

A fresh encounter with God

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Date: 31 December 2017

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[0 : 00] Please keep open in your Bibles. Isaiah chapter 6, this is what we will be looking at this morning.

We do all have those hopes and fears and this is the time of year when those seem to come to the fore and we have shared concerns as well.

And although you may be of a very optimistic kind of character, apparently scientists have discovered that the human psyche is geared up to be rather pessimistic about the future. It's a kind of way of coping by lowering our expectations. Well, there's plenty of reasons to be pessimistic and I want to bring those before you this morning, not to discourage you, but rather to be able to set the scene and to be realistic.

So here's a good reason for being rather low in spirit. Brexit. I was reading in evangelicals now that nobody talks about Brexit inside evangelical churches because it's too contentious to do so.

[1 : 26] But here I'm going to keep on safe territory and just say to you, whatever your position, however you voted, however you think about it now, this is going to be a big muddle.

This is going to be a very, very difficult and upsetting time for many people. And so it is.

Changing the subject completely. Do you know this character here? Do you remember seeing this on film? I remember when this came out. I saw it on TV. 1986, Short Circuit.

This little character here is a little military robot who somehow or other receives some energy in a lab that makes it human. And it's a sweet film and we all enjoyed it.

I remember watching it as a family. Artificial intelligence, which looked so sweet and nice in 1986, is not so sweet and nice now.

[2 : 26] It is very disturbing how it is possible for robots to be teaching other robots and to actually get themselves into a place where they supplant humans.

Artificial intelligence, coming to a high street store near you, actually, is probably somewhere in your home already.

Artificial intelligence, coming to a high street, is probably somewhere in your home already. And it will be having a massive impact. It's going to have a massive impact on job prospects. In my industry of civil engineering, for instance, whereas there's a sort of shortage of 600,000 people to be doing civil engineering work.

This subject is actually massive. It's going to have a complete effect upon the way in which people do business.

And the jobs are going to be available for us and our children and grandchildren into the future. Hopes and fears.

[3 : 37] How about the surveillance society? So, on the current predictions, nobody knows how many CCTV cameras there are in the country. But there are probably about 6 million CCTV cameras out there.

So that's sort of one for every 10 people. It's a bit like that statistic about how near you are to a rat. At any point in time, there's a CCTV camera somewhere near you.

Well, you can try and dodge CCTV cameras. Of course, you can try to do that as well. But 46.4 million adults in the UK have a smartphone.

Which is a pretty high proportion. It's 70% plus of adults have a smartphone. And the fact is, your smartphone is measuring, monitoring, assessing you every day.

And knows all about you. And there are big companies, corporations out there like Facebook and Google and Amazon, who know many of your intimate details.

[4 : 44] I was interested to read yesterday this guy, Jonathan Hirschen. He doesn't like his photograph being taken, so he appeared on the screen wearing a cardboard box over his head

because he has refused to let his image go into Facebook.

And amazingly, he's managed to do it for the odd 20 years, the last 20 years. But he knows there's going to come a day when his cover will be broken. Because facial recognition is going to be, is already a very powerful means in which people, Facebook exactly, knows you through facial recognition.

So Jonathan says this, privacy is an illusion. The reality is that as you go across the internet, you leave traces of yourself everywhere. How does that make you feel?

And then there's gene therapy, which of course offers a great deal and help for those who have particular and previously untold sort of diseases.

And this marches on apace. Don't know how you feel about that as well. All I can say is that against these issues of artificial intelligence, surveillance society and gene therapy, there is no ethical and moral compass which is being deployed by anybody.

[6 : 22] There are fears and concerns. And there is much wringing of hands and scratching of heads about what to do about these things.

But where is the ethical and moral compass that actually has anything to say about these subject matters? Who is speaking about these matters?

Who is saying there are things that we should do, things that we should not do? The council of despair is that there is always going to be somebody out there who is going to be pushing the boundaries, whatever.

But it seems to me that we do live in a remarkable time when such things can be talked about. And we have no idea where this may all go. And then if one might change the subject matter a bit, in terms of hopes and fears where we sit as Christian people in the Western world, materialism continues.

[7 : 35] Ah, Westfield shopping centre in Stratford. I love it. Not. The cathedrals of today, aren't they?

These shopping centres. Croydon, the existing shopping centre has been completely ripped out and a massive Westfield is going to be parachuted in to there.

These are where the people flock. This is where people are today, aren't they? In their thousands and thousands and thousands. We have to shop, of course.

But there is a way that we shop. And these cathedrals of the Western world sort of tell us a great deal about what it is that drives our society, which is materialism.

It is materialism because if spiritualism is not abroad, what is left? But to feed the body. And that's exactly what takes place.

[8 : 38] And belief decays and that continues to be the case. What do I notice here? I notice an empty church. It's an empty church. Full shopping centre, empty church.

A census of Scottish Christians in 2016 found that there were around 390,000 regular churchgoers north of the border, down from 854,000 in 1984.

Research also revealed that 42% of churchgoers in Scotland were aged over 65. Bishop Paisley, John Kennan, admitted he loses sleep over church attendance figures.

He said, the real crisis that's going on is not that people aren't coming to us, it's that we've stopped going to them. It's a geographical and a human reality. Essentially, we've stopped being part of the homes and lives of ordinary people.

To be honest with you, he says, I lose sleep over the declining numbers. If the numbers are declining because there's something we could be doing that we're not doing, then there's something we should be losing sleep over.

[9 : 54] There's a sense that we could do this better if we thought about this, came together and had some kind of plan. I find this closing sentence from a bishop of the church of Scotland extraordinary.

I find this closing sentence from a church. What do you think of that? What do you think of that statement from a church leader? What do you think of that statement from a church leader?

What do you think of that statement from a church leader?

So we go back 2,757 years and we could do the maths very well because we know very well the years in which the prophet Isaiah lived. And we know when this king, Isaiah died, 740 BC.

And this was a significant moment. And this is what we read in chapter 6, verse 1, isn't it? It doesn't just go straight into the vision. But Isaiah says, in the year that King Isaiah died, I saw the Lord.

[11:18] And I don't think this is just simply a sort of a diary marker. But it is there for a purpose and it's there for us to think about and it's there for us to understand.

What do we know about King Isaiah? Well, actually we know quite a lot about King Isaiah because there are other passages in the Bible that talk about him in the book of Kings and the book of Chronicles.

He was a king who reigned for a very long time, 52 years. Now, in terms of the length of duration of kingship in other Judah kingdom kings, that's a long time.

And we read about him in 2 Chronicles 26 that during his time there was prosperity. He increased the defences of the land and the kingdom was extended.

But we also read this and it's in 2 Chronicles 26, verse 16. Perhaps we might turn to that.

[12:26] It's on page 460 in the church Bible. 2 Chronicles 26, 16. After Isaiah became powerful, his pride led to his downfall.

He was unfaithful to the Lord his God and entered the temple of the Lord to burn incense on the altar of incense. Now, let's be quite clear what was involved here.

He was not a priest. He was a king. And it was only the priests who were allowed to go into the temple of the Lord to burn incense on the altar of incense.

What possessed him to go and do this? Why did he think it right and proper that he should, as a king, go and do the work of the priest?

Because God has specifically said that is the work of the priest. Well, it says his pride led to his downfall.

[13:45] Maybe he thought, I've done the job of king so well, I could do the job of priest as well.

Well, that was human thinking. And that was his downfall because he had forgotten the word of the Lord.

He was unfaithful to the Lord his God. And he entered the temple of the Lord to burn incense on the altar of incense. Azariah the priest, with 80 other courageous priests of the Lord, followed him in.

They confronted him and said, It is not right for you, Azariah, to burn incense to the Lord. That is for the priests, the descendants of Aaron, who have been consecrated to burn incense.

Leave the sanctuary, for you have been unfaithful and you will not be honored by the Lord God. It was a courageous thing.

[14:56] Because they were confronting the king. Azariah, who had a censer in his hand, ready to burn incense, became angry. While he was raging at the priests in their presence, before the incense altar in the Lord's temple, leprosy broke out on his forehead.

When Azariah the chief priests and all the other priests looked at him, they saw that he had leprosy on his forehead. So they hurried him out. Indeed, he himself was eager to leave.

Because the Lord had afflicted him. So here were the trembling priests, the courageous priests, 81 of them, confronting Azariah.

But the Lord confronted him. And the Lord brought his judgment upon him. And the leprosy came. And as you know, leprosy meant uncleanness. And uncleanness meant separation.

And that's exactly what happened to him. So that he had to live by himself. And his son, Jotham, became the Prince Regent. And took authority. So what a downfall.

[16:02] What a sad, sad, sad thing happened to this man. Who had achieved so much in his life. And God had blessed him so much in his life.

But pride led to his downfall. And led to God's judgment upon him. He's still alive. But he's no longer operating as the king.

But the day came when he did die. And that's the day when Isaiah went into the temple of the Lord. Or rather had a vision of the Lord. In the year that King Isaiah died. So it was a sobering time. It was a sobering time. It was a time of uncertainty.

As it always was when kings died. What was going to happen next. And it was a time to be thoughtful.

[17:02] When this man who had achieved so much. Had had the judgment of God upon him. And eventually he died. So Isaiah did not live in 2017.

But he did live in an age. Where he had the shared concerns of the society around him. Around him. And it says that.

On this. At this moment. The Lord. Gave to him. A vision of himself. In the year that King Isaiah died.

But in the temple he sees a throne. And that is special. Because there is no throne in the temple. There never was.

[23 : 55] God never gave instructions to Moses that there should be a throne established there. As appropriate as it might have been. But in Isaiah's vision he sees a throne.

That he sees the Lord seated on that throne. The Hebrew word at the beginning here for Lord is just Adonai.

Lord. But we know who the person is because later on the word Lord Almighty is used with capitals referring to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

The covenant Lord. The God of Israel. So he knew who he was encountering. This was not some sort of uncertain apparition of an angel being.

But it was the Lord. The one who had encountered Moses, not just in the burning bush but later when Moses asked to see his face and the Lord said to him, you cannot see my face.

[25 : 14] I will hide you in a cleft of the rock. So you just see my back parts. And here Isaiah, he sees the Lord high and lifted up.

High and lifted up. Here's the throne. And this is where the vision begins to break down. We can't put this into any sort of a pictorial demonstration. I wouldn't even try to dare to even suggest anything on this screen behind because it's inappropriate to do so.

We live with the words and the bigness of it. And the bigness is that here's little Isaiah and he's in this place. Just close your eyes as it were and think of yourself being in this place as if this was the temple.

And the whole of this is filled with the presence of the Lord. And there's a throne of enormous proportions. And there's a sense that the Lord is here in his greatness.

And the train of his robe sort of fills, cascades to the very edges of everywhere. So there's no part of that temple that doesn't have the presence of the Lord about it.

[26 : 28] And he's seated on a throne. And we know what that means. And then there are the seraphs or the seraphim. It's the only place in the Bible that seraphs are mentioned.

We know nothing about these angel, heavenly occupying creatures apart from this particular passage.

But they have wings, six wings. One covering feet. Two covering their faces.

Their faces because even though they are heavenly beings and without sin. They can't look upon this mighty God. And with two wings they fly.

They fly to do his bidding. They fly to be his servants. We don't know how many of them there are.

[27 : 31] But there's a chant going out. Well, it's more than a chant. It's a cry. It's a cry. Did you get the sense of that as we read this passage? Just now.

It's a big cry. Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty. The whole earth is full of his glory. Isaiah, you're there in the temple.

And you think there's glory in this temple. But the whole earth is full of his glory. The heaven cannot contain him.

And so they cry. Holy, holy, holy. One cries and the other answers. One cries and the other answers.

And this goes on and on and on. This endless affirmation of the being of God.

[28 : 34] And there's a shaking. The doorposts and the thresholds shake. As in an earthquake.

And isn't that right? Isn't that necessary? How could it not be shaken? And the temple was filled with smoke.

The temple was filled with smoke as it was. The dedication of the temple itself.

Where it says the priest could not minister. Because of the presence of God. And the smoke that filled the temple at that time. Had it ever been filled with smoke again.

Subsequent to that occasion. I don't know. But it was entirely appropriate and necessary. That all that we have just said. About the being of God in his temple.

[29 : 40] Should be accompanied. By this sort of mysterious. Vision obscuring smoke. As if God were enforcing that truth.

That just as those seraphs needed to cover their faces. So it was completely inappropriate. That there should be any insightful. Vision of the Lord himself.

It was a mercy to Isaiah. That smoke filled the temple. And here is a man of God.

That he has had a fresh encounter. With the God that he knew. But like Job he might well say. I have heard of you by the hearing of the ear. But now mine eye sees you.

A fresh encounter with God. Like Moses, Job, Peter and John. And I come to this thought. As we read about this happening to Isaiah.

[30 : 54] We read about this happening to Moses, Job, Peter and John. What does this mean for us? We read about this.

At the outset of the meeting. A verse from Psalm 46. And I want you to turn this up now. Again, Psalm 46 verses 10 and 11.

Because. This Psalm. Encourages us. With these words in verse 10.

Be still. And know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations. I will be exalted in the earth. Now I said earlier. That Isaiah was not. Asking for this vision. Just as I don't believe.

[32 : 07] Peter and John and Job. And Moses were either. The Lord gave it to them. But here we have. A permission. An invitation.

And a command. To seek a fresh. Encounter. With God. Be still. And know. That I am God.

It's the voice of the Lord. Speaking to us. And that is why we should not. And must not.

Put these visions. That these people receive. These encounters with God. On a shelf. Marked. Special. Only for some people. Because.

There is encouragement here. In the word of God. For each one of us. To have. An encounter. With God. Amen. Here is a word.

[33 : 11] For busy. Brighton. Christians. Fed on a diet. And now trapped. In the habits. Of sound bites. Full diaries. Text messaging. And a multitude.

Of distractions. We have become. A people. Of poor concentration. And low spiritual ambition. A.W. Tozer.

Who lived. In the middle. Of the 20th century. Ministered. In America. Wrote this. In the preface. To his book. The knowledge.

Of the holy. The low view. Of God. Entertained. Almost universally. Among Christians. Is the cause. Of a hundred. Lesser evils. Everywhere. Among us. A whole new.

Philosophy. Of the Christian. Life. Has resulted. From this one. Basic error. In our religious.

Thinking. With our loss. Of the sense. Of majesty. Has come.

[34 : 07] The further loss. Of religious. All. And consciousness. Of the divine presence. We have lost. Our spirit. Of worship. And our ability. To withdraw.

Inwardly. To meet God. In adoring. Silence. Modern Christianity. Is simply. Not producing. The kind of Christian. Who can appreciate.

Or experience. The life. In the spirit. The words. Be still. And know. That I am God. Mean next to nothing. In the self-confident. Bustling. Worshipper. In this middle period.

Of the 20th century. If that was true. In 1950. I'm sure it is true. In Western. Christianity. In 2017. In 2017.

Above all. And I speak to myself. We want to be in control. Of everything. Including. Our spiritual lives. So I was choosing.

[35 : 10] Hymns. Songs. To be sung today. And I always have. The voice in my. Right ear. Which is saying. I'm going to have some. More modern ones as well. Please. I struggle.

I struggle. To find. Modern. Songwriting. That has much to say. On this subject. Because we are. An I. Dominated. Society. And the God. That people want. Is the God. Who is there. To serve their needs.

Not a God. Who is there. To silence us. But there. To encourage us. Not a God. Who pushes us down.

But a God. Who is always. Lifting us up. Not a God. Who is making us. Guilty. But one. Who is making us. Feel. Self-affirmed. And so.

[36 : 19] Those. Are the words. We say. And those. Are the songs. That we sing. Because the dominant theme. Of Western Christianity.

Is that God is grace. And we're needing. We need him. To give us grace. And to comfort us.

And to reassure us. And to provide for us. And brothers and sisters. He does all that. But he is much.

Much. Much. Bigger. Than that. And if our view of God. Is of the character. That he is there to.

Essentially. And I put it crudely. Satisfy our needs. We have not. Had. An encounter. With the God. Who is. Let me repeat.

[37 : 20] All. We want to be. In control. Of everything. Including. Our spiritual lives. This is rather close. To the sin of idolatry. This is rather close.

To the sin of idolatry. Where we have crafted. A God. In the image. That suits us. And we have him. On our shelves. At home. And he is taken down. To satisfy our needs.

To the sin of idolatry. But let us look. At this self-revelation.

Of God. Because it was a self-revelation. Of God. And see. Back in Isaiah. And this. In this vision. What it is about God. That is revealed. To Isaiah. And firstly. We see. That. He is a holy God.

[38 : 20] One commentator. Has said this well. The seraphs. Cry. Holy. Holy. Holy. Is the Lord. God. Almighty.

There is no. Other. Characteristic. Or attributes. Of God. Which is ever. Expressed. In the Bible. In this threefold way. It is never said.

That God is love. Love. Love. Or even. That God is grace. Grace. Grace. They have to repeat. Again.

And again. Holy. Holy. Holy. Holy. Is the Lord. Because this is. His supreme attribute. Exodus 15. Verse 11. Says. Who is like you. Majestic in holiness. Verse Samuel 2. Verse 2. There is no one.

[39 : 16] Holy like the Lord. There is no one. Beside you. Psalm 111. Says. Holy and awesome. Is his name.

We struggle. With this word. Holiness. And to be honest. We don't preach. On it enough. So that. It is no wonder. That the people of God. All of us.

Have such a. An. An anemic view. Of what this word. Might mean. But let me just. Suggest to you. Or think in your own minds. What do you think.

When you hear the word. Holy. Well we think of. Holy people. We think of. A sort of characteristic. Of life. But the fundamental. Understanding. Of this particular word.

Is not so much. To do with. A moral quality. But to do. With a distinctiveness. A difference. A separateness. So it is said. That the vessels.

[40 : 14] Inside that temple. That Isaiah. Saw in his vision. Were holy. Not because they were. Morally beautiful. But because. They were set apart. They were not to be used.

For profane things. The priests. Were holy people. Because they were set apart. For the service. Of God. Which is why. It was such a terrible thing. That. Isaiah. The king. Went in to do. The priest job. Because he had not been. Set apart for it.

Because holiness. Is that important. To God. This idea. Of separateness. And as Isaiah.

Sees this vision. Of the Lord. And hears. The seraph voices. Saying holy. Holy. Holy. The one. Overwhelming. Impression. And experience.

[41 : 11] He receives. Is that. He is. Encountering. Something. Which is. Completely. Different. To anything else. That he's ever. Encountered. In his life.

In our. Western. Society. Since the. Nineteenth. Century. We are. So fond. Of categorizing. And numerizing. And explaining. And defining. Everything.

We see. Around us. That we put. Everything. Into that. Box. But here. Is a revelation. Of God. And he's saying. You can't do anything. Like that. With me. You can't. Put me.

In your boxes. I'm not. To be defined. By your laws. I live. Outside. Of that territory. I am not.

The God. Of the idols. I'm the one. True. Living God. Without. Beginning. And without. End. You can't. Categorize that. You can't. Understand it.

[42 : 07] I am the almighty God. Nothing is impossible. For me. You can't. Understand that. I'm different.

I'm different. Brothers and sisters. Isn't this amazing thing. That we're called upon. Today. To be those. Who worship.

The one. Who is utterly. Different from us. To worship. To fall down. On our faces. Fall down.

On our knees. To be silent. Like Isaiah was silent. And like Peter. In the boat. Says. Depart from me. I'm a sinful man. And then the greatness.

Of God. The God. Who fills everything. In every way. Says Ephesians. 1. Psalm 23. Or think of Psalm 139. Where can we escape.

[43 : 09] From this presence of God. If I go down to the depths. If I go up to the heights. You're there. The greatness of God. How sad.

We're not lingering on this point. That's a heading. Isn't it. But the greatness of God. He couldn't be in that temple vision. Without having a sense. Whoa. How great this God is.

At his authority. Isaiah. I want you to know this. I'm on a throne. I'm on a throne. Yes. The king has died. Yes. It's going to be Brexit.

Yes. There's going to be artificial intelligence. And all the rest of it. But God is on his throne. He's on his throne. It's not a little throne.

It's filling heaven and earth. There's no. There's no. Atom in the universe. It isn't outside. The throne ship of God. Certainly not your life or mine.

[44 : 12] Your family. Your children. Your concerns. Today. He's saying to Isaiah. You're worried about this. I'm on my throne. Ruling the universe.

There's absolutely no possibility of anybody usurping the throne of God. Unquestioned rule.

So I say to the bishop of the Church of Scotland. It is not right for us to be losing sleep over church attendance. That is not our calling.

It's not our calling even to be thinking up a plan. It is our calling to have a fresh encounter with God. God. I think of that other man called Azza.

Not Azza. But Azza. The man who put his hand upon the ark to steady it from falling. Which seemed like a generally sensible thing to do.

[45 : 31] But he was struck dead in doing so. Because God was saying to the people. I'm in charge. Don't meddle with holy things.

There's an inevitable reaction. There's an inevitable reaction. In verse 5.

Woe to me I cried. Woe to me I cried. I'm ruined. The author of the eyes has it. I'm undone. I'm stripped bare.

I'm unclothed. My defences have gone. I'm a man of unclean lips. And I live among a people of unclean lips.

For my eyes have seen the King. The Lord Almighty. Brothers and sisters. You know. You know. That whenever people have a real encounter. With the living God.

[46 : 33] That is the first response. That is always made. That they. Recognize their unfitness.

To be in his holy presence. They recognize themselves to be unclean. And to be full of sin. Foul and full of sin I am.

Says the hymn writer. Moses take your shoes off. You're on holy ground. Pisa.

I'm a sinful man. Job. Therefore I repent. In dust and ashes. There's enough evidence here for us. And by multitudes of experiences in church history. To be able to say with absolute confidence.

That this is what happens. When people have an encounter with the living God. And it is so much my prayer.

[47 : 32] That we should see more of this. In the coming year. When people have an encounter with the living God. And recognize that they are sinful. And need a savior. Because why else would you need a savior from your sin?

And why else would Jesus Christ come to die upon a cross? Why all the agony and the pain and the suffering of that. If God is simply there to satisfy my needs. There is something much more fundamental.

Which is we have an encounter with the holy God. And recognize we're undone. We're under judgment. We need to be saved. Christian people need to know this.

Because we've lost the language. But we pray for our families. Our friends. Our work colleagues. Those who come in here.

And have tasted. Tasted Christian things. But we pray that they would have an encounter with the living God. May God grant it. Why should this not happen?

[48 : 36] Why should this not be the case? Do we think the scientific mindset is so overwhelmed. The city of Brighton. That God on his throne is unable to do the things which God on his throne has done.

Through generations. But this is a call to prayer isn't it? It's a call for us to pray big prayers. That God would show himself again in our generation as he has in times past.

And how much we need to know this. And then there is this amazing provision. Chapter 6 verses 6 and 7. Where one of the seraphs flew to me with a live coal in his hand.

Which he had taken with tongs from the altar. And with it he touched my mouth and said. See this has touched your lips. Your guilt is taken away. Your sin is atoned for. And it's a wonderful thing.

And it's almost. It almost seems to break the vision in a sense. How can this be that he's had this encounter with God. Where he sees only judgment coming his way.

[49 : 43] And God so graciously offers atonement. It's an amazing provision.

It's an amazing provision that this holy and different God should care for us so much. As to send his son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sin. Doesn't it make the greatness of salvation so apparent to us?

What a mighty thing God has done. There was no requirement for him to do this. And absolutely none. But he sent his own beloved son to die for sins that man had done.

He is the atoning sacrifice for our sin. I love it in Revelation where the angel puts his hand upon the apostle and says.

Don't be afraid. I've got to be afraid. But the Lord says to us. Don't be afraid. Don't be afraid. He's reaching out his hand to lift us up.

[50 : 56] And then we see this recommissioning for service in chapter 6 verses 8 to 13.

We read it earlier. Well, great and glorious service. The presence of the Lord. But it's not going to be great. It's not going to be glorious. It's going to be jolly hard work. It's not going to be very discouraging.

Because what Isaiah has now been commissioned to do is to go and preach and preach and preach and preach. And see only people getting harder and harder and harder and harder. And he needed this fresh encounter with God.

So that he'd know that God was on his throne. And God had made no mistake. And when God had given Isaiah the privilege and responsibility of ministry. All he had to do. But it was all.

Was to go and do it. He just had to go and do it. And all that he was offered in that service.

[51 : 55] Was hardness of heart. And people refusing the word of the Lord. But every time he preached a sermon. The people just mocked and turned away.

Or even didn't turn up at all. He would say, yes but I heard the Lord. I met with the Lord. And I'm doing what the Lord has asked me to do. And that's exactly what you and I are being called to do. Now. In the face of all the opposition. And all the obstacles. That we may be confronted with. We have to go and do the thing which God has called us to do.

In Isaiah's case. That was a preaching ministry. In all our cases. It's a testifying ministry of some kind. To be tamed to people.

The God whom you do not know. But the God whom you should worship. Is on a throne. He's ruling the universe. And one day we're going to have to give an account to him. And come to the place.

[53 : 02] Where atonement is found. For your sin. Because there is only one place. There's only one name. Given unto men. Whereby we must be saved.

And we all can say these words. And we all have opportunity to do so. And we will in this coming year. But we will do so. In the knowledge that God is on his throne.

We're not alone. The God of Jacob is with us. And that we're serving him. We serve him. Don't we? He is the one to whom we must give account.

And we're serving him. Heavenly Father we do.

Pray that we would be able to receive. The truth of your word in our hearts. And that you would make us. Obedient to the heavenly vision. We pray that we would not be.

[54 : 09] Those who paddle around in the shallows. With such low spiritual ambition. We pray that we would be those who. Are ready to encounter you.

Where we would hear your command. To be still. And know that you are God. O Lord teach us this. You know. A big part of us wants this.

But quite a big part of us also. Shies away from it. And we just ask that you would. Strengthen the first. And remove the second. We ask that we may be a people.

Who yearn to love. And to praise. And to worship and serve you. Teach us this our Father we pray. We do pray. For those who are currently. Not in the kingdom of Jesus Christ.

But you have called them. By electing love. From the beginning of the world. And this is the year. That you are calling them out of darkness. Into your light.

[55 : 05] And we pray that we would have the privilege. And the blessed opportunity. Of serving you in this way. That your kingdom would increase. That grace would be seen. That we would see.

What a great saviour. We have. What a great salvation. He offers. We ask this in Jesus name. Amen. Amen.