

The God Who is Worthy

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[0 : 00] Isaiah chapter 12. I'll be reading for us just the first three verses.

Behold, God is my salvation.

I will trust and will not be afraid. For the Lord God is my strength and my song. And he has become my salvation.

With joy, you will draw water from the wells of salvation. Let's pray. Lord, this morning we come with hearts that are filled up with the testimony of your word.

Encouraged by the reminder of the privilege that we have to worship you together. To bring our expressions of thanks and praise to you.

[1 : 14] A God who is worthy. Who alone is worthy to be praised. And we do that this morning. And we ask that you would help us to be people who are marked by praise.

As we look at this passage today and we see the example. And the call. The command. The exhortation for us to be people who are people of praise.

May that be true of us. Regardless of the circumstance. Regardless of the situation in life. May we be people who are marked out as people of praise.

We ask for your help. In Jesus' name. Amen. Well, this past weekend I felt a sense of accomplishment.

I, for the last several months, have needed brakes and rotors on the front of my Honda Civic 2006. I won't tell you how many months have gone by.

[2 : 14] And it's been very clear to me that the little squeaking. The squeaking went away because I rubbed things down so far that it wasn't there to squeak anymore.

And, you know, there's one of those things where the daunting pressure of doing that kind of task. And you get the wheels off. And then you don't know what to do next.

And then you have a car that doesn't work anymore. You can't move it out of the driveway. You can't get it out of place. And so that kind of loomed on my shoulders. That was kind of a burden to carry.

And I certainly didn't want to pay the money to get brakes and rotors fixed. And so what does anyone do in the 21st century when we need to figure out how to do something like brakes and rotors?

What do we do? Yeah, you are good. In days gone by, we would ask somebody for help. You know, we would ask a parent.

[3 : 15] We would call up a friend. We would get somebody to come. But not anymore. We go to YouTube, right? So that's what I did. I went to YouTube. And you type in the search. And you get the specifics.

Honda Civic 2006 LX front brake pads and rotors. Here's how to go. Well, after looking at several different videos, I noticed that some of them experienced or had some gaps.

Like, you know, you remove this screw and you take off the rotor. It should be that simple. But for some reason, it wasn't coming off.

There must be another step somewhere in the process. And so instead of going from step A to step E, I needed B, C, and D in the process.

And some of those videos didn't have that. Other videos walked little novices like me through the entire process. And I found out that all you have to do is knock on that rotor, pound I should say, a couple of times, to unstick it from the other mechanisms that were there.

[4 : 25] Kind of unfreeze it. And then you could wiggle it out of place. But, man, I would not have known that from the previous video. Well, I was able to get the rotors off, put them back on, get the brake pads in place, put the wheel back on.

And my wife drove it yesterday, and she was able to stop. So that's a good sign. And I don't know if you ever noticed this, but at the end, especially of some of those kinds of YouTube videos, there's always this little advertisement by the person who kind of owns that video that says, hey, if this video is useful for you, please like this video or add it to your channel.

Have you ever seen that and wondered what in the world is going on? Well, come to find out this is a good way for the people who have benefited from this tutorial, this one-on-one tutorial, to really say, hey, thank you for making this video available so that I can save myself some money and I don't have to inconvenience other people and have them partner with me in this process.

So thank you for your help. It's a way to do that. It's also a way for us to promote this video in the process so that in the queue when other searches are made, that this video actually rises to the top and other people can also benefit from the value of this video in this little tutorial.

So it serves kind of a dual process, not only to say thank you personally, but also for me to promote the video and essentially acclaim its value so that others can benefit in the process.

[6 : 14] This morning we're looking at this passage in Isaiah chapter 12. And what really is kind of unexpected about this chapter is that Isaiah has spent so much time teeing up the discipline that he's going to bring on Israel and the judgment that he's going to bring to the nations.

He spent the first nine chapters trying to raise the awareness of what's going to happen and then beginning that process in chapter 10. Now all of a sudden in chapter 12, he takes an unexpected turn.

From chapters 10 to chapters 35, Isaiah is going to deal with the discipline of Israel and the judgment on the nations.

But in chapter 12, and in chapter 25, and in chapter 26, he pulls away, he takes this little departure, this little detour, because he wants Israel to understand where this is all going.

This is all leading to praise of God. All of this, the hardship and the difficulty, the suffering, the circumstances that they were going to encounter, and the judgment on the nations were all for the sake of praise to the glory of God.

[7 : 43] This morning I would ask you, as we begin this study, this important question. Is your life marked by praise?

Is the expression of your life, the words from your lips, the posture of your heart, a posture of thanks and praise?

As we'll see this morning in our passage before us, Isaiah wants to bring to the forefront of our attention, you cannot be a people of God without being a people of praise.

You cannot call yourself a follower of God without being a person that is marked by thanksgiving. That is the significance of this passage today.

And for those of us, and I would put myself in this category as one who tends to complain, one who tends to criticize, one who tends to look at a glass half empty instead of half full, that cannot be the expression of a life that is marked by the sweetness of the gospel in the glory of God in transforming our life.

[9 : 07] You will be a person of praise if you are a person of God. That's what Isaiah wants us to understand. That is the thrust of today's message.

Are you a person of praise? As we look here in the first three verses, we see this rising theme coming to the surface.

First, I want you to notice that the expression, the ultimate expression of a people of God is marked by praise. This is the ultimate expression of the people of God.

Notice what it says in that first phrase. It says, you will say in that day. Isaiah points to a day of awakening. A day really of resurgence and revival in the hearts of the people of Israel.

We'll look briefly in just a few moments at kind of the historical background. Where was this people in relationship to spiritual vitality? Isaiah wants these people to understand that it might not mark their current position, their current posture of life, but it will be true of a future people that God has created for himself, a people who are to be marked as a people of praise.

[10 : 35] This Hebrew word of praise is translated thanksgiving or praise interchangeably throughout the Old Testament. and one commentator puts it this way.

He says, any revival of religion which may yet come to the world will be marked by a new outburst of thanksgiving. You want to see revival in this land?

Do you want to see a resurgence of people captured by the image and glory of Christ? it will happen as you are struck yourself with a vision of God's glory and you proclaim it to yourself and to others around you as your life is again marked by thanksgiving and praise.

The words of this song are drawn through the collection of scriptures throughout the Old Testament which help us understand this doesn't just mark a future people but this is the people that God had called Israel to be all along.

They were to be a people of praise. We see it as the people are coming out of the nation of Egypt and crossing through the Red Sea. The same words that we find in this chapter this morning are the words that first showed up in those moments those moments of rescue that featured his glory that identified the future hope that the people would have as they would move into the promised land as they would make God the central focus of their lives.

[12 : 23] But Isaiah is anticipating a future day. A future day when all of this will really become alive and consuming for the people of God.

There will be a day of enduring praise and thanks. Many things would characterize that day but the one thing that would stand out head and shoulders above the rest the prevailing theme of their lives would be marked by Thanksgiving.

A people marked by thanks. I want to show you just three ways in this passage that the people are thankful. What are they thankful for? How can we emulate their example?

What do we see here in these first three verses that help us understand what we as people of God also need to be thankful for? Notice right here at the beginning of verse 1 it says this I will give thanks to you O Lord for though you were angry with me your anger turned away.

first of all they were thankful for discipline. Do you find yourself being thankful for discipline? Or do you find yourself being thankful that you escaped discipline?

[13 : 46] Oh man discipline is not something that we enjoy. But here are the people of Israel looking back on the legacy of their lives and they understand God graciously intervened.

God stood in the way he prevented them from going where they could go. He helped to call them back to himself and in that way his grace showed up in their lives.

And for that for that they give praise for that they give thanks. They understand that discipline had a purpose and so in the discipline they are grateful.

They praise in the name of God. God was justly angry with a disobedient and an unfaithful people. We see it right at the outset of Isaiah in chapter 1.

Turn with me just for a second. Keep your finger in chapter 12. Just by way of reminder in Isaiah chapter 1 what do we know about these people in verse 4?

[14 : 56] Here's what it says. Ah, sinful nation of people laden with iniquity offspring of evildoers children who deal corruptly they have forsaken the Lord they have despised the Holy One of Israel they are utterly estranged from the lowest dregs of society to the upper classes of the palace sin had permeated this people wholesale rebellion and turning away from God we see that over and over as an anthem through the first and second kings and first and second chronicles of people who had given themselves over to the vile practices of society of the nations surrounding them but in that day there would be something different in that day there would be spiritual resurgence but in this day it was marked by compromise it was remarked by rebellion even as

Isaiah writes this prophecy during the reign of Uzziah and Jotham and Ahaz and Hezekiah although Uzziah and Jotham kind of stand as those who were devoted to God at least for a portion of their leadership for some reason action had not taken place in and among the people themselves we find in second kings that Uzziah did what was right in the sight of the lord according to all that his father Amaziah had done except that the high places were not removed the people still sacrificed and burned incense on the high places King Jotham was just like his father Uzziah he did what was right in the sight of the lord he did according to all that his father Uzziah had done however the high places were not removed the people still sacrificed and burned incense on the high places and so the compromise that showed up in

Uzziah and in Jotham took flight in the ruling of Ahaz this son and grandson now shows the wickedness and the lack of training that were represented in his father and grandfather of Ahaz it says he walked in the way of the kings of Israel indeed he made his sons to pass through the fire according to the abominations of the nations whom the lord had cast out from before the children of Israel and he sacrificed and burned incense on the high places on the hills and under every green tree or tree and during the writing of this prophecy of Isaiah God is giving a vivid clear example to the nation of Judah what will happen when a people turn their back on God the northern ten tribes those tribes of Israel that had split off from the kingdom would experience the disciplining hand of God on their lives on their nation as a result of their rebellion and turning away from the

God of Israel Judah would be able to see up close and personal first hand what happens when a nation turns their back on God they would have this object lesson play out right in front of them the empire of Assyria was rising to power we find from 2nd Kings chapter 15 directly after during the tail end of Uzziah's leadership we find some things beginning to break loose in the northern ten tribes in relationship to this rising empire of Assyria it says the king of Assyria came against the land he demanded tribute from the king of Israel who then depleted the funds of all the wealthy individuals who were living in the nation in order to turn back Assyria from attacking them well that worked for a couple of years but it didn't take long before that same king would come back and begin to conquer all the lands surrounding those northern ten tribes decimating the cities and taking the people captive to Assyria

Ahaz and seeing this rising threat says I'm going to make a preemptive decision I'm going to make a political decision to align myself with Assyria so if they make it through Israel that will be safe as a nation of Judah so he sends tribute to the king of Assyria and in sending tribute to the king of Assyria all of those nations who had been opposed to Assyria now begin to return and retool their focus now it's going to come on to Judah the kingdoms of Israel and Damascus and even the Edomites and the Philistines begin to align themselves against Judah and now Ahaz has a problem so what does he do instead of turning to the Lord and asking for help from God he turns to human strength he sends more money to the king of

[20 : 43] Assyria and Assyria comes he gives assistance and decimates Damascus Ahaz would meet him there the king of Assyria and not only would enter into a binding treaty with him but would now import a new dimension of idolatry into Judah he sent for his high priest to come and to evaluate the altar that Damascus was using to offer tribute to their gods and his encouragement to this priest was make this same design and put it in the place of the bronze altar outside of the temple in Jerusalem move that bronze temple to the north side of the temple and now all of the sacrifices the burnt offerings the sin offerings the grain offerings and drink offerings and peace offerings instead of being offered to God on the bronze altar was offered now on this idolatrous

Damascus altar right outside the temple of God in Jerusalem he dismantled the temple and redecorated it according to his own design we find a tribute to his leadership in 2nd chronicles it says he walked in the way of the kings of Israel and made molded images for the Baals he burned incense in the valley of the son of Hinnon and burned his children in the fire he sacrificed and burned incense on the high places on the hills under every green tree in every single city of Judah he made high places to burn incense to other gods and it was to Ahaz that the prophet Isaiah gives the promise of Emmanuel unbelievable mercy it was to this wicked king who led

Israel to wholesale rejection of God that the promise of Messiah comes a promise of future deliverance comes what do you do when a people reject you what do you do when a people turn their back on you I'll tell you what this person would do if he was in control he would extinguish those wretched people but not God God would purify his people not extinguish them God would refine his people not destroy them God would restore his people for himself a people of praise that's why Israel can rejoice in the disciplining hand of God because they know what they deserve they deserve judgment they deserve destruction they deserve annihilation but instead they get restoration they are restored back to relationship with God and the reminder of what they deserved in light of what they actually received continues to help them give praise as a people of praise understanding the disciplining hand of

God which now leads us to the second point in our study not only thankful for discipline but also thankful for the accompanying comfort the disciplining hand leads to the comfort of God the goal of discipline is always comfort we find that here again in verse one it says for though you were angry with me your anger turned away that you might comfort me the purpose of discipline in your life the purpose of discipline in my life is to lead us to comfort to lead us to recognizing that God is all sufficient for all things the focus of correction is always to the point of refreshment refreshment that can only be found in God as we find from second Corinthians chapter one three

Paul recounts this he says blessed be the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ the father of mercy and God of all comfort who comforts us in all our affliction that is the God that we serve the God of comfort and thus the God who is worthy of your praise today it is our impulse to run to comfort when we feel pain the world offers many formulas to console or to ease our pain friendships medication activities entertainment vacation anything to escape the immediate effects of difficulty and suffering but there is only one comfort that satisfies the comfort that is only found in God and when we experience his comfort even in the midst of pain it leads to joy that expresses itself in thanks that is the message of Isaiah run to God the God of all comfort run to him is that the common expression of your life expression of thanks is that where you find yourself running to not just periodically but continually as someone who recognizes the amazing privilege of being called after his name and being ministered to directly and personally by the God of comfort if it is if you recognize those things it will lead you to praise it will mark your life it will make you a thankful person as you come to appreciate all that

[27:16] God has done for you but all of this now moves to the pinnacle that we find here in verse 3 what is that verse 2 behold God is my salvation I will trust and will not be afraid for the Lord God is my strength and my song and he has become my salvation Isaiah says if you are people of God you will be thankful for salvation thankful for salvation in verse 2 we find this grammatical expression that lacks a verb so that literally it's behold God salvation of me thus God is salvation not just that God saves or that

God rescues as though he were one of many answers to life's problems but that God is salvation rescue and deliverance and help will not come any other way since God is salvation it cannot come independently of him it is only as you look to God that you can look to salvation attention is directed to God who is the epitome of salvation God's salvation is not an abstract philosophical concept it has a relational dimension he is salvation for me not salvation just generally but it is salvation for you salvation that you can experience personally independently as God ministers his saving hand directly to you one commentator puts it this way one should not read into this statement a

New Testament perspective about God saving his people from their sins though Christ's death on the cross or even the theological idea of substitutionary atonement from Isaiah 53 the praise simply claims that God is a source or the source of salvation that delivers people from anything that might destroy them now this is significant because if God saves not just for a future date but saves you for the moment it means that God has shown up to rescue you in every dimension of life to give you meaning and purpose regardless of where you find yourself he redeems your work those empty tasks you find yourself doing mechanically God gives mean to those things and rescues you in your work

God redeems your friendships he gives you purpose of being mutually encouraged and strengthened not just sucking people dry he redeems your marriage and he even uses it as an illustration of Christ in his church may we not corrupt and pollute the illustration of Christ in his church by destroying our marriages he redeems us from personal life struggles and uses them to make you trust him more and to empower your testimony students he even redeems your homework as you learn that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom you learn that the source of help comes from him even something as routine as homework has a spiritual orientation a life that is oriented towards

God is a life that is experiencing perpetual rescue salvation that comes from him and that leads us to expressions of joy and thanks as you understand that every moment of life can be redeemed can be delivered can have purpose and meaning that God can give you confidence that God can give you security and peace of mind and hope and a clear conscience regardless of what happens in life and as Isaiah looks at that future day when the God of salvation is recognized for who he is he understands it will be a time that is marked by praise and thanksgiving and what begins as a personal position of praise we see in verse one and two

[32 : 29] I will give thanks to you you are not angry with me and in verse two behold God is my salvation I will trust and will not be afraid now spills over and now includes an accompanying chorus of individuals who are all joining along in this succession of praise notice in verse three with joy you and that is the plural corporate nature of this body of followers you all will draw water from the wells of salvation and you all will say in that day give thanks to the Lord call upon his name make known his deeds among people proclaim that his name is exalted now grows this praise from individual praise to a corporate nature that flows through the rest of this passage and now the whole body is caught up with this expression of praise this chorus this anthem of praise now rises to a crescendo and now the people are actually part of this process of commending praise to one another as now we turn to this next point in verses 4 to 6 not only will the people of

God be marked with praise but the ultimate testimony to the earth to the nations will be a testimony that is marked by thanks and praise let me read for us in verses 4 to 6 and you will say in that day speaking of this company give thanks to the Lord call upon his name make known his deeds among the peoples proclaim that his name is exalted sing praises to the Lord for he has done gloriously let this be made known in all the earth shout and sing for joy oh inhabitants of Zion for great in your midst is the holy one of Israel again in that day this people will be marked as a people of praise this expression of praise that begins personally now is unbridled and begins to affect the entire community and this community spurs one another on and instructs one another to be about the praising process give thanks to the

Lord call upon his name both are commands interjected between this chorus of individuals we find in these remaining verses four ways that this body of followers of God recognizes the worthiness of God and celebrates his name stands as an example for us how can we be about being a testimony to the lands to the nations about the greatness of our God how can our gospel be marked by thanks how can it be potent and powerful because of the praise that we give our Lord first in verse four it says make known his deeds make known his deeds we find that this is a people that has learned how to talk about all that

God has done they have learned to give him credit for the successes in their lives they have learned to help others understand that the fruitfulness and the victories that they've experienced are victories that have come from one source the source of salvation the God to whom they look let all that you do be directed to him they say to one another it stands as an example to us what gets in the way of us declaring the deeds of God what gets in the way of you making the greatness of God understood maybe because we follow the world's strategies maybe because we work out our own solutions maybe because we let impatience get the best of us we take matters into our own hands we pray little we seek wisdom little we seem to only look to

God when things are out of our control then and only then do we call for help and so we celebrate our own successes we feature our own abilities but those who come to terms with God the God of salvation and look to him for rescue those are the ones who can declare the deeds of God to the world are you one who makes the deeds of God understood secondly they make known his name also there in verse four give thanks to the Lord call upon his name those who represent God faithfully point to the one who saves they're not quiet about the name of God he's not an anonymous God he's not one among many he is the one true

[38 : 23] God and as the psalmist says in Psalm 145 he says I will exalt you my God the King I will praise your name forever and ever and throughout the book of Isaiah there is a great emphasis on the name of God we saw that at the beginning we'll continue to see it go until the very end the emphasis on the holy one of Israel the emphasis on the almighty God and those two aspects of God working together to call a people to himself restoring a people that represents him faithfully it's the exclusivity of the name that leads to joy swords are beaten into plowshares nations will not lift up sword against a nation the wolf will lay with the lamb find that in chapter 11 the calf and lion will lay down together a young child will lead them but but not because of anything that is happening outside of the name of

God the might and the strength of God that comes to bear on his people we find again here in verse five we find make known his glory make known his glory not only his deeds and his name but also his glory there is no gospel without glory there is no good news aside from lifting up the value and worthiness of your God notice how God's glory is proclaimed in verse five what does it say it says sing praises to the Lord for he has done gloriously songs were central to Israel's worship these were the expressions of praise that flowed from the deepest parts of their being you have been called to praise as people like

Israel we are called to praise the king we've looked at first Peter chapter two you are a chosen generation a royal priesthood a holy nation a peculiar people people who are called to proclaim the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light we have been called to praise and to glorify the Lord and in our praise the nations will be affected Christ says in Matthew chapter 5 16 he says let your light shine before others so that they may see your good works and do what and give glory to your father who is in heaven in first Peter chapter two it says have your conduct honorable among the Gentiles that when they speak against you as evildoers they may by your good works which they observe glorify

God in the day of visitation and in 2nd Corinthians chapter 4 verses 3 and 4 it says even if our gospel is veiled it is veiled to those who are lost whose minds the God of this age is blinded who do not believe lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ should be revealed to them the gospel is about the glory of God his worthiness his supremacy are you praising and thanking God for his glory does it show up in your conversations in the world around you does your gospel message expound on the glory of Christ and finally we see in verse 6 we make known his greatness shout and sing for joy oh inhabitants of Zion for great in your midst is the holy one of

Israel he is mighty in spite of the power of the nations their dominating strength their seemingly unstoppable nature their ruthless practices their hating being hated among by their enemies and in spite of the rebellion of Israel we find that God intervenes and rescues he is a God of strength he is a God of might how great is your God this morning how great is he in your midst how great is your God in the setting in which he has placed you if I asked your co-workers or fellow students or neighbors to describe for me your God how great is your God how does his greatness show up in your conversation with others there was no mistake in the minds of the people of Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost the greatness of God was on display they say in Acts chapter 2 verse 11 in describing their own personal experiences it says we heard them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God that is the gospel the greatness and worthiness and value and treasure of your

[44 : 28] God how great is your God this morning well I don't know about you but liking a YouTube video is not my style but I but I come to realize that that liking this video not only benefits them in terms of popularity but I've come to understand that liking that video on YouTube actually is a benefit to them financially did you know that as you subscribe to their channel as you like their posts it raises them in popularity and advertisers then begin to get attracted to this video and then the rest of the world can experience and enjoy the benefit of that video well it pales in comparison but I found in my own heart and life that not only is it not my style to give thanks for a

YouTube video by liking it it does not tend to be my style in thanking God for his goodness when it shows up in my life and so I don't commend his worthiness to others and by doing so I don't give the opportunity for him to be valued in the minds of others I leave the gospel obscure I leave the gospel concealed because I don't choose to thank the goodness of God the glory of God the deeds of God the might of God it's just not my style but it should be God's people will be marked by praise let's pray Lord this morning as we close this service we understand how dreadfully short we come to the standard being a people that is so permeated so saturated by praise that it flows out in every conversation not only in expressing the goodness of God for us not only magnifying you and praising you for your work to us but in commending you to others making your worthiness praise put on central the spotlight giving others the opportunity to join in the chorus of praise to be able to experience the benefits of being partnered and in fellowship with God oh God please forgive us forgive us as a people for not being marked as people of thanks help us this week to make it our aim to change that at least a little so that we can come back next week and say listen to the opportunities

I've had to give thanks to God and then to join in the chorus of thanks with others who are also a part of that process so that we can gather a community a city a nation to be worshippers of our great God we pray in Jesus name amen