

God's impassioned appeal

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[0:00] And I'm not going to do anything clever, I'm afraid. I'm just going to go through the text this morning and see what the Bible says. What is it that God gets impassioned about? You need a little bit of context. It says it's the vision concerning Judah and Jerusalem that Isaiah, son of Amos, saw join the reigns of Isaiah, Jotham, Hezekiah, kings of Judah.

Judah is the north, no it isn't, Judah is the south kingdom. The north and south kingdoms split and there were various crises of faith and in the end both kingdoms were destroyed.

I did a sort of little timeline there, I won't stop on it, but it just says that the northern kingdom got zapped there and the southern kingdom ended up being zapped there. And in between there are two crises, one to do with a chap called Ahaz and one to do with a chap called Hezekiah who was his son.

They were both kings. We won't stop on that because it comes up later. You might need a little bit of geography. This is the Mediterranean, that's Cyprus and the places you need to know are Jerusalem, God's headquarters there, and the temptation of Egypt as a possible source of help. A possible ally. A possible ally. And then Assyria, this nation as a big threat, which eventually came and destroyed the northern kingdom, and which was followed by Babylon, which engulfed the southern kingdom.

[1:31] But that does give you a little, we'll do that bit more detail some other time. Let's look at the first nine verses in which I think God is full of emotion about his complaints.

Hear, O heavens, listen, O earth, for the Lord has spoken. Back in Deuteronomy, Moses said that this is the way it would be, that if God's people caused him to complain, God would be found sort of invoking the cosmos and saying, Heavens and earth, have you seen what is happening here? Hear, O heavens, listen, O earth. And what is it that heavens and earth are invited to bring into this sort of cosmic courtroom? This is what God says.

I reared up children and brought them up, but they have rebelled against me. And God is impassioned about that. Many of you here have brought up children.

And you know a little bit of what it is to invest yourself in your children, to bring them up. And you know how bitter it is if your children were to spit that back in your face.

[2:55] It's a bitter thing. And God says, that's what my people have done to me. I reared them, brought them up, but they've spat in my face.

They've rebelled against me. They're ungrateful. They're rebellious. And he says, even animals have more sense than this.

The ox knows his master. The donkey, his owner's manger. The animals know where they're going to get food. They know who's going to look after them.

Even stupid animals know that. But my people, Israel, does not know. My people do not understand.

There's a sort of stupidity about the people which God is complaining about in this very strong way. And then you notice in the beginning of verse 4, the word A-H-R.

[3:56] Okay? That's what the dentist says to you. Ah. Well, it was the doctor. Anyway. But this is not that sort of ah. This is a sort of sigh from the depths.

Ah. You remember how Jesus sighed like that? Do you remember Jesus looking up to heaven and sighing about the hardness of heart? Well, here's God sighing and saying, Oh, sinful nation, a

people loaded with guilt, a brood of evildoers, children given to corruption. They have forsaken the Lord, have spurned the Holy One of Israel and turned their backs on him. So, again, we're thinking about the metaphor of children. I think educational theory and social theory would tend towards, and you can correct me if I'm wrong, saying that children aren't actually naughty. They're simply misguided or disadvantaged. But God is not afraid to say of his children, it's not that they're just misguided and they're nice really.

[5:06] It's not that they're just disadvantaged. I mean, they've had lots of advantages, actually. They're sinful. And he uses an array of words. He talks about their guilt. He talks about their corruption. And he talks about them being evildoers. And it's one of these places where God does not pull his punches. He says, This nation is evil, guilty, and corrupt. He doesn't pull his punches. And he's saying, This should not be. They have spurned the Holy One of Israel and turned their backs on him. Something rather deliberate about this. Spurning is when you deliberately turn away from something. They spurned the Holy One of Israel and they've deliberately gone in their own direction. And then he changes the picture. This is somebody who's perhaps in a bare-knuckle fight and who is losing badly. And rather than saying, Okay, that's enough. Thank you.

[6:09] Just keeps on going and is being mashed and pulverized in a horrible way. He says, Why should you be beaten anymore? Why do you persist in rebellion? Your whole head is injured. Your whole heart is afflicted. From the sole of your foot to the top of your head, There is no soundness, Only wounds and bruises and open sores, Not cleansed or bandaged with oil. And he says, This is, It's just a self-destructive thing. I thought I put the word self-destructive there, But I obviously didn't. There's something self-destructive going on here. Instead of, It's not even in your own interests To carry on the way you're carrying on, Turning away from God. It doesn't even help you. It just makes matters worse. And at this point, I'll stop for breath, Because we have a city, And there's a picture of our city. And you might say, Well, It's a good job it's just about them. Good job God doesn't say anything like that about us. And I'm going to say, We are not ancient Israel. This is addressed, First and foremost, To ancient Israel. And yet, Would we not say, That in our city, There is ingratitude, There is ingratitude, God has given every human being, Not just ancient Israel, But given every human being, Life and breath, And everything else.

[7:37] And it is the great sin of humankind, That we are ungrateful, That we do not thank God, Or give God honour as God, But exalt ourselves instead. So I think it's not just ancient Israel, Who comes under this impassioned complaint. Our nature, We could, Yeah, I could sort of reflect on it, In all sorts of ways. Historically, Our European culture, Has derived its strength, And its wholesomeness, From Christianity, From the God of the Bible. But I think it would not be, An exaggeration to say, That the mood of our culture, Is to turn our backs, On this God, And his ways, And say we can do it far better ourselves. But actually we don't. Actually, It just works out the wrong way. So I'm suggesting, That we shouldn't, Too quickly, Just say these verses, Apply to other cultures, And other nations, Rather than our own. I think, That the cosmic court, Has other cases to try, And the Bible says, We will all come, Before the judgment seat of Christ.

[8:58] Nobody will escape, God's judgment. Let's follow on, These impassioned complaints, Just a little bit. In verse 7, For these people, The way this was a heading, Was for military defeat, As I intimated earlier, On the little timeline thing. Your country is desolate, Verse 7, Your cities burned with fire, Your fields are being stripped, By foreigners right before you, Laid wasters when overthrown, By strangers.

Of course to ancient Israel, The idea of their heritage, Being overtaken by foreigners, Would have been, The most abominable thought, The most repulsive thought.
Their safety is undone, All that is rich, And worthwhile, Is stripped, Taken away, All order and beauty, Becomes chaos and ugliness, As their fields are laid waste, By strangers, And they are left, This is quite a poignant picture, The daughter of Zion, Meaning to say, There's this grand, Glorious city, God's headquarters city, Is left, Like a shelter, In a vineyard, Like a hut, In a field of melons, I don't, Have you ever driven, From Ringmer, Into Lewis, Been on a bus, And as you come there, Am I correct, You see a load of allotments, With, I'm always fascinated by this, A load of, Forgive me if you own, One of these allotments, But they've got, Just sort of rickety old sheds, That's what it looks like, As I pass by, Rickety old sheds, In these allotments, And allotments tend to, Be like that, Don't they, And, There's no criticism, I mean a rickety shed is fine, But, But this glorious city, This sort of metropolis, Is now left, Like a rickety shed, In a field of cucumbers, That's what it's like, And this is, How, How are the mighty fallen, There's a picture of such, And, The comment comes, Wow, Unless the Lord Almighty, Had left us some survivors, We would have been like Sodom, We would have been like Gomorrah, Now Sodom and Gomorrah, Were, Were, Ancient cities that were, They're notorious for their, Evil,

[11:47] Inhumanity, And they were overthrown by God, In a very, Notable judgment, They're just, Wiped out, And, Here, This little bit of the text here, Is saying, You know, We would have ended up like that too, If God had been thorough, And just wiped the board, That's exactly what we deserved, But he didn't, He chose, For reasons best known to himself, To leave some, To spare some, To preserve some, The word for, For that sort of thing, Is grace, It's giving these, People, Mercy, That they don't deserve, He says, Unless the Lord had, Spared some, We would have been like Sodom, We would have been like Gomorrah,

And Paul picks up this exact thought, In Romans 9 29, And he quotes it exactly, And he says, Unless God had saved, A remnant by grace, We would all have been, Totally scuppered, And I wonder if you would, Agree with that thought, How come, I'm a Christian, You might be thinking, To yourself, How come I'm a Christian, Is it because I was so much better, Than other people, That I stood out, Morally, Spiritually, By virtue of my, Special character and personality, Perceptiveness, Wouldn't it be better to say, Do you know, I should have been just, Swept away with everyone else, The only fact, The only reason that I'm here, Is because God spared me, In his grace, He was kind to me, Which I never deserved, And isn't that an amazing thing, That by his grace, He saved me, And spared me,

And taken me, From where I ought to be, In the gutter, And brought me into his kingdom, And into his family, Isn't that the way, That a Christian thinks about this, No, Apparently not, Yes, I think so, Unless the Lord, Had, Left us some survivors, We would have been like Sodom, We would have been like Gomorrah, There's a, There's a, There's a, There's a touch here, On this button of, God's amazing grace, Amazing grace, To people who don't deserve it, Let's, Now move to verses 10 to 15, So I think, So God was impassioned, In his complaint, How, It's a complaint, To say, You guys, It's so wrong, Turn back, And let's go now, To his confrontation, So he is now addressing, The city, The city of Jerusalem,

But he picks up, On the Sodom and Gomorrah, And addresses them as that, He says, Hear the word of the Lord, You rulers of Sodom, No, No, Jerusalem, We're Jerusalem, We're God's headquarters, No, I think you're the rulers of Sodom, Listen to the law of our God, You people of Gomorrah, This isn't just the rulers, It's the people as well, And they're saying, No, Hold on, This can't be right, Because Sodom and Gomorrah, Were notoriously wicked cities, God overthrew them, But that would never happen to us, God, Get real, This is not going to happen to us, Because we are very observant, Religious people, Never happened to us, And God, Takes their religion to pieces, So, Isaiah tends to like lists, And there's some lists in here, And, He says, Okay, You've got, We've got a load of religion, We're very religious people, That, We can't possibly be under God's disapproval,

In any shape or form, And God, Comes out with this, Stinging, Critique, The multitude of your sacrifices, Verse 11, What are they to me?

[16:06] Says the Lord, I have more than enough, And here's a list of burnt offerings, Rams, The fat of fat and animals, I have no pleasure in

the blood of bulls, And lambs, And goats, You've got the whole array of sacrifices, Because this is ancient Israel, And they add all these sacrifices, And the ancient Israelites, The ancient Israelites were saying, We do these sacrifices, Morning, Afternoon, And evening, We've got lambs, Bulls, Goats, We do all this stuff, We do all that, And God, Itemizes, Their sacrifices, And says, What use do you think this is to me?

Do you honestly think, That what I'm really counting, Is the number of kilograms of flesh, That you kill, Or the number of pints of blood that you, Do you really think that that's what impresses me? Do you really think that that's what I'm interested in? I have no pleasure, Verse 11, In the blood of bulls, And lambs and goats, Now, But we all come together, Don't we?

We have various sorts of meetings, In fact, Our timetable is pretty well full of them, We have a whole list of those coming up in a minute, Verse 12, When you come to appear before me, Who has asked this of you, This trampling of my courts?

Remember an anecdote, From a pastor in Sri Lanka, Who had trained in England, And had been invited, To an ethnic congregation, In a part of Europe, I'll try not to be too specific, Because, Because of his ethnicity, So he went along to this ethnic congregation, They'd all gathered together, They were all immigrants, In a foreign land, So they all had that together, And it was a church, And he stood up to preach, And he preached the word of God, And the amount of interest, In the congregation, Was pretty much zero, And there was, He says, I remember this, He says, There was a girl at the back, Chewing gum, Bubble gum, And as he preached, She blew the bubbles at him, Like that, That's how much, Interest there was in God,

[18:42] Well they all came together, Because they were all the same ethnicity, And they had a lovely time together, But the interest in God, Was zero, And I think that's the sort of thing, That was happening here, You trample my courts, He says, You're not interested, In, Coming before me, In fear, And love, And seriousness, You're just here for a good time, Stop bringing, Meaningless offerings, Verse 13, Here's a list, New moons, Sabbaths, Convocations, Evil assemblies, New moon festivals, Appointed feasts, You know, Just itemize the, The number of different meetings, On their agenda, And God says, I hate the lot of them, I mean, Verse 14, My soul hates, Isn't that an awful thing,

For God to say, Do you understand, The, The, The, The strength of this, My soul, So you say, Oh God has a soul, No he doesn't mean, This isn't about, How God is made up, It's, It's a way, When you say, When you were to say, My soul loves, Beef burgers, It would mean, It would mean, That you really, Really love beef burgers, It's my soul, I was saying, Really I do, And God is saying here, The real me, Just hates, What you guys do, When you get together, It's appalling, Isn't it?

Absolutely appalling, and what he says here in verse 14 they have become a burden to me i have weary of bearing them that's what i'm just telling you what he's saying i'm not trying to pin this on us i'm just saying let's hear what he's saying to these people he hates it from the bottom of his heart and he says here's a thing you come to pray but i'm not going to listen to you verse 15 when you spread out your hands in prayer i will hide my eyes from you but i thought god always listens to prayer well generally we are encouraged to pray absolutely but god says there's that there can be such an extreme situation of spiritual stupidity spiritual stubbornness spiritual hypocrisy i won't hear prayer because i'm so um repulsed by the whole thing there is such a thing as religion that god is repulsed by there's a thought there's a thought even though you offer many prayers verse 15 i will not listen so you pray holding out your hands and he says what you don't realize is your hands are full of blood i'm not going to listen to you when you pray and your hands are full of blood he hides his eyes and blocks his ears because there's blood on their hands and i think for his listeners they would have said i really don't see what you're going on about what is the problem we have all our religion we have our timetable we have our sacrifices all it says in the bible isn't it we're doing all that stuff what's the problem why on earth have i put that they're very active they're very compliant as far as we can see but it's an unsettling thing isn't it god says for all that shows on the outside there's something that is deeply fundamentally wrong with your religion it's a rather disturbing thought isn't it because we might we might be thinking well god we're here in church what more can god want we've actually turned up um that must be it and god can say well actually just turning up

doing the things the christian things the spiritual things doesn't necessarily mean that i'm happy with it rather frightening isn't it so i think this at least makes us cautious on external measurements of church so in the uk we we can hardly believe that there are churches of 2 000 3 000 4 000 people but apparently in various parts of the world there are and we're sort of we think well that must be amazing 3 000 people i think it just makes us pause and say god doesn't think numbers are everything he doesn't does he and he doesn't think that being very active is everything now you're going to say well what is he looking for of course that's always the unsettling question what is he looking for well let's go on to the next chapter the next section and see this invitation that he makes and this is an impassioned invitation he picks up on the the the way they are managing to combine religion with violence with inhumanity and with cruelty and this blood he says wash and make yourselves clean a friend of mine ministered in um in brazil

actually pardon me brazilian people and he talked about some branches of so-called christianity which went hand in hand with uh drug drug business and so you could have both those things going on together and people thought that's fine we've got um christian meetings and activity but the finances is linked with drugs and i think that can't possibly happen but this chapter makes me think well maybe it could because they seem to be capable of combining combining religious rights with huge wrongs in the way they lived and he says now let's sort this out now this is the wonderful invitation in this whole passage let's sort this out verse 18 is one of the really famous gospel call of god invitation of god passages verse 18 says come now we can sort this out let us reason together says the lord though your sins are like scarlet they shall be as white as wool though they're red as crimson sorry they're white as snow though they're red as crimson they shall be like wool and you might be thinking i'm not a drug i'm not a drug trafficker i haven't murdered anybody i don't think there's blood on my hands literally but i'm still a sinner and i say this invitation works just as well for any sinner don't have to be a a a drug in a drug cartel for this to apply to you whatever sin is yours it might not be that you murder people but you might have a sharp tongue or whatever god says we can clean we can make you clean whatever though your sins are like scarlet they shall be white as snow they're red as crimson they shall be like wool so let's look at this section verse 16 to 20 which are an impassioned invitation he says you need come let's we need a washing thing going on here yeah and it's got two out two sides to it there's a sort of a human responsibility side and a god's grace side of it so in verse 16 he says wash and make yourselves clean yeah stop doing that if you were if you were in a drug cartel say i'm sorry i'm resigning from this if you were um in a gang which a knife gang or something like that you say i'm not i'm not going to do this anymore uh if you know whatever it is you're saying i want god more than i want this i'm going to turn to god wash and make yourselves clean take your evil deeds out of my sight stop doing wrong learn to do right it's called repentance that's what god wants a people to repent wholesale everything turn to god and the particular things he picks up on here are the words of things in society seek justice encourage the oppressed defend the cause of the fatherless plead the case of the widow that's in verse 17 so stopping things and starting other things he says that you can't be a christian if you just carry on the way you always have done there needs to be a crisis either a huge crisis or perhaps a an almost unnoticeable crisis but a point in which you say lord i want to stop that life and i want to start life with you and whatever it takes for that old life to stop you do it to me lord because that's that's that's what i want to live life with you stopping and starting it's repentance it's saying that was wrong and i'm turning to you that's what repentance is and i think we could summarize it by saying you start to care about the things and the people that god cares about because these people seem to only care about money and power and he says that and therefore you overlook the vulnerable and the needy because they don't you don't even notice them start noticing the fatherless and the widow and he says learn to do right verse 17 and do justice come to those words in a minute so it's not so repentance for them particularly meant thinking of the weak and vulnerable and not just noticing the praiseworthy the glamorous and the powerful i remember going to a meeting uh somebody came along with me and in the in the meeting there was some glamorous and rich type influential people and my companion left me and went off and talked to them and i thought oh right i obviously don't count anymore um making that a way of life god says is not is not god's way god's way is to care about the vulnerable the weak the little children of this world as jesus would have put it and god meets us in this so your sins are scarlet they'll be white as snow he says if you turn this way you will eat verse 19 the best from the land you'll eat good as a very lovely word good you'll eat good and and some of you probably facing this sort of question what way am i going to live because you know i've got powerful powerful pressures from the world powerful pressures

inside myself but god is saying neither of those are right if you want to eat the good you've got to turn and do it my way that's what he says to these people here if you are willing and obedient verse 19 you will eat good from the land it's an invitation it was an invitation then it's an invitation now come now we can get this right he addressed it to people who were up to their chins in wrong things he's really well he says it more strongly than i feel inclined to say it but he says guilt corruption and iniquity maybe you're sitting here maybe you're bogged down in well i don't know what you might be bogged down in a relationship that you know you shouldn't be in because of the lord or maybe you are driven by self and the thing you know money sex power the things that are powerful in our culture and she's and god says or maybe even bogged down in religion me come to me says god god let's work this out person to person let's reason together and my power my grace can save you [32:41] it can be put right do you believe that because faith is important you see god makes these promises and we're to receive them in faith i trust you in that i'll go for that let's look now at the next section verses 21 to 27 which are an impassioned statement about future redemption and there's this contrast between the jerusalem that god sees in whatever that the date of this is is applying to the the the rubbish jerusalem and what he has in mind so just follow it through if you would from verse 21 see how the faithful city has become a harlot harlot is um sex for sale it's usually applied in the bible to not not just a sort of a what's it called um the sex industry but the heart as regards what your heart longs for what you give your heart to in terms of worship usually refer to as other gods but anyway see how the faithful city has become a harlot let's just pick up on these words righteousness used to dwell in her and you forgive me but there's a hebrew word here mishpat so that's a very lovely rich word mishpat doing things right the sort of rightness of the way things were amongst the people and in front of god that's what used to be there and this other word um that was justice and righteousness said dick if you remember there was an old hymn jehovah sid kenyu do you know some of you remember that's the word righteousness said dick um forgive me i just love these words but he he he said this is what used to be there mishpat said dick um but it isn't now your silver has become dross your fine wine has become tasteless your rulers are rebels companions of thieves they all love bribes they chase after gifts they do not defend the cause of the fatherless the widow's case does not become before them and he describes how it's not what it should be ancient israel to the jerusalem of of um isaiah's day did you and if you see that luther film where he we went to rome do you remember that bit where he he in medieval christianity was was told that uh rome was the great holy city and he went there and he found there was prostitution uh pope had illegitimate children the clergy didn't care about anything it's the same sort of thing this it's not what it ought to have been and this extraordinary statement in verse 24 the lord the lord almighty the mighty one of israel says i will get relief from my foes so get relief is a word which is like the word noah which actually means comfort i get some comfort from these irritating foes how could he call his own city his enemy do you get something of the tension that's going on here here they are these people are my enemies i will avenge myself on my enemies verse 24 and then there's some things about turning i will turn my hand against you so you think right that's it god's going god's going to throw them all on the rubbish heap because they have not because they've related to him their hardness of heart their sin and then it takes this extraordinary turn verse 25 i will turn my hand against you i will thoroughly purge away your dross and there's something really remarkable going on here because god is he's not saying oh i don't really mind they're quite lovely people anyway oh you know who cares they're fine he gives the full weight to the enormity of their their sin and he says this is appalling i'm totally against it and then he says somehow without stopping being against their sin i will take away their sin do you get that you see those words i will thought i will turn

my hand against you i will thoroughly purge away your dross and remove your impurities and god's saying through some extraordinarily non-compromised method i will be totally against sin and i will end up having the city that i want to have i will restore your judges as of old that's a turn word i think i will turn back your judges the judges the word for judge is the word shafat which is like a bit like mishpat it's somebody who brings order and peace and goodness i he's not saying i'm going to give you high court judges he's saying i'm going to populate your community with people who can bring order and peace and goodness into it i will restore your judges as in days of old your counselors at the beginning and afterwards you will be called the city of righteousness you'll be called the city of which is it i haven't written it down um the city of is it said that called mishpat i think probably said the city of said that's where you'll be and the faithful city there's another lovely word here which means um it's the word from which we eventually get our men meaning to be established and steady and you know on the rock and he says that's the sort of city you will be you will be um a righteous city and you'll be that steady on the rock city that's what you're going to be the faithful city and he says verse 27 zion will be redeemed a wonderful word redeemed to change things powerfully for the better by the expenditure of huge force or the expenditure of huge resources you'll be redeemed with mishpat with justice and her penitent ones that's another word for turn the turning ones with i haven't written it down tzedek i guess so all these wonderful things the the righteousness and the justice god is not saying oh i don't bother with those i'll just forget about that he says i will have that i want that i'm going to have that and i will ensure i get that and i will redeem my people i will purify my people i will even be against my people to ensure that i get that's that holy city in the end so it's quite a baffling statement isn't it is god friendly or is he hostile he says that he's against his foes but he's actually saying i will have my people and it's it's a it's a complete conundrum how can such a change be brought about how can the god who is against his the sin of his people and sees it in all its horror simultaneously say but i will have a holy people something powerful happens isn't it for israel um they go through and they will go through the horrors of being treated as god's enemy and the fire the purging that i think he has in mind for them is they will go into exile and their route to the glories that the prophet looks forward to don't bypass the exile that go through the fires of exile and something emerges on the far side of that but i think there's more to it than that because i think the final answer to what's in view here is what happened to jesus on the cross because he in particular in his own person took the the way that god was against his people if you imagine that againstness being put into a cup jesus saw that cup and drank the whole lot of it in fact that's what he says in the garden of gethsemane isn't it he says i can see a cup there full of full of the horrible things of god's hatred of sin and you don't just pour it down the drain and get rid of it jesus drinks it up i think that's what happened there god is against sin he um disconnects himself from from sin and jesus and jesus was on the cross as it were in exile from god forsaken separated from god he endured those fires so that he could come out on the far side of that and say here is my people i build my church because of my blood because of what i did my people will be forgiven they will be made holy they will be the people that i want them to be let's um look at the what he says about the final destination and it ends on this on this negative note doesn't it it says i will be redeemed with justice a pennant ones with righteousness but rebels and sinners will both be broken those who forsake the lord will perish you'll be ashamed because of the sacred oaks in which you have delighted you'll be disgraced because of the gardens that you have chosen you'll be like an oak with fading leaves like a garden without water the mighty man will become tinder and his workers spark both will burn together with no one to quench the fire this is about ultimate destination and um you may be aware of somebody called mrs theresa may have you heard of her and uh have you heard of jacob reese morgue oh no that's quite encouraging really isn't it i'm talking about brexit so i was going to use this as an example that uh currently the the uk government um there's a dispute where are we heading for what sort of brexit is it going to be um and i don't think they know really um how can we know what the next steps in negotiation are well i think and it's so unclear i mean this is my my opinion perhaps you perhaps i'm seeing it wrong but i think it's so unclear they don't know where to go they don't know what the final outcome is going to be i don't know how to get there and uh um we pray that god will help them muddle through as as best as possible but destination matters and we've got two destinations here zion the city of god that is the destination that god has in mind for his people what is the final outcome of this world going to be now if you um watch doctor who or hitchhiker's guide to the galaxy then the end of the world is this huge explosion and that's it it's all finished a terrible depressing thought god says the future of this world is a glorious heavenly city think of it it like that

god there people there human flourishing there everything going on there brilliant place to be that's what god has in store the future of the world is god's glorious city but it has that's not the only possible destination because even now in this world at this point you are choosing which way to tread your footsteps and this is this is the the unpalatable and unpleasant alternative rebels and sinners will be broken those who forsake the lord will perish you will be ashamed because of the sacred oaks in which you have delighted you'll be disgraced because of the gardens that you have chosen i don't think he's talking i don't think he's about gardening i think this is about the this has a religious impact to it that they're sort of non god of the bible religion involved oaks and worshipping trees and wonderful gardens things like that but i mean whatever it is that attracts our hearts instead of the lord would fit here wouldn't it you'll be ashamed of those things you'll say how stupid i was to invest my heart and my life and my all in everything like that jesus is the person in whom to invest my soul my life my all isn't he you'll be ashamed if you chose the other and he says you'll end up like an oak with fading leaves verse 30 in a garden without water we actually have some plants in our in our back room which are frighteningly like that actually they just they were once flourishing but due to cold lack of sun and that neither maria and i remember to water them properly they're just sort of flaking dried up husk sort of things and god says dear soul if you turn from me that's what you will end up as what a foolish choice to make and the mighty man and his work very much sorry but i've achieved so much do you know how big my bonus was last month you know a hundred thousand pounds i've met somebody who who said of his son my son brought in a bonus last month of a hundred thousand pounds you know what could be wrong with that well might be very good might be um could be a lot of things wrong with that but here you see is the mighty man and his work verse 31 somebody who's been hugely successful and he says if that was done without god all that achievement does is produce tinder tinder's what you use to to make a fire and you'll be the one that that burns up the mighty man will become tinder and his workers spark and both will burn together with no one to quench the fire what a sad sad sad alternative do you understand what's laid before us this morning do you understand what god is saying to us through this do you understand that the road you tread now will lead to one future or another do you hear god saying there is a way out a way back a way forward come let us reason together and who would not reason with god when he makes an offer like that let's sing