

God Calls You To Look Unto Him

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 24 December 2023

Preacher: J.D. Edwards

[0 : 0 0] Isaiah chapter 45. So here's what the Reformation Heritage Bible commentary says on this book to introduce it. Jewish tradition suggests that Isaiah's father Amos was the brother of King Amaziah of Judah and that Isaiah was murdered during the early part of Manasseh's reign.

Isaiah means Jehovah is salvation. The grandeur of his writing style and the access he had to the king of Judah imply that Isaiah was a well-educated man within an influential family in the nation and his writing reveals that he was a man of great learning and intellect as well as real courage. Isn't it beautiful how God has prophesied that he would take on flesh through all kinds of different prophets. The other example would be Amos. Amos was a poor farmer south of Jerusalem. He raised sycamore trees and tended sheep and now Isaiah is this princely man with a world-class education. Isaiah wrote based out of the capital city Jerusalem. At this point in redemptive history the ten northern tribes were already in captivity. Isaiah prophesied the coming judgment of now the two southern tribes Judah and Benjamin but also God's promises. Isaiah is also the mouthpiece of the great God who would bring salvation not only for Judea and Jerusalem and then the ten northern tribes which the New Testament calls Samaria but God would bring salvation to the ends of the earth and that's our focus in today's sermon text. So we're in Isaiah chapter 45 and we're going to begin reading at verse 18.

As I read this we believe in Reformation Heritage Church here that this is the word of God that it is inspired, inerrant, infallible. It's God's clear and sufficient word for you who are his people.

Once I'm done reading the word of God I'll say this is the word of the Lord and if you receive it that way say thanks be to God. Isaiah 45 starting at verse 18. For thus saith the Lord that created the heavens, God himself that formed the earth and made it.

[2 : 1 7] He hath established it. He created it not in vain. He formed it to be inhabited. I am the Lord and there is none else. I have not spoken in secret in a dark place of the earth. I said not unto the seat of Jacob seek ye me in vain. I the Lord speak righteousness. I declare things that are right.

Assemble yourselves and come. Draw near together ye that are escaped of the nations. They have no knowledge that set up wood of their graven image and pray unto a God that cannot save. Tell ye and bring them near.

Yea let them take counsel together. Who hath declared this from ancient times? Who hath foretold this long ago? Have not I the Lord and there is no God else beside me? A just God and a Savior. There is none beside me.

Look at verse 22. God says, Look unto me and be ye saved all the ends of the earth for I am God and there is none else.

I have sworn by myself. The word has gone out of my mouth in righteousness and shall not return. That unto me every knee shall bow. Every tongue shall swear. Surely shall one say, In the Lord have I righteousness and strength. Even to him shall men come and all that are increased and sensed against him shall be ashamed. Verse 25. In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified and shall glory. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. You may be seated.

[4 : 1 4] The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of the Lord endures forever. Well, let's pray from Isaiah 55.

Oh God, as rain brings grain for food, may your word go forth. You promised that it will not return unto you void, but that your word shall accomplish that which you please. It shall prosper in the purpose for which you send it. Lord, I ask now in your presence, before your people, what's been my prayer all week.

Simply that we would see you. That we would behold your glory today and be satisfied. We ask this for Christ's sake. Amen.

Beloved congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, God calls you to look unto him. God calls you to look unto him. God calls you to look unto him. It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas.

[5 : 42] Everywhere you go, take a look at the five and ten. That's the five and dime like a dollar store. It's glistening once again with candy canes and silver lanes that glow.

It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas. Toys in every store. But the prettiest sight to see is the holly that will be on your own front door. This time of year gives us a lot to look at. And it's the time of year where pastors probably across the world are picking on Christmas lyrics for two reasons. They're so easy to pick on. And the number two, I think it's our job. I think it's our job to make sure that all that we're taking in as the people of God is being reformed and conformed to Christ. It's so easy for myself to be caught up in the marketing, the propaganda, the worldly messages.

But instead, we're supposed to set our eyes on Christ. I was thinking about this promise in verse 22. [6 : 43] Look unto me. Look unto me, God calls. In the Garden of Eden, remember the fruit looked delightful to Eve.

In 1 John 2.16, we're warned, Christians are warned, to not follow the lust of the eyes. There's something spiritual that happens with what we look at.

Put your eyes on verse 22. I just need you to see the focus of today for yourself.

This is my one point for you today. If you leave here and you're talking later over delicious food, what was the point of the preacher? It's this right here, verse 22. God calls you.

He says, look unto me and be ye saved all the ends of the earth. Why? He says, for I am God and there is none else.

[7 : 50] That's the sermon today. God calls you to look unto him. This is so comforting because we do long to find satisfaction.

And our eyes go everywhere to find something that will satisfy them. And God is telling us, I give you satisfying glory to behold.

God has already given satisfying glory for us to behold. When we behold Christ, we behold God. Jesus is God. Well, let's walk through our verses here. Starting at verse 18. I see five reasons you need to look at God today.

Five reasons you and I need to look at God. Number one, this Christmas, God calls you and me to get our eyes off of this physical realm. Because he's giving us, he's already given us satisfying glory to behold.

[9 : 03] So when we see the lights and these beautiful sights, that's good. But look past it. Get your eyes past the physical realm. God calls you to look unto him because he is the creator of heaven and earth.

This is the first reason. And he says this in verse 18. I'm going to take them in two parts. First, the heavens. Second, the earth. Look at verse 18.

Thus saith the Lord that created the heavens. He is the creator and the king of heaven.

That's why you need to look at him. God is the creator of heaven. Heaven is the invisible spiritual realm.

I want to keep a special focus on that invisible spiritual realm and the realm of angels. angels. We're told in Job 38.7 of angels. The morning stars, they were called.

[10 : 05] They sang together. And all the sons of God. That's another word for angels. Shouted for joy. And that was how the angels witnessed all that God had created.

All that God had spoken into existence. Revelation 5.11 says, The voice of many angels. How many angels should we picture in heaven? They numbered myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands.

A myriad in ancient Greece was 10,000. So what's 10,000 times 10,000? The point is, it's more than you could count or imagine.

That's what God created when he created the heavens. J.I. Packer wrote this of angels. Heaven is their headquarters where they are constantly worshiping God.

And from heaven, they are sent to render services to Christians at God's bidding. Because God is the creator of the heavens. That's why you should look past this physical realm.

[11 : 09] Not only is God the creator of heaven, God is the king of heaven. Zechariah 1.10 says that angels are God's mighty warriors of light.

God has a vast army of holy, magnificent, fear-striking spiritual beings. The Lord sends his angels to patrol planet earth.

He created the heavenly host. And he rules over the host of heaven as their king. Remember what Jesus said in Matthew 26. He said, I can appeal to my father.

And he will send at once more than 12 legions of angels. A legion is 5,000 to 6,000 angels. So more Roman soldiers than you could picture.

And 12 is the number of fullness. It's all the nations of Israel. When you would summon the army of the people of God, it would be all 12 nations represented. In other words, there is a full army of angels at God's disposal.

[12:16] The angels know the reality of heaven better than you and I do. And that's why the angels, which we think about at Christmas, burst into song when they saw what was happening.

In Luke 2, which Ralph read for us in verse 13, we read that a multitude of the heavenly host praised God. And they said, Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace among those with whom God is pleased.

We're told in Colossians 1.16 that by him, that's God himself, all things were created, things in heaven and things on earth, visible and invisible, whether it be thrones or dominions or principalities or powers, all things were created by God and for God.

Jesus is God. Jesus created the heavens. Jesus is king over the heavens.

Our confession, the second London confession of faith in chapter 8 on Christ the mediator, paragraph 3 puts it this way, The Lord Jesus in his human nature, thus united to the divine in the person of the Son, was sanctified and anointed with the Holy Spirit from above beyond measure, having in him all the treasures of God's wisdom.

[13:47] Jesus is God. That's why we sing, Hail the heaven-born Prince of Peace.

Hail the Son of Righteousness. Behold the glory of God and be satisfied. Behold Jesus.

He is the creator and the king of heaven. That's the first reason God calls you to look unto him. It's because he created and rules over the heavens, the spiritual realm.

Well, this Christmas, God also calls you and me to get our eyes off of our own little kingdoms. The second reason God calls you to look unto him is because he is the creator and the king of the earth. Not only the heavens, but also all of the earth. Look at what he says next in verse 18. God himself formed the earth and made it.

[14:53] He made the earth for his glory. This is what all of the scriptures declare. All of the earth is like a book. It reveals who God is. Psalm 24 says, The earth is the Lord's in the fullness thereof.

He has founded it and established it. Augustine, a long time ago, he said, I looked at all of the earth and I asked, Who is God?

And all of the earth said, I'm not God. God is he who made me. That's what the earth shouts back at anyone who's honest to look.

And that's what Psalm 19 says, The heavens declare the glory of God. The sky above proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours forth speech. Night to night reveals knowledge.

There is no speech, nor are there words whose voice is not heard. God is the creator of earth. Look at earth and look past it and see the creator.

[15:59] See God himself. Not only did God create the earth, God is the king of the earth. Look at what he says in verse 18 again. He formed it to be inhabited.

I studied this in the original language. In the Hebrew, it's poetic and you can't quite get a firm grasp of exactly all that it means because it could mean so much more.

Here's how it is in the original. God established her. From chaos, he created her to dwell therein. He formed her.

So God created earth. Earth is in the feminine. The earth is his house. It's his palace where God himself will dwell.

And he formed the earth for the dwelling. He formed earth for himself to rule over. The earth is the temple of the Lord where he is pleased to dwell.

[17:05] Now, the people of God that inhabit the earth, in our souls, we are the temple of the Holy Spirit. So as his people fill the earth, he dwells in a ruling way.

But he rules and he is king over all that he made. He says in verse 18, I am the Lord and there is none else.

Jesus is this Lord that Isaiah 45 describes. In John 1-3, we read that in God the Son, all things were made.

Without him was not anything made that was made. And in him was life. Verse 14 says that he the creator was made flesh and he dwelt on the earth and we beheld God's glory full of grace and truth. God took on flesh to dwell in the world that he created. Well, in this account in Luke 2, we get the glory of heaven coming to earth.

[18:13] It's the angelic host breaking through to these 10 to 13 year old shepherds as they're watching their sheep. And the angels declare this, An angel of the Lord appeared to the shepherds.

The glory of the Lord shone around them and they were filled with great fear. And the angel declared, Unto you is born this day in the city of King David, a Savior who is Christ.

The king. And the heavens peel back, so to speak. The eyes of these shepherds are opened up to behold the heavens from earth.

And they hear the sound of heaven worshiping God, singing glory to God in the highest and peace on earth to all who belong to him.

We sing, Veiled in flesh, the Godhead see. Hail the incarnate deity. And from our confession, we read that, In respect to our averseness and utter inability to return to God, and for our rescue and security from our spiritual adversaries, we need Christ in his kingly office.

[19:32] Why did heaven break forth onto earth? It's because we are in darkness. We need God to reveal himself. We need him to come to earth as the great king to pull us into his kingdom.

Because without him we have no hope. So in the kingly office, God himself, in the person of Jesus, came to convince you to subdue your broken will, to draw you to himself, to uphold you, to deliver you in me, and to preserve us until we are finally joined with him in his kingdom of heaven.

We long for that day when the kingdom of heaven will be fully on the earth, but we enter it spiritually when we believe in the work of Christ as our king. This is what we confess from Colossians 1.20 that God made peace with sinners through the blood of his cross to reconcile all things to himself whether they be things on earth or things in heaven.

So this Christmas God calls you to trust what he has revealed and he has revealed that he is the king. The king and the creator of earth.

Look to him and be satisfied with the glory of your creator. Let earth receive her king by faith.

Number three, this Christmas God calls you and me, this is an important one, I believe God calls you and me to not trust what we're getting off of our screens, phones and TVs, computers.

[21:19] Don't trust your screens. Instead, trust what he has revealed in his word. Look at what he has revealed in verse 19.

He says, I have made myself known to you in verse 19. I have not spoken in secret in a dark place of the earth. I said not unto the seat of Jacob, seek ye me in vain.

God made his revelation so abundantly clear so that no man can have excuse. He's faithful to his promise in Jeremiah 29, 13.

You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. There may be some here who have been seeking after God and you might not even know it.

He says, you will find me. I've revealed myself not in secret in a dark place. Through all of creation and through my word especially, I have made myself known.

[22:22] Seek me and you will find me. You can't trust what you get from the screen, but you can trust God's word.

Look at what he says in verse 19. I, the Lord, speak righteousness. I declare things that are right. God's word alone can be trusted.

You can trust God's word. It is right. Romans 121 says, those who do not glorify their creator as God or give thanks to him become vain in their imaginations and their foolish hearts are darkened. And that's how all of us enter this world. Our foolish thoughts are darkened. We need God through the light of his word to shine the light of his glory and renew our minds.

See, God gathers those to himself from around the world. And how do God's people always organize themselves? He gathers us to himself through his word.

[23:31] Anywhere you go where there's a true church, it's going to be ruled by Christ through the word of God. Look at what he says in verse 20.

Assemble yourselves. Come, draw near together that escape the nations. They have no knowledge that set up the wood of their graven image and pray unto a God that they cannot see.

Those gods cannot save. And we are those from all the nations that God has called out. We are the ones who have heard the shepherd's voice. We've said, the word of God I can trust.

Let me gather around. Let me assemble with God's people that I can hear from my Lord. God cautions us. Trust his word alone.

2 John 2, 7 says, For many deceivers have gone out into the world. Those who do not confess. Listen to this. Those who don't confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh.

[24 : 33] So the doctrine of the incarnation, it is the test of a true believer. If Jesus is God, then you believe and you receive the word of God and you have life.

If you deny that Jesus is God, you are not saved. And the church needs to be careful and to guard this doctrine. Augustine, I'm sorry, this was Gregory Nazianzus, a long time ago, one of the patristic fathers.

He said something like this, When I look at one person of the Trinity, I look at the Son, scarcely can I have a thought of the Son without my mind going to the Spirit and the Father and the oneness of God.

And when I think of the one God, creator of heaven and earth, I can't stop but also think of the Son who expressed it and the Spirit who ministers. You see how our thoughts of God should be that way.

As we think of God the Creator, we think of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And the incarnation reveals that Jesus is God. John 1.18 said that no one has ever seen God, the only God who is at the Father's side.

[25 : 45] He has made God known on earth. That's what Jesus came to do. In our confession, we believe this, that it pleased the Father that all fullness dwell in our Lord Jesus Christ so that being holy, harmless, and undefiled, full of grace and truth, Jesus Christ might be thoroughly furnished to execute the office of mediator and surety.

The full deity of God dwelt in Jesus so that He could be the Savior of the world. As I was driving in this morning, I just saw the snow, the mud, the grass, some cows, and I thought, that's how God entered this world.

Mild He lays His glory by, born that man no more may die. See that Jesus is God and His word alone, His revelation alone is life for your soul.

God has given us a satisfying glory to behold. Behold that glory in Jesus and live. Number four, this Christmas, God calls you and me to receive His good news.

God calls you and me to receive His good news. Not only to hear it and sing about it, not even to believe it for your family, for those you love.

[27 : 32] Personally, receive His good news again today. the gospel is for Christians, right? Receive the gospel again today.

Look at what He says in verse 21. Tell ye and bring them near, yea, let them take counsel together. He's saying, spread the word.

There is good news for you who are sick and dying. It's like in Jesus, as He goes around, one sick leper who's dying of a sickness He cannot heal, tells the good news to another, there's a man who can heal us.

Let's go to Him. Gather around. Go to the mountaintops. Let others know there is good news. You need a Savior. And there is one who can save.

And before He says how He does this, He tells us what He is doing. In verse 21, look at that, verse 21, He says, Who hath declared this from ancient time and who hath told it from that time?

[28 : 31] Have not I, the Lord? God says, I will come to save. And how I will do it is the way I have told from long ago. In verse 21, He says, There is no God else beside me, a just God and a Savior.

I will compromise my justice and I will save. How will you do that, Lord? I'll do it the way I told long ago. I, the only God and Savior, declared that the seed of Eve in Genesis 3.15 would crush the serpent's head.

That's how I'll save you. I, the only God and Savior, declared that the seed of Abraham would one day inherit a great nation. Genesis 12, I, the only God and Savior, declared that the seed of David in 2 Samuel 7 would bring peace to His kingdom.

How will I do it? I will do it the way I have promised. So there we are in darkness, deceived by our own sinfulness.

We are being destroyed by evil inside and out. And we hear that God is just and God is the creator and God is powerful.

[29 : 53] We know that a just king will punish all evil. We don't want a king that's not just, but I know that I'm evil, so that puts me in a position.

I know I deserve to be punished. I want God to put an end to all evil, but that means Him putting an end to me. And it should strike fear in us, like those angels of the glorious presence of God struck a fear in the angels.

Luke 2.10 says, the angel had to comfort them. He said, fear not. And this is the good news for us from Isaiah 45. I bring you good tidings of great joy for you, which shall also be for all the people. God says in verse 22, you need to see this one more time and receive the good news today. Jesus reveals this to you. Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth.

For I am God and there is none else. How do you receive this salvation? What does verse 22 say? [31 : 09] You look. You don't work for it. You don't buy it. You don't prove yourself worthy of it. You look. As the old song put it, you have nothing to do but to look and live.

There is life for a look at the crucified one. There is life at this moment for thee. Look at Jesus. God has given us a satisfying glory to behold and it's his own son that he holds up for us to see. Look unto me and be saved.

All the ends of the earth, I am God and there is none else. One of my favorite preachers in the 1800s, Charles Spurgeon, as a teenager, he was feeling the weight of his sin.

It was weighing so heavy on him and in God's grace, God drew him to go through the snow like many of us were out there shoveling and getting wet today. And as a teenager, his family didn't venture out but he did.

[32 : 20] He marched by foot to the closest church where he lived and you know the story. That stormy day, very few people showed up. The preacher didn't make it in so another man stood up and read this one verse from Isaiah 45, 22.

And he hadn't had much time to prepare a full sermon so he just kept repeating that over and over. look, look, look.

The word of God ministers to Charles Spurgeon. He let go of all of his self-righteousness. He trusted that promise. Look and be saved. There is life for a look at the crucified one.

There is life in this moment for you. In Luke 2, 20, we read that the shepherds returned glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen.

We sing with them who have looked at Christ. Peace on earth and mercy mild. God and sinners reconciled. We look at Jesus.

[33 : 33] We see the glory of God. God. Number five, this Christmas, God calls you and me to not care about the glory of man.

Don't care about the glory of man because God has given us satisfying glory to behold. God calls us to look unto Him in this life because He will prove His word true to all in the life to come.

God calls you and me to look at Him now in this life. He will prove His word true to all in the life to come. Look at verse 23.

The Lord says, I have sworn by myself. I am the covenant keeping God. I am the one who sealed the covenant with Abraham.

I am the one who swore by myself to the people of Israel with Moses. I am the Lord God who swore between the Father and the Son witnessed by the Spirit in the covenant of redemption before the foundation of the world.

[34 : 49] I have sworn that I will save a people for myself. verse 23. I have sworn by myself the word has gone out of my mouth in righteousness and shall not return.

I will do what I promised that unto me every knee shall bow every tongue shall swear surely shall one say in the Lord have I righteousness and strength even to him shall men come and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed.

verse 25 is the promise that in the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified and shall glory.

I want to draw your attention to verse 24. Who is it that is justified? It's those who say in the Lord do I have righteousness and strength.

I have no righteousness and strength on my own but I have righteousness in God. I have no strength on my own but God is my strength.

[36 : 03] I have looked to him for salvation. He alone can save. In the Lord we are justified. That's why Psalm 110 verse 3 says that God's people those who he has freely justified they will offer themselves freely.

In holy garments they will come into his house and worship him standing in the righteousness of their Savior. In the last two words of verse 25 all those who belong to the true spiritual Israel which are those that Christ purchased all those shall be justified and shall glory.

glory do you glory in God? Do you behold his satisfying glory as he set it forth in the sun? If you are justified if your sins are forgiven you will glory in God.

In Matthew 2 verse 10 we hear of these wise men who had followed the star when they saw the sign that God had given they rejoiced exceedingly and when they were come into the house where Mary Joseph and Jesus lived they saw the young child now with Mary his mother and they fell down and they worshipped him they gloried in God what God had done by sending his son and when they had opened their treasures they presented unto him the gifts if you behold that Jesus is God you will glory in him joyful all ye nations rise join the triumph of the skies the creator and king of heaven has come to earth and he has triumphed over sin Satan worldliness and wolves join the triumph now because one day every knee will bow and every tongue will confess receive him now by faith look unto

Jesus with your heart and be saved look one last time at verse 22 he calls you to look unto him and be saved all the ends of the earth for I am God and there is none else I have given you a satisfying glory to behold look unto me God calls that old hymn goes on like this look sinner look unto him and be saved unto him who was nailed to the tree it is not your good deeds that can pardon your sin nor by works can you set yourself free nor is it in your penance nor more guilty toil but only his blood that redeemeth your soul on him then who shed it thou mayest at once thy weight of iniquities roll so look sinner look unto him and be saved unto him who was nailed to the tree there is life for a look at the crucified one there is life in a moment for thee find true life in

[39 : 36] Christ behold God's glory in his son this Christmas God calls you to look unto the Lord Jesus Christ and live let's pray oh Lord you are the eternal infinite and unchangeable God you are the creator of heaven and earth you are perfect in your power your goodness and glory your wisdom justice and truth you are the only God there is none else and you the only God you took on flesh flesh in the words of Luke 1 you took on flesh to deliver a people for yourself out of the hand of your enemy and you saved your people that your people might worship you as king without fear help us to live lives of worship in

Christ's holiness in Christ's righteousness before you all the days of our life we ask this for Christ's sake alone amen