

A Covenant of Compassion

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[0:00] Good morning, church. Morin. And there's Mike, one of the pastors here at Shoreline.

! You guys tired this morning? We haven't even packed yet, and we're headed to Chicago soon, trying to get last-minute presents.

We've been battling sickness all throughout this church, from sort of low-level coughs and runny noses to Dave being in the hospital. And there's a lot going on.

There's a lot going on in our church right now. But you know, whether we're experiencing kind of low-level sufferings, which happen every day, or sort of the more weighty, more tragic sufferings, I think so often that we get to places where we cry out, God, you don't see.

God, you don't care. God, you don't care. Now, there's no reason to raise a hand, but have you ever lofted up one or both of those complaints to God?

[1:25] You know, I'd be surprised if there was anybody in this room who's lived any bit of life who answered that question, no. You know, which of us, in moments of loss or of tragedy or of disappointment or frustration, has not at some point cried out to the Lord, God, if this is what my situation is like, then surely you either don't see or you don't care or maybe both.

And you know, as Isaiah moves us into the second portion of his prophecy, this becomes Israel's complaint. So you see, we're actually in good company here. You can see it if you open your Bibles to Isaiah 40.

Isaiah 40, 27. You can see that complaint right there because Israel cries out, my way is hidden from the Lord. You don't see.

It's hidden from you, Lord. My way is hidden from the Lord. And then they say, and my right is disregarded by my God. That's like my cause, my case.

God, you don't care. You've thrown out my case. God, you don't see. You don't care. And you know, in many ways, all of Isaiah 40 and all of Isaiah 40 to 55, actually, is Isaiah responding, the Lord responding through Isaiah to these two complaints.

[2:46] I mean, even in the very next verse, Isaiah 40, 28, is this well-known response. Have you not known? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the creator of the ends of the earth.

He does not grow faint or weary. His understanding is unsearchable. Like, you think God doesn't see? He's the God who made the universe by the word of his power.

He possesses unlimited, unfading wisdom and strength. Of course he sees you. Of course he sees you. But does God care?

Does God care? And you can find Isaiah's immediate answer in the very next verse there in Isaiah 40. But we're going to see the answer from our sermon text for today, Isaiah 49, 8 through 13.

So if you haven't arrived there, please get to Isaiah 49 in your Bibles. If you don't have a Bible, there's Bibles on the back table. Feel free to take one of those and keep it as a gift to you.

[3:52] Well, we're in the final week here of our four-part Advent series, The Light Shines in the Darkness. And the title of today's sermon is A Covenant of Compassion.

A Covenant of Compassion. Now, we've been looking at select passages in Isaiah this Advent season. Last week we were in Isaiah 35. And that chapter concludes the first major portion of Isaiah's prophecy.

And then you can read there's three chapters of historical interlude that follow that. God miraculously delivers King Hezekiah and Judah, Jerusalem, from destruction by the nation of Assyria.

But then chapter 39 ends. Those three chapters of historical interlude. That chapter ends not in victory, but with this ominous prediction of Judah's downfall to come by a bigger, badder, greater nation, Babylon.

And then this significant shift occurs in chapter 40. It's how Handel's Messiah begins. Comfort, comfort my people, says your God.

[4:58] We realize that Isaiah is now prophesying, not to his present generation, though they obviously would have heard his message, but he's targeting that future generation, 150 years later, that would be in exile in Babylon.

They would have witnessed the destruction of Jerusalem, the rampage of Babylon. They would have been carried off into exile. And they would be needing a word of comfort.

Isaiah assures the exiles that God does see and God does care. And he is actually sovereignly advancing human history, kings and kingdoms, for her redemption.

He is going to raise up a servant who's not even born yet, but God names him. This is the power of our God. This is the foresight of our God. God names the servant, Cyrus of Persia. He's going to come, 100 years later.

He's going to be your redemption back from Babylon, back into the land. But in chapter 48, even as the exiles are depicted joyfully returning home, freed from captivity, we find that they're in even greater need of spiritual deliverance.

[6:09] Spiritual deliverance. So they've got national deliverance. They need spiritual deliverance. And this deliverance would come about by a greater servant of the Lord. Introduced in chapter 42, he reappears here in chapter 49.

This is what is known as the second servant song in Isaiah. The servant we find is perfectly trusting, perfectly faithful. He is the true Israel and God's going to dispatch him at just the right time to perform this double task.

Look at verse 6 of chapter 49. God is going to use the servant to not only restore Israel, that's the first task, but also to make him a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.

And then mysteriously look at verse 7. This is going to come about through suffering. And that suffering, though, will give way to exaltation. And that brings us to our text for today, the second half of this second servant song.

And before we dive in, let me pray one more time here. Father, we need your energy, Lord. Not just physical energy, but spiritual energy.

[7:19] We've just been singing these glorious gospel truths that resound from the incarnation of Christ. And our hearts need to be rightly affected by these truths. So, Lord, your spirit, we ask your spirit to do that work.

God, cause our hearts to be set aflame by the truth of Christmas, the truth of the gospel, the truth that we see here, Lord. Only your spirit can do that, and we are desperately in need.

God, my words can't do a thing. Your word can. And so, God, I ask that you would speak to us right now. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen. It begins, Thus says the Lord, In a time of favor, I have answered you.

In a day of salvation, I have helped you. I will keep you and give you as a covenant to the people. Now, here's the first thing we see. The servant as a covenant.

The servant as a covenant. Now, notice first how God says to the servant, I have answered you. The servant is ever the faithful, trusting, prayerful servant, and God is pleased to answer his righteous prayers.

[8:27] He has answered. He has helped his servant. First, it says, In a time of favor. In a time of favor. Now, this phrase, it's actually alluding back to the year of jubilee.

You find this in Leviticus chapter 25. It's a time that occurred every 50 years when captives were freed, debts were forgiven, property was returned back to rightful owners, rest from work was enjoyed.

The servant is going to bring about a new kind of jubilee. This is the favor of the Lord. God has answered and helped his servant in a time of favor and also in a day of salvation.

Now, this is Hebrew parallelism. There's parallel ideas here. This time of favor is the time of salvation. And at this point in Isaiah's prophecy, he's especially concerned, remember, with spiritual salvation.

National redemption has come. The exiles are back in the land. They need spiritual salvation. And Isaiah is proclaiming this is a day of salvation. The servant will usher in a spiritual jubilee.

[9:35] He will himself, we saw in verse 6, he will be himself light, salvation, not only to Israel but the nations. Now, this salvific work of the servant, it's further described in what God declares next, I will keep you and give you as a covenant to the people.

So the servant is himself, light, salvation. And now God is saying the servant will himself be a covenant to the people.

Now, when I married my amazing wife, Brittany, where did she go? She's gone. She's out of here. Well, when I, no, sorry. When I married my amazing wife, Brittany, only 11 years ago, she and I, many of you have done this, we entered into a covenant with one another.

What does that mean? That means that we pledged exclusive love, exclusive loyalty to one another. And so it is with God, covenanting with his people. He pledges his grace, his faithfulness. He pledges his love and his loyalty. And God established a covenant. We see this is significant in Old Testament history. God established a covenant with Adam and Eve. And then with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

[10:50] And then he did it with Moses and with Israel. And then with David. He also did it with Noah that I missed. And now God is saying, his servant will himself be a new kind of covenant with his people.

But his servant will himself be God's pledge of love and of loyalty. God's pledge of grace and of faithfulness. Alec Mottier comments, prophets preached the covenant and pointed away from themselves to the Lord.

The servant will actualize the blessings and point to himself. The Apostle Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 6 too.

For he says, and he quotes Isaiah 49 verse 8, Friends, the new covenant pictured here in Isaiah in the 700s BC has been inaugurated.

That covenant is Jesus Christ himself who has been given to the people. And Jesus took a cup. And when he had given thanks, he gave it to them saying, Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

[12:14] Jesus has become, by his sacrificial death on the cross, the covenant between God and man. The pledge of God's grace, God's faithfulness, his love and loyalty.

And for who? For undeserving sinners like you and me, who repent and who believe in his name. And in light of that, in light of the fact that Jesus himself is a covenant, there's two right responses here.

To trust him and to treasure him. To trust him and to treasure him. Jesus prayed eternal life. This is his prayer in John 17. Eternal life is knowing you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

Apart from Christ, there is no life. There is no eternal life. There is no fellowship with God. There is no enjoyment of all the blessings that come in connection with God.

We must repent of our sin, believe in Christ, that is to receive him, to rest in him. And in doing so, we enter into this new covenant in Christ's blood.

[13:25] We're going to partake later of the communion bread and cup. As we do that, we are receiving afresh the body and the blood of Christ.

We are, by faith, being nourished in and by him. And we're reminding ourselves of the covenant that we have in him. But for those who have not professed Christ, and will say this, the bread and the cup are not for you.

But what I want you to see is that as you're refusing the bread and the cup, the wafer and the juice, what you're really refusing is the one who offers himself to you for your eternal salvation and blessing.

And the call for you is to trust in him today. The response that is right to Christ being the covenant is to trust him and to treasure him.

This passage is beckoning us in light of his being our light and salvation and our covenant to see Jesus as a treasure, as the highest and greatest and most valuable treasure that we could ever possess.

[14:30] There is nothing and no one worth more than Jesus Christ. He is the pearl of greatest price, worth giving up all to possess. So I just want to ask, what is it that you need to let go of this morning?

What kind of second-rate, worldly treasure, fleeting treasure is ruling your hearts this morning? Rather than the divine, eternal treasure that is Christ.

Come to Bethlehem and see him whose birth the angels sing. Come adore on bended knee Christ the Lord, the newborn King.

God declares through Isaiah that he will give the servant to the people as a covenant. And then he elaborates on all the blessings that flow from this.

And so we move into the signs of the covenant. And by signs, what I mean is the effects of the covenant, the blessings that result from this covenant. Here is the first thing that we see.

[15:37] Secure homes to enjoy. I will keep you and give you as a covenant to the people. To establish the land. To apportion the desolate heritages.

Now the land was a major component in God's covenant with Israel. In the promised land, which Israel inherited under Joshua, they were to dwell safely as the people of God under his rule and his blessing.

Like a second and greater Joshua, the servant under this new covenant, will once again secure the land and apportion it out as the inheritance of God's people.

See, these are going to be homes of peace and of safety. Free from any violence. Free from any oppression. They're going to be homes for the people's everlasting enjoyment. Under God's perfect rule and blessing.

To cure homes to enjoy. The second thing is freedom for the captives. It's a saying to the prisoners, come out. To those who are in darkness, appear.

[16:41] For those held captive, the shackles are going to be burst wide open. The prison doors, demolished. They're going to be set free.

The parallel image in the second half of that verse, it underscores this divine transformation taking place. Like, it's not as if the prisoners themselves are gaining their freedom.

No, it's more like by the command of Almighty God, they go from darkness into light. Right? From shadows into the sunshine. This is a divine transformation taking place.

Saints, don't you love it when the gospel is preached from the Old Testament so clearly? I mean, this is the gospel. This is what God has done in Christ.

Church, apart from Christ, we are imprisoned by a three-headed enemy. Sin, Satan, and death. And friends, we're no match for this enemy. No match.

[17:41] We could never free ourselves from the tyranny of Satan and sin and death. But Jesus Christ, the long-awaited Messiah King, He became the suffering servant, the Lamb that was slain, so that by His blood, Revelation 5, He could ransom people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.

And just like He called Lazarus out of the grave, He calls to the prisoners, Come out! To those in darkness, Appear! God has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins, Colossians 1.13.

And Paul says that this qualifies us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. That inheritance is a secure home for our everlasting enjoyment, a home in which we're going to dwell with God and He with us, absent every and any kind of evil or oppression.

Saints, let's cling to this gospel. What has taken place and these future promises of God that remain yet to be fulfilled, but they have been secured for us in Christ.

Andrew sent an encouragement along in the weekly email. I don't know if you saw it, but what his encouragement was is that even though these great future promises can at times seem fanciful to us, don't they just seem too good to be true sometimes?

[19:15] But we can look back. We can see God's perfect track record of faithfulness and we can know that He is going to be faithful to every word of His promises.

And the way it all works out will be far better than we could ask for or imagine. So take heart if you are discouraged. Grab hold of a promise of God.

Not one word of that promise will fail. Not one word. Secure homes to enjoy, freedom for the captives, and then we see provision for the journey.

They shall feed along the ways. On all bare heights shall be their pasture. We saw in chapter 11 how Isaiah foresaw this second and greater exodus to come.

And that was going to be in connection with the promised Messiah King from the royal line of David. Well now he's connecting that future exodus, that second exodus, with the servant of the Lord. God is making known that it's one and the same person.

[20:20] The Messiah King prophesied in the first portion of Isaiah's prophecy is the servant of the Lord who takes center stage in this second portion. Under the new covenant of and in himself, he will provide his freed captives with all the nourishment they need.

Because as they make their exodus journey through the wilderness home, he is sustaining them, he is providing for them, he's nourishing them. And I want you to see again this divine transformation in the second parallel line.

You know, it says that they shall feed along the ways. You know, that's normal enough. But then it says, on all bare heights shall be their pasture. This is the desert blossoming like the crocus, right? The bare heights are becoming pasture where these sojourners are going to graze. God is turning what's barren into fertile land for the nourishment of his people.

And then he's also giving protection from harm. They shall not hunger or thirst, neither scorching wind nor sun shall strike them. As Alec Mautier explains, they will be protected from every inner failure of strength, right?

[21:36] Hunger, thirst, every inner failure of strength, and from every outward threat. The scorching wind, the sun. Psalm 121, awesome psalm.

Describes God as the helper and the keeper of Israel. He never slumbers nor sleeps. He keeps them from all evil.

He guards their very lives. The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in from this time forth and forevermore. Psalm 121, verse 8. So here in Isaiah 49, as the freed captives journey home in connection with the servant, their covenant, they are kept and they are guarded every step of the way.

Is there another image that comes to your minds when you think about these words here? Maybe one that King David made famous in one of his psalms.

A shepherd and his sheep. And fifth and finally, we see here, shepherding care to guide. For he who adds pity on them will lead them and by springs of water will guide them.

[22:48] We see now, the reason that there is provision, the reason that there is protection, is because there's a shepherd leading his sheep. And it is a shepherd filled with pity, with mercy and compassion.

This merciful shepherd ensures that his sheep are nourished and protected, leading and guiding them to springs of water. Friends, if you're one of this good shepherd's sheep, then you know his voice, don't you?

He calls you by name. You've experienced his tender mercy and compassion, his provision of all that you need, leading you to the green pastures and still waters, restoring your soul.

You're following him on the path of righteousness. You're comforted by his nearness as he walks with you through the valley of the shadow of death.

You've enjoyed fellowship with him, even surrounded by your enemies. And you're being chased. Brothers and sisters, you're being chased by his unrelenting goodness and mercy all the days of

your life until that day when you, when we have safely arrived in our forever homes.

[24:08] What a merciful shepherd we have. Fellow pilgrims, fellow sheep, let us avail ourselves of his tender mercies, which are new for us each and every morning of this trek to our heavenly home.

Some of you might especially feel like you're in the wilderness right now. Maybe you're lonely. Maybe you're struggling with health.

Maybe you can't break free from a particular sin. or sin. Maybe you feel like a failure of a parent or spouse or employee. Jesus Christ, your shepherd, is himself, the soul nourishment that you need this morning.

And he is available to you. That nourishment is available to you in overflowing abundance. Or maybe you don't feel that. Maybe you're in a season of relative ease or of relative comfort.

And I want to say, don't settle for filling up on the cheap substitutes that this world has to offer.

Look, we can quench. We do this all the time. We can quench our spiritual thirst with all kinds of material things.

[25:25] With financial stability. With making our homes look just the way we want. With building good reputations at work. Or with sports success. Now, none of those things are bad things in and of themselves.

But they will leave us spiritually malnourished. And meanwhile, Christ offers himself to us. He is leading us by springs of water.

Let us partake of him. Isaiah has proclaimed this servant as a covenant. He's listed these signs of the covenant. And now he speaks of the certainty of the covenant.

The certainty of the covenant. And I will make all my mountains a road. And my highways shall be raised up.

Now, we saw this highway imagery last week in Isaiah 35. Here it is again. God is going to level all obstacles that prevent his faithful sojourners.

[26:26] You know, those prisoners that he set free. Those in darkness that he called into the light. He will do what he needs to do to help them safely arrive at home. They will inherit the land that he is giving to them for their everlasting enjoyment.

See, the success of this covenant rests not on the people who are prone to unfaithfulness. The success of the covenant rests on the unendingly faithful God.

Jeremiah pictures this new covenant in chapter 31, and he speaks of the certainty of this covenant like the rising of the sun, the setting of the sun, as certain as the orbit of the moon around the earth, so certain, and even more is the inbreaking and the upholding of this new covenant in God's servant who is Christ.

Fourth, we see the scope of the covenant. Behold, these shall come from afar, and behold, these from the north and from the west, and these from the land of Syene. The land of Syene most likely refers, though people don't quite know, most likely refers to a place in southern Egypt.

So under this new covenant, Isaiah is saying, and as we've seen in prior weeks, God is going to gather his pilgrims from the north, the south, the west. Now he probably excludes the east simply to not let his audience think he's still talking about Babylon.

[27:50] He's moved on from Babylon. He's talking about a greater spiritual deliverance by the hand of the greater servant of the Lord. And again, this is that second and greater exodus that Isaiah keeps talking about over and over again, an ingathering of people from the far corners of the earth.

Such is the scope of the new covenant. It's a better covenant. It's for all those from every nation who join themselves to the true Israel of God by faith in the servant in Jesus Christ.

You know, Isaiah, he also foresaw this future joining of the nations to Israel back in chapter 45.

He said, speaking of the nations, they will plead with you saying, surely God is in you and there is no other, no God besides him.

This phenomenon is happening right now through the gospel of Jesus Christ, is it not? Paul says that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham.

[28:56] By faith, church, we are the sons of Abraham. We are grafted in to the true Israel by faith in Christ. And therefore, we become

recipients of this glorious new covenant that's been inaugurated by Christ in his death on the cross and his resurrection from the grave.

And church, what's more, it is through us, through the church of Jesus Christ, as we proclaim the gospel, that people from the corners of the earth turn to Christ and become part of this new covenant.

So our call, brothers and sisters, is until our dying breaths to proclaim that word of the gospel, to call sinners to repentance and to faith.

That's our job. You realize that, right? This is our job. This is our glorious job. We are. Isaiah talks about how people are going to publish peace from the mountains. That's us. Publishing peace in the streets, spreading the gospel abroad.

Now, at the same time, we know that for those in darkness to appear, the Holy Spirit must act. Right? That is a supernatural work of God upon the heart of a sinner.

[30:14] We cannot perform that work. We can't do that. And so, we don't just proclaim the gospel. We earnestly pray. We earnestly lift up praise to God, please to God on behalf of sinners that He might save them.

Church, who is that unsaved person or persons that you're trying to reach? The names come to mind. The faces come to mind right now.

Commit, saints, and I know so many of you are doing this, commit to pray for them regularly. I don't know if you have a system for prayer requests. I think it's a good idea.

I use note cards that Paul Miller talks about in his book of praying life. And I have a card for former coworkers of mine at EB. Their names are written down. I have a card for neighbors of mine. These are an unsaved family, people that I'm praying for regularly.

I know so many of you are doing that. Commit to pray for them. Commit to pray for and pursue gospel conversations with them. Let's be praying for them with our families during family worship.

[31:24] Let's be praying for them in our community groups. Let's be praying for them in our discipling with one another. Praying for the people that we're trying to reach with the hope of the life of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Actually, let me just stop and pray right now. Father, so many faces and names have come to mind among your saints right here, Lord. People that we earnestly desire to come to know Christ for their salvation.

Lord, these are family members we've been praying for for decades. These are coworkers we've been working with for years. These are neighbors that we live alongside and you have placed us in your sovereignty next to these people with the gospel, with the hope of the gospel that these sinners would turn to faith in your name, Jesus Christ.

We pray that your spirit would work mightily in their hearts to call them from darkness into light, to call them out of the prisons that they are in.

God, use your church. Give us a burning desire to see the lost saved. Give us a compassionate heart towards them. Christ, you've shown us that compassion.

[32:34] Help us to feel that and to demonstrate that by moving towards the lost with the hope of the gospel, we pray. Christ's name, amen. Having foreseen this future ingathering of God's redeemed from all over the earth, Isaiah declares, Sing for joy, O heavens, and exalt, O earth.

Break forth, O mountains, into singing. Isaiah is calling all of creation to lift up the song of the covenant. The song of the covenant.

Now all over Isaiah's prophecy, probably a dozen times already up to this point, he beckons the redeemed of Israel and of the nations and the heavens and the earth and the mountains and the hills and the forests and the trees to break forth into joyful singing.

Sing to the Lord a new song, his praise from the end of the earth, 42.10. Heart-affected, joy-filled worship.

That is the fitting response of God's people because of who he is and what he has done and specifically what he's done in and through the work of his servant who has become for us light and salvation and a covenant.

[33:57] God calls us, as in Romans 12.1, to worship him in light of the gospel in every aspect of our lives. But here, as in hundreds of other

places in the Bible, we are beckoned to worship God through song, through song.

Now last year, and I commend you to listen to this, Andrew preached from Isaiah 51 and 52. And in that sermon, which has a similar calling forth of all of creation to singing, Andrew talked about how we are hardwired by God to sing.

We're hardwired. Now he gave a sports example from Philadelphia, but I will unapologetically shift that analogy to Chicago. Whenever the Cubs win at home, the whole crowd erupts in this amazing song called Go Cubs Go.

The crowd starts singing, Go Cubs Go, Go Cubs Go. Anyone know this? Hey Chicago, what do you say? Cubs are gonna win today. That's the song that 40,000 people start singing when the Cubs win.

And you know, like C.S. Lewis has brilliantly talked about in his reflections on the Psalms, this singing, this praise, it is a natural and fitting response because it not only expresses our enjoyment, but it actually completes our enjoyment.

[35:19] And this is how God has made us. Well, if a ridiculously unimportant mid-season victory of a baseball team can excite the joy-filled response of his people, how much more ought the sin and death crushing victory of our servant Jesus Christ who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.

Church, this is the song of the redeemed, the song that ought to rise up from within our resurrected hearts. It's a song that we're going to be singing with the saints and the angels forever in heaven and the one that we have the joyful privilege of singing now, week in and week out.

Bob Coughlin writes in his book, *Worship Matters*, our deepest, strongest, purest affections should be reserved for God himself. And he gave us singing to help express them.

Now listen, I know that there's people here that for whatever reason just don't enjoy singing all that much. And I don't know why God made you that way or made certain people to like it a lot and some not, but I do want to encourage you because singing, it's all over the scriptures and it's what we do as the people of God.

I want to encourage you, if that's you, pray about that. Like, pray regularly that God would increase your desire for and delight in singing. Now if you don't like singing because you're bad at it, if you don't like singing because you're self-conscious about it, I want to encourage you to pray.

[36:53] Pray regularly that you would care less about the opinion of men and more about the opinion of God who considers all of your off-pitch singing to be a pleasing aroma to him.

Man, I also want to encourage you, when I hear someone singing loudly, off-tune, I am strengthened in my spirit because I think, man, that brother just don't care how he sounds, he just wants to praise the Lord.

And listen, I want to exhort all of us as well, all of us, to be filling the air all week long with songs of worship. Fill the air with songs of worship.

There's a lot of good podcasts out there, I listen to lots of podcasts. There's a lot of good audiobooks out there, I listen to those too. But don't just listen to podcasts and audiobooks. And definitely don't listen to the spiral of anxious or self-pitying or self-exalting thoughts that often whirl within our minds.

Listen to and sing along with truth-saturated worship music that's going to help engage and express your heart to the Lord in affectionate praise and worship.

[38:03] to put worship music on it at home or in your car. Sing songs of worship with your families and with our community groups. Take advantage even.

We send out playlists. Take advantage of those playlists that we've made available. Saints, we have a glorious song to sing, one that all of heaven and all of earth will one day join us in.

It's a song of the covenant, the song of the redeemed. and it's a song that revels in the great compassion of our God and that brings us to our final point, the source of the covenant.

The source of the covenant. Why should all of heaven and earth break out into joyful song? For the Lord has comforted his people and will have compassion on his afflicted.

Now this verse connects back to the opening words of chapter 40. Comfort, comfort my people says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem and cry to her that her warfare has ended, that her iniquity is pardoned.

[39:17] See in those verses Isaiah had already predicted the double deliverance that was going to come. Israel's national deliverance from exile, her warfare has ended and that greater spiritual deliverance from sin, her iniquity is pardoned.

Here in chapter 49, the servant himself having become light, salvation, and a covenant, that second greater deliverance has come to pass. The ultimate comforting of God's people.

Iniquity pardoned, sins blotted out, spiritual redemption secured, the dam of God's favor burst wide open through the servant's work.

The exuberant singing erupts because God has comforted his people just like he said he would. And the deeper reason contained in that final line is the compassion of the Lord.

God would God act to save a people who have rebelled against him? Why would he reach down to rescue those who trampled on his law, who chased after other gods?

[40:32] What would compel the God who dwells in unapproachable light, majestic in holiness, like a consuming fire? What would compel him to accomplish redemption for sinners?

His inexplicable divine compassion. It's the tender mercy, it's the pity that he has unthinkably towards those who he created.

It's his supernatural unfathomable love. Friends, this is God's heart towards his people. It's pity, it's compassion, it's grace, mercy, it's love.

This is, as Dane Orton describes in the book *Gentle and Lowly*, the spring-loaded tilt of his affections. God's anger, he writes, requires provocation, but his mercy is pent up, ready to gush forth.

A few chapters later, God will declare in Isaiah 54, for a brief moment I deserted you, but with great compassion I will gather you.

[41:45] In overflowing anger, for a moment I hid my face from you, but with everlasting love I will have compassion on you, says the Lord, your Redeemer. And the unflinching proof of that love, of the fact that God's heart is spring-loaded with compassion, is the incarnation of Christ.

It's Christmas, and the gospel story, his life, birth, death, his birth, life, death, and resurrection for our sake. In this, the love of God was manifest among us, that God sent his only son into the world so that we might live through him.

In this is love, not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins. Brothers and sisters, see what great love the Father has for us, his children.

He has lavished it upon us, and not because of anything in us. Nothing in us provoked God's love. It's because of his own divine heart of love.

God is love. John writes, Church, if your thoughts this morning are accusing you, they're condemning you, shaming you, know that for God's children, he does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities, for as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him.

[43:20] Psalm 103, 11, run to him in your mess, run to him with your self-accusing thoughts, with your guilt and your shame, see how Christ has taken it all upon himself, and now God welcomes you with open arms, the arms of a compassionate, loving father.

And perhaps like me, you oscillate between self-condemnation on the one hand and self-exaltation on the other. Maybe your thoughts are not self-accusing this morning, maybe they're self-glorifying. Perhaps you have an inflated view of yourself this morning, your knowledge, your ability, your performance. Friends, see the cross of Christ, the compassion that was poured out for you in his blood.

Realize how unfit and unworthy you are for him to have gone to that extravagant length. See the great leveling that occurs before the cross.

Nothing in my hands I bring, simply to the cross I cling. And rise from there with humility, with love, and then manifest that same spring-loaded heart of compassion towards those around you.

[44:40] Does God care? Overwhelmingly and resoundingly, yes. Children of God, believers in Christ, he does care.

He does care. And his pent-up heart gushes forth in compassion towards us. He has proven this by sending his own son to become for us a covenant.

By his blood, in tender mercy, he is shepherding us through the wilderness of life, nourishing us every step of the way until we finally arrive at home for our everlasting enjoyment.

Let's go to the Lord in prayer. God, your mercy, it knows no bounds.

We are objects this morning of the compassionate heart of a loving Father that we do not deserve.

At the cross of Christ, we see two seemingly contradictory things.

[45:50] We see our unworthiness and yet our worth to you. That we're unworthy of your love and yet you have poured it out upon us.

And so we thank you. We thank you. Lord, if there's any here that don't know you this morning, oh, I pray that they would see the compassionate heart of God. They would see that. They would see the offer that is being held out to them.

And they would receive him this morning. God, for your saints, would we this morning experience what Paul talks about in Romans 8, the spirit in us bearing witness with our own spirits.

Now, we are children of God, and that is because of your great love for us. We pray this in Christ's name. Amen. In our final minutes, we're going to partake of the Lord's Supper together.

future. You know, in this Advent series, we've been talking a lot about the past, and a lot about the future, with application for the present, and in the Lord's Supper, we find that the past need a need a need a need a need a need a need a need a