

Who Does God Look On With Favour? - Isaiah Ch 66 V 1-6

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[0 : 00] Morning, Isaiah chapter 66, almost in the middle of your Bibles. So, Isaiah chapter 66, and we're going to read the first six verses.

This is God's Word. This is what the Lord says.

Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. Where is the house you will build for me? Where will my resting place be?

Has not my hand made all these things? And so they came into being, declares the Lord. These are the ones I look on with favor, those who are humble and contrite in spirit, and who tremble at my word.

But whoever sacrifices a bull is like a person who kills. Whoever offers a lamb is like one who breaks a dog's neck. Whoever makes a grain offering is like one who presents pig's blood.

[1 : 26] And whoever burns memorial incense is like one who worships an idol. They have chosen their own ways. And they delight in their abominations.

So I also will choose harsh treatment for them, and will bring on them what they dread. For when I called, no one answered. When I spoke, no one listened.

They did evil in my sight, and chose what displeases me. Hear the word of the Lord, you who tremble at his word. Your own people who hate you and exclude you because of my name, and have said, Let the Lord be glorified, that we may see your joy.

Yet they will be put to shame. Hear that uproar from the city. Hear the noise from the temple. It is the sound of the Lord repaying his enemies all they deserve.

Psalm, thank you. Good morning, everybody.

[3 : 01] Why don't we start by turning to God in prayer. Father, we need your spirit's help this morning.

To humbly receive what you have to say to us from your word. Lord, to submit our lives to it. To put it into practice.

Lord, we pray that we here in Cargilline this morning will be those whom you look on favor. Because we are humble and contrite before you.

In Jesus' name we ask. Amen. Amen. Well, today's text deals with a question that has been asked in every culture, in every time.

Who does God look on with favor? How can I be made right with the divine? And the text is found, of course, in the last chapter of Isaiah.

[4 : 17] And one of the main themes in this book is God's righteous judgment on sin. Isaiah reveals a God holy beyond our understanding who cannot simply ignore sin.

He must act in judgment upon everyone's rebellion, regardless of race or religion. But hope is the second major theme as we read about a coming Savior who would be crushed for our sin, yet whose rule would never end.

And right at the end of the book, just as Isaiah is pulling together all these different strands, we have this incredible revelation from God in chapter 66, verse 2, as he declares this, these are the ones I look on with favor.

What is he going to say next? Is it those who work the hardest to earn it? Well, as a primary teacher, I often hear my students engage in lively debate as to who is the teacher's pet.

Now, what they're really asking is this. Who does Mr. Ross favor? On whom does his special approval rest?

[5 : 40] Who gets the preferential treatment? Now, let's face it, we all probably know that Johnny was probably the teacher's pet back when he was in primary school. I'm imagining he got 10 out of 10 in every spelling test.

Probably had beautifully neat handwriting and never, ever caused even an ounce of grief for his adoring teachers. Who thinks the same?

I won't ask for a show of hands. The bottom line is, from the earliest stages in life, we're all hardwired to believe that our performance earns us approval, right?

From school teachers to sports coaches to our bosses and work, we understand that where we get to in life is 99% performance-based.

And so, quite naturally, we translate that to our relationship with God. And deep down, our reflex position is to believe that my performance earns me God's favor, his forgiveness, and salvation.

[6 : 50] But God's answer to that question is not what the world expects. Read with me in verse 2. These are the ones I look on with favor.

Those who are humble and contrite in spirit, and who tremble at my word. Well, it's not by proudly claiming that we've earned his favor, rather by humbly admitting our brokenness, running to God for mercy, and submitting our lives to his word.

That's how God can look on us with favor. And to make this crystal clear, God paints two contrasting portraits for us in this text. The proud person and the humble person.

Let's start with the proud person. And just to warn you, this won't be easy to hear. Because it's going to be like looking in the mirror, and you won't like what you see.

But we so need to, in some way, grasp how much our sin of pride offends God, and the eternal consequences of it.

[8 : 07] So I challenge you, heed the warning of scripture today against pride. And, hold on for the hope of the humble later in the sermon.

So, the first thing we learn about the proud person in verse 1 and 2 is that they have a proud heart that boasts in their own efforts.

In verse 1, it's obvious that God's people thought they had earned his favor by building him a temple. How they lived their lives after that was inconsequential because they thought they had God's favor in the bag.

Now, God's response just shatters that theory. Read along in verse 1. verse 1. He says, Heaven is my throne and the earth is my footstool.

Where is the house that you will build for me? Where will my resting place be? You know, it's like God is saying, yes, you built me a temple like I asked you and thank you for that, but do you honestly think you can fit my glory inside there?

[9 : 18] the universe can't even contain me. How much less a building? And just to further drive home his point, he goes on in verse 2.

Has not my hand made all these things and so they came into being? Don't forget who gave you the stone, timber and gold, God says, let alone the skillful hands and the brilliant minds to build it.

What grounds do you have people of Judah to boast that you earned my favor by building the temple? None. You see, maybe you're like me and in those occasional moments of success in life, you can start to boast about what you did, the family you raised, the kindness you showed, the money you donated, the ministry you served in and somehow God begins to fade into the background, doesn't get a mention.

But in this text, God shows up every reason to boast by magnifying his glory and telling us that everything we have is ultimately a gift from his hand.

See, the proud heart doesn't want to acknowledge the sustaining, providing grace of God. Rather, they say, look at what my hands have achieved. Watch out.

[10 : 51] God does not look with favor on such self-reliant people. Secondly, we learn that the proud person has an unrepentant spirit.

Read with me the last two lines of verse 3. They have chosen their own ways and they delight in their abominations.

Now, that verse made me stop in my tracks as I was preparing this because right away, this timeline of events replayed through my mind of times when I knew what I was doing was wrong but I delighted in choosing it anyway.

I refused to repent of it at the time and if anyone had dared to confront me on it, I had a pre-prepared list of reasons to justify my behavior.

That's ugly pride. And we live in a world now where everything goes and depending on what the popular belief at the time, you can't question anybody else's morality, right?

[12:06] This is the brazen unrepentance of a proud heart who can't bring themselves to admit they are wrong. Watch out.

this pride ends in destruction. And this relates very, very closely to the third point.

The proud person doesn't want to hear God's word. Doesn't want to know about what God has to say. Read with me in verse four.

God says, for when I called, no one answered. When I spoke, no one listened. They did evil in my sight and chose what displeases me.

Now for some people, this is a very obvious refusal to accept the Bible as God's truth. think of Richard Dawkins and those sorts of people.

[13:12] But for others, you know what, it's more subtle. Church goers are often quite skilled at appearing to respect and listen to God's word, when often times the reality is quite different.

My time, personally, for reading God's word is first thing in the morning. Now if I'm being totally honest with you, at 6am in the morning, I'd rather read the sports news than read what God wants to say to me.

Now I know that sounds silly. I mean, how could you possibly put reading about the Lions rugby game in front of the life-giving words of God? But I actually face that battle every day.

And often God's word only gets the leftovers of my time, not my very best attention, when it should be the other way around. Can you relate to that?

God calls us shameless pride. When we habitually choose Instagram, Netflix, or whatever your favorite thing to do is, over the Bible, in front of it, what our actions are actually showing is this.

[14:27] I don't need God's wisdom and truth today. I'm doing just fine on my own. God says, watch out.

Such a person is under my judgment. And that is the fourth thing that God tells us about the crowd, their coming judgment.

Because starting in verse 3, God uses this series of jarring, unsettling images to wake us up to just how repulsive our pride is to him.

This is not easy reading. Look at verse 3. God is like who whoever sacrifices a bull is like one who kills a person.

And whoever offers a lamb is like one who breaks a dog's neck. Whoever makes a grain offering is like one who presents pig's blood.

[15:34] And whoever burns memorial incense is like one who worships an idol. You see, under the Mosaic law, the people were required to make offerings of grain and sacrifice bulls and lambs.

But for the proud, their sacrifices repudiated God. They actually had the opposite effect. You see, they couldn't paper over the cracks by getting all religious in public.

And neither can we. by showing up in church, putting money in the box, visibly doing good things for others. We might fool each other, but we can't fool God, who sees every motive of our hearts.

Let's continue in verse 3. It says, they have chosen their own ways, and they delight in their abominations. so I will choose harsh treatment for them, and will bring on them what they dread.

Speaking on the topic of hell, Tim Keller says, the Bible tells us that people only get in the afterlife what they have most wanted, either to have God as saviour and master, or to be their own saviours and masters.

[17:17] Watch out. If you live like you don't need him, blocking out his word and his ways, the horrendous end result for you is being your own saviour and master for eternity, and that is hell.

But there is hope, hope for salvation. There is hope for a better way to live, because God can change proud hearts into humble and contrite hearts, who can receive his forgiveness and favour for eternity.

So what does the humble person look like? And starting in verse 2, we find that firstly, they have a humble heart.

Rather than having a proud heart, that looks to what their own hands have achieved, in verse 2, we see that the humble person acknowledges that they are helplessly dependent on the grace and mercy of their Lord.

They realise that everything they have is a gift from God. They wake up in the morning, thanking God for the breath in their lungs to live another day. They thank God for providing their food and drink every time they eat.

[18 : 47] They recognise their money is ultimately a gift from God and they generously give back to him. They realise the house that they live in is also a gift from God and they don't hold it to themselves but they open it up to bless and be hospitable to others.

They understand that God has given them their talents and skills and they use them for his glory and the good of society. And when it comes to the most ultimate question, their standing with God, the following hymn, Rock of Ages, sums up their heart.

Nothing in my hands I bring, simply to thy cross I cling. Naked, come to thee for dress.

Helpless, look to thee for grace. Foul I too the fountain fly. Wash me saviour or I die.

That right there is a litmus test for humility. Are you wholly trusting in Jesus' finished work on the cross for the forgiveness of your sin?

[20 : 05] Is that your heart? the second thing that we learn about the humble in verse 2 is that while the proud are unrepentant, the humble are contrite or crippled in spirit.

Please keep a finger in Isaiah and skip back a couple books to Psalm 51. And here we're going to see a real life example of a contrite heart.

Now after King David had committed adultery with Bathsheba and he ended up murdering her husband as well, he made a right mess of things, what did he come to understand in the wake of his awful decisions and his sin?

Well if we look in Psalm 51 chapter 16 and 17 David says to God you do not delight in sacrifice or I will bring it.

You do not take pleasure in burnt offerings. My sacrifice oh God is a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart you God will not despise.

[21 : 30] You see David knew that God looks on the contrite with favor. Those who are genuinely devastated by their sin and the offense it has caused and they daily cry out to God for his forgiveness and his mercy.

Look at verse 1 in the same psalm. This is what David says. He says have mercy on me oh God according to your unfailing love according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. See the point is not that the humble are sinless. The point is that they are broken by their sin and they keep coming to God for forgiveness.

They keep asking for his spirit's power to overcome sin and live in a way that pleases him. Do you do I exercise those daily patterns of repentance?

Thirdly we see that the humble tremble at God's word. Where the proud fail to listen and live under the authority of God's word the humble have a profound reverence for it.

[22 : 47] They realize the eternal consequences of not listening to it. Now the ordinary person walking down Main Street in Cargill line may frown upon the idea of fear and trembling before God and his word.

We definitely prefer to emphasize God's love and his compassion rather than his overwhelming judgment on our sin. But brothers and sisters we cannot afford to lose sight of both these aspects. Think about Isaiah who back in chapter 6 was overcome with anguish after a vision of God and this is what he cried Woe to me I am ruined for I am a man of unclean lips and I live among a people of unclean lips and my eyes have seen the king the Lord almighty see God isn't supposed to be like your best pal who you mess around with on a Friday night no no he is the holy God so infinitely higher than us and we are to have a healthy fear of him whilst also being comforted by that same God who says come to me all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest take my yoke upon you and learn from me for I am gentle and humble and harsh it helps me sometimes to think about a teacher I had in secondary school

I think we all can remember that one teacher in school that commanded the respect and admiration of all students and for me that teacher's name was Pat and he was folk legend in the place and he taught leaving certain masters to a small group of us lads and I'm telling you when he taught we listened there was no messing he he could get the whole room laughing but he knew where to draw the line you know that kind of way he was kind and he cared personally about each one of our lives we respected him completely but I'll never forget his stinging rebuke one morning on one of his top students and my friend he had been disrespectful to one of Pat's colleagues the day before and so

on this morning we were just having a normal maths class but the next thing Pat just stopped everyone and he turned to face my friend and he confronted him on the wrong he had done the day before and he said listen he just communicated how much that had hurt him personally and his colleague now you could have heard a pin drop in that room we were left in awe gripped with fear the right type of fear of a great teacher who was perfectly justified in his rebuke we all knew he was right see our

God is a God of perfect love and perfect justice his instructions they're no trivial matter following them is the difference between eternal life or death the proud person doesn't make God's word a priority they flip open the Bible for a few minutes in one ear out the other that's that one ticked off the list but the humble person knows that hearing God speak to them is the most essential thing they do each day and they don't come up with a hundred excuses to put it off instead they submit their lies reverently to that word every day that's humility lastly what is the outcome for the humble well we know from verse 2 they receive

[27 : 14] God's favour they receive his salvation because every day they humbly accept their need of God repent of their sin and submit their lies to his word that's a Christian summed up but you like me might be starting to worry at this point because looking at the portrait of the proud person has been like looking in the mirror and while maybe you see aspects of humility there too you realise how often you fail to prioritise his word how frequently you rely on yourself and can often go days without acknowledging your sin to God see the fact is none of us are truly humble not one you and I we are the proud in and of ourselves we are outside of

God's favour under his righteous judgement for our rejection of him is there any hope for us or maybe if he tried to be more humble God might show us his favour then if he worked really really hard at it no no Isaiah shows us that we can never earn it we can never earn God's favour but the amazing hope of Isaiah is this someone was humble for us someone was contrite and obedient to God for us who is that truly humble person read with me in Philippians 2 verse 5 onwards it says in your relationships with one another have the same mindset as Christ Jesus who being in very nature

God did not consider equality with God as something to be used to his own advantage rather he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant being made in human likeness and being found in appearance as a man he humbled himself and became obedient to death even death on a cross Jesus was humble for us the Lord of the universe came to serve the children he created Jesus was contrite for us he was broken and crippled by our sin on the cross Jesus trembled at God's word for us he obeyed his father even to the point of death on a cross and there he bore the full weight of God's judgment on our pride so that we could have eternal life with him instead you see

God can look on us with favor because Jesus lived the humble life that we could never live and took the righteous judgment of God for our sin the humble are saved not because of what they've done but because they humbly rely on what Jesus has done they run to him for mercy they submit their lives to his word can you not see how it's impossible for the proud to be saved you can't trust your own ability to save yourself and trust in Jesus to save you as well it's one or the other and if you've listened to God's word today and realized hold on I am trusting in myself then please don't let this day pass without reaching out for the grace and mercy of Jesus repent of your pride repent of your striving to earn his favor humbly acknowledge your sin and your need for him turn from your own way and submit your life to his word and there's a promise in scripture if you do that you will pass over from

God's judgment to his eternal life as you humble yourself and put your faith in Jesus and if you are already found in Christ today you know you are trusting in Jesus for your salvation rejoice that God looks on you with the same favor that he looks on his son and remember you now have the spirit of Christ living in you who gives you the power to kill the root of pride in your life rely on him to transform you into a person who increasingly looks like Jesus the person who daily repents of sin and lives under the authority of the word when God looks at our church body here in

[33 : 06] Kerrigline I pray that he would see hearts that are truly humble simply trusting in Jesus precious children whom he favors us let's pray father we thank you for your word which brings us to our knees and holy reverence view lord your word cuts to the heart of the matter it exposes our sin of pride we thank you we thank you for that lord we ask you would humble us today lord we repent of our sin of pride of our self reliance we turn away from our strivings to earn your favor change our

proud hearts into humble ones that cling to the cross for god's glory in our lives we pray amen and just to finish we're just going to meditate on the words of that hymn rock of ages and we're going to stand as it plays and sing as well but
I just challenge