dwell together with sinners. Their sins have to be gotten rid of.

But that glory would return to a cleansed people. That's what Isaiah is saying. And that leads us to our third point, that God's own presence with them will be their glory and their protection.

[36 : 14] Verse five and six. Then, after he has cleansed them of their sins and made them holy, then the Lord will create over all of Mount Zion and over those who assemble there, a cloud of smoke by day and a glow of flaming fire by night, over all the glory will be a canopy.

Over them all, the glory would be a canopy. It will be a shelter and shade from the heat of the day and a refuge and hiding place from the storm and rain.

Then, after cleansed by Messiah, he will take up his dwelling place in them and over them. Signified by the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night, those visible symbols that the Israelites had when they were in the wilderness, that God was present, that God was with them. So it would be that God himself, his presence would be their glory. I mean, this was the thing that distinguished Judah from all the other nations.

[37 : 21] It was that God dwelt in them. God was in the midst of them. Take away God's presence and Israel is nothing more than just one another nation like all the other nations of the world.

No, it was Jehovah in the midst, his presence, his glory. That was their glory. That's what distinguished them and gave them some reason of importance. It was him being in their midst. But that was taken away. And now Isaiah is saying it will return. The glory will return. And he will not only be for them a glory, but also their covering, their canopy of protection.

When he removed his glory from them, they were exposed. There was no more protection. They were exposed to every warring nation around them that wanted to come in and take them. They came. Every wasting disease exposed. It came. Every evil curse. It fell on them. The protective covering of God's presence was gone.

[38 : 29] But notice when that when the Lord returns in glory and his presence is a covering over them, then they are protected. In that day over all God's people, the glory will be a covering, a shelter and shade from the heat of the day and a refuge and hiding place from the storm and rain.

When the sun is beating down on us and we can't bear the heat anymore, what do we do? We get under a shade tree and we enjoy the shade. Shepherds might go into a little shelter built for such times.

What would it be like to have a cloud that would give us shade and just follow us wherever we went? We had shade. That's what God promises to be to his people.

A continual shelter and shade from the heat of the day. When storms come, thunderstorms and tornadoes and hurricanes, we take refuge into a safe hiding place until the storm blows over and then we come out.

What would it be like just to live under a safe hiding place so that wherever we were, we're safe from the storm? That's what Jehovah will be. The branch will be for his people.

[39 : 46] A covering, a protection from the storm. A shelter, a refuge, a hiding place. He's constantly this for us.

We live under this shelter and shade of his protection. He's as near as the shadows are. You know he's near if you dwell under his shadow, under his shade.

He always comes between us and anything that would trouble and harm us. He's there. Our protection. Nothing gets to us but what it must pass through him first.

And so the sun will not smite us by day nor the moon by night. Because he. The maker of heaven and earth keeps watch over us.

And he never slumbers or sleeps. We live under the protective canopy of his presence 24-7 by day and by night. Wherever you go, you're under this protective canopy.

[40:51] So when you go to school, you're under the canopy. When you come to church, you're under it. When you go to work, when you go into that difficult conversation, you're under the canopy. When you're tempted, you're under the canopy.

And all of this, our branch is one for us. The protective presence of almighty God watching over us. So is the nation you live in heading for years of God's judgment for its sin? Is the economy that you work in and invest in headed for collapse?

Is the moral fabric of the nation falling apart, leaving you with all kinds of questions of what's going to happen to us and to Christians? Are the earthquakes, hurricanes, tornadoes and terrorists threatening you?

Are devils and evil men tempting you? And does your own flesh make you wonder, will I make it to the end? With such a traitor on the inside.

[41:51] Well, the Lord's our rock. In him we hide. A shelter in the time of storm. Secure whatever ill betide. A shelter in the time of storm.

Oh, Jesus is a rock in a weary land. A weary land. A weary land. Oh, Jesus is a rock in a weary land. A shelter in the time of storm.

So Isaiah says, stop trusting in man. And start trusting in the branch. Who is himself your glory, your beauty, your survival.

And yes, your protection. For he never will leave you nor forsake you. What an alternative to trusting in man who is never more than a breath away from his death.

We trust in the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth. So what have we seen this morning? Well, we've seen that God's judgment will reduce his people to a remnant.

[43:00] He will humble them. He will bring them low. But that's not his final purpose. His final purpose is the triumph of his grace in taking filthy and ugly people and cleansing them and making them a holy, beautified people where his glory dwells and protects forever and ever.

So, dear Christian, are you in circumstances that tend to mock the promises of God? You know some glorious things have been said about you.

The Bible promises if you're in Christ, there's coming a day when you will never have a sinful thought again. You'll never have a self-centered thought. You'll never sin.

You will be as beautiful as Jesus because you'll be glorified and made like him perfectly. You'll be the end of pain, sickness, sorrow. No more death.

These are glorious things that are promised of you. And here you are slugging it out and taking two steps forward and maybe three backwards.

[44:15] And you're wondering, how are those promises ever going to be fulfilled in me? You know what Isaiah's answer is? Fix your eyes on Jesus.

Get your eyes on the branch. The Messiah. He is the perfectly faithful one. He will fulfill all the promises that God has ever made.

He will not let one fall to the ground unfulfilled. And he doesn't need promising circumstances to do his work in. Are you in an ugly mess that's brought you to the end of yourself?

Oh, throw yourself in the arms of this Jesus. He delights to take ugly, unholy people and to save them and cleanse them and to beautify them with his own beauty, with his own spirit, his own work of grace.

You say, well, I'm doing fine on my own. I don't need the Lord. I don't need this shelter in the time of storm. I've weathered some tough storms and here I am, John.

[45:24] I'm doing all right. my friend, the big one's coming. The perfect storm. The storm of God's wrath.

And you will need a savior, a shelter in the time of that storm. Whatever you've gotten through in this life, you'll need him in that day.

And every day and every moment that you remain outside of Christ, you live outside of the protective covering, my friend.

You are exposed. You're exposed today to every demon that wants to tempt you and have his way with you. You're exposed to your own lust. You're exposed to any evil person doing anything to you.

You're exposed to the wrath of God because you're outside of the covering. Oh, get under the covering. Get in Christ. Be cleansed. Be protected.

[46 : 26] Sheltered in his wounded side. Now no ill can meet. Be tied. One with him forevermore. Thank you, Father, that such things could be said of us who are the most unworthy of having any good things said.

Thank you for the grace that you have brought in the Lord Jesus, that branch that sprung up from the stump of Jesse. Thank you for fulfilling your promises in him.

Thank you that we stand from this perspective and are able to look back and see that much of what Isaiah said has come true and that we can look into the future and say that we know that the one whose purposes cannot be thwarted and who has kept his promise will keep those promises that yet remain.

so come and work in us that joy, that glory, that pride in our Savior, that trust in him. Beautify us and make us more like him, we ask in Jesus' name.

Amen.