

Isaiah 44:24-45:25

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Preacher: Mike Loosa

[0 : 00] Good morning. I'm going to read the sermon text this morning.! Starting in verse 24.

Thus says the Lord, your Redeemer, who formed you from the womb. I am the Lord who made all things, who alone stretched out the heavens, who spread out the earth by myself, who frustrates the signs of liars and makes fools of diviners, who turns wise men back and makes their knowledge foolish, who confirms the word of his servant and fulfills the counsel of his messengers, who says of Jerusalem, she shall be inhabited, and of the cities of Judah, they shall be built, and I will raise up their ruins.

Who says to the deep, be dry? I will dry up your rivers. Who says of Cyrus, he is my shepherd, and he shall fulfill all my purpose?

Saying of Jerusalem, she shall be built, and of the temple, your foundation shall be laid. Thus says the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have grasped, to subdue nations before him, and to loose the belts of kings, to open doors before him, that gates may not be closed.

I will go before you and level the exalted places. I will break in pieces the doors of bronze and cut through the bars of iron. I will give you the treasures of darkness and the hordes in secret places, that you may know that it is I, the Lord, the God of Israel, who call you by your name.

[2 : 14] For the sake of my servant Jacob, and Israel my chosen, I call you by your name. I name you, though you do not know me.

I am the Lord, and there is no other. Beside me there is no God. I equip you, though you do not know me, that people may know, from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside me.

I am the Lord, and there is no other. I form light and create darkness. I make well-being and create calamity. I am the Lord, who has done all these things.

Shower, O heavens, from above. Let the clouds rain down righteousness. Let the earth open, that salvation and righteousness may bear fruit. Let the earth cause them both to sprout.

I, the Lord, have created it. Woe to him who strives, with him who formed him. A pot among earthen pots. Does the clay say to him who forms it, what are you making?

[3 : 19] Or, your work has no handles? Woe to him who says to a father, what are you begetting? Or to a woman, with what are you in labor? Thus says the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, and the one who formed him, ask me of things to come.

Will you command me concerning my children, and the work of my hands? I made the earth, and created man on it. It was my hands that stretched out the heavens, and I commanded all their hosts.

I have stirred him up in righteousness, and I will make all his ways level. He shall build my city, and set my exiles free. Not for price or reward, says the Lord of hosts.

Thus says the Lord, the wealth of Egypt, and the merchandise of Cush, and the Sabaeans, men of stature, shall come over you, and be yours. They shall follow you.

They shall come over in chains, and bow down to you. They will plead with you, saying, surely God is in you, and there is no other. No God beside him.

[4 : 29] Truly, you are a God who hides himself. O God of Israel, the Savior. All of them are put to shame, and confounded. The makers of idols go in confusion together, but Israel is saved by the Lord, with everlasting salvation.

You shall not be put to shame, or confounded to all eternity. For thus says the Lord, who created the heavens. He is God, who formed the earth and made it. He established it.

He did not create it empty. He formed it to be inhabited. I am the Lord, and there is no other. I did not speak in secret in the land of darkness. I did not say to the offspring of Jacob, seek me in vain.

I, the Lord, speak the truth. I declare what is right. Assemble yourselves and come. Draw near together, you survivors of the nations. They have no knowledge, who carry about their wooden idols, and keep on praying to a God that cannot save.

Declare and present your case. Let them take counsel together. Who told this long ago? Who declared it of old? Was it not I, the Lord?

[5 : 41] And there is no other God beside me, a righteous God and a Savior. There is none beside me. Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth, for I am God, and there is no other.

By myself I have sworn. From my mouth has gone out in righteousness a word that shall not return. To me every knee shall bow, every tongue swear allegiance.

Only in the Lord it shall be said of me, our righteousness and strength. To him shall come and be ashamed, all who are incensed against him. And the Lord, all the offspring of Israel, shall be justified and shall glory.

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Father in heaven, this is your word.

There is such profound meaning here that I ask that you would uncover for us this morning by your spirit. God, we need your help to understand the things freely given us by God and your spirit gives us that help.

[6 : 49] So, spirit be here in power among us today. Lord, awaken faith. Cultivate trust in us. For your glory we pray.

In Christ's name. Amen. Well, good morning everybody. Thanks Jason. My name is Mike, one of the pastors here at Shoreline. And if last week was your first week, I just want to offer an apology. I don't have an Australian accent. That wonderful man is not the pastor here. We are delighted to have Reese with us preaching from Psalm 121. You know, in two days, as you all know, millions of Americans are going to take to the polls, exercising their right to vote for the nation's elected officials.

And this is a wonderful right and privilege, is it not? That we enjoy in this nation. It is good for us as Christians to thoughtfully and prayerfully participate in the democratic process of our country. Right? So look into the issues, church. Pray through them. Look at them in light of the word of God. And pray through the decision that we have to make on Tuesday. And then go out and vote on Tuesday.

[7 : 59] And pray for God to bring into office men and women whom he will use to restrain evil and advance righteousness and justice in our country. That's how we're told to pray in the New Testament.

But what if the people you vote for don't get elected? Right? Or what if the people you vote for do get elected, but then fail to bring about the good things that you thought they were going to bring about?

What then? What if you look around and you feel like evil, violence, oppression, hostility towards Christianity, what if you feel like evil is less and less restrained and the ideologies of the world and the reign of the enemy are advancing?

What then? You know, the passage that we're looking at today, I believe, gives us a firm foundation from which we can face hard questions like these head on.

Not with fear and trepidation, not with anxiety and worry, but with confidence and hope. If you haven't already, please open up your Bibles to Isaiah chapter 44.

[9 : 10] Our passage, which Ian just read for us, is Isaiah 44, 24, all the way to 45, 25. And if you don't have a Bible, there's Bibles on the back table.

They're bookmarked to today's passage and you're welcome to take that and keep it as our gift to you. We are in this morning, the sixth sermon in a 14-week series in Isaiah chapters 40 to 55 entitled, From Sighing to Singing.

From Sighing to Singing. And the title of today's passage is One God and Worldwide Savior. One God and Worldwide Savior.

The passage today, it's moving us into another unit in Isaiah's prophecy. If you've been with us, remember that Isaiah is prophesying around 700 B.C. But his message here in chapters 40 to 55 is primarily intended for the future generation of Jews who would be living in exile in Babylon over 100 years later.

And we've seen now how Isaiah offers comfort to the exiles, right? God still reigns supreme even though they're in exile. He still remains steadfast towards them.

[10:21] His people Israel whom he chose and whom he loves. See, they think that God doesn't see or doesn't care. But unlike the powerless gods and idols of the nations, he does see, he does care.

As a result, God will redeem them both from their national bondage to Babylon and also from their deeper bondage to sin. This is the astonishing grace of the Lord to redeem his undeserving and wayward people from exile even in their sin.

That was the message in chapters 40 to 44. And in the next few chapters from today's passage, through the end of chapter 48, Isaiah is circling back on God's promise to redeem Israel from exile and he's providing greater color and clarity.

How will God redeem Israel? Well, these chapters provide the answer. But before explicitly answering that how question, this passage begins with the declaration of God's absolute power. And that's the first thing we see here. God's absolute power. And in these opening verses, we see three positions of the Lord. God is the one who formed Israel from the womb, he says in verse 24, who alone created the heavens and the earth.

[11:45] The gods of Babylon, according to their mythology, they had to collaborate together in order to bring about creation. But the truth of the matter is the Lord God is the sole creator of all things.

The sole creator. God is also the sole ruler of history. Now this is clear from verses 25 and 26. As one commentator says, people are always attempting to predict and give meaning to the future and to history.

But even as God overrules human predictions of the future, he translates his own promises into realities. Yeah, God is the sole ruler of history.

Third, we see here in the opening verses that God is the sole redeemer of his people. Look what it says at the end of verse 26, I will raise up their ruins.

God's saying that of the city of Jerusalem, which was currently in ruins, and the cities of Judah, which had been destroyed by Babylon. Now verse 27, he said, who says to the deep, be dry, I will dry up your rivers.

[12:54] That is probably a reference back again to the Exodus. We see this over and over in Isaiah. God is constantly referring back to his deliverance of the people from Egypt, saying that he's going to do it again.

See, he and he alone, though, is the redeemer and the rescuer of Israel. God is the sole creator, ruler, redeemer. And he declares these three positions almost as a preamble to the big reveal of verse 28.

I'm the one who created all things, Israel. I'm the one who rules over history. I'm the one who redeems my people. And I am the one, verse 28, who says of Cyrus, he is my shepherd and he shall fulfill all my purpose.

Who is Cyrus? You know, in chapter 41, God said that he was stirring up a conqueror from the east and from the north who would trample kings underfoot and now this victor is given a name, Cyrus. Cyrus of Persia, the king of Persia, 150 years after the time of Isaiah would sweep westward and southward conquering the kingdom of Babylon and becoming the dominant power in the Middle East.

[14:14] And as recorded, if you read your Old Testament, as recorded in the book of Ezra, Cyrus would issue a proclamation allowing the Jews to return to Jerusalem gifted with silver and gold, all the things from the temple that Nebuchadnezzar had stolen, he gives them back to Israel and issues a decree giving them power and authority to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem.

And God is telling the Jews now, 150 years in advance, through the prophet Isaiah. Just let that sink in for a minute. Do you know of anyone else in the history of mankind who has so precisely predicted historical events of the future?

I mean, the leading experts can hardly predict tomorrow's weather, right? Or the outcome of the next election. But here, God is predicting events on the world stage of human history 150 years in advance.

events which came to pass just like he said. Just like he said. Now, I'll say as an aside, liberal scholars look at this and say, well, this can't possibly have been written in 700 B.C.

because Cyrus is named, right? But historically, for generations, the Jews, they took this as the prophecy of Isaiah. One man, the whole book, right? And so scholars today say, well, this can't be

true.

[15 : 35] But we believe in the God who created all things. And this is no problem for us. It's no problem for us with the Judeo-Christian worldview. God spoke 150 years in advance through Isaiah and it came to pass.

And you know, there's things in here that have come to pass later in history as well through Christ that we're going to get to. Not just this one prophecy, but God giving predictive prophecy that has come to pass.

God wants you to see this morning that he is the sole creator that he is the sole ruler, that he is the sole redeemer. You know, Jesus, in John chapter 2, after driving the merchants and the money changers out of the temple, he said to the Jews of his day, if you remember from our time in John, destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up.

Now, Jesus wasn't talking about the literal physical temple, right? He was talking about, as John tells us, the temple of his body. When, therefore, he was raised from the dead, his disciples remember that he had said this and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

That's John 2, 22. See, Jesus predicted his own death and resurrection and he did this not as some cool trick, but to elicit faith. That's why he said that to his disciples and to the Jews.

[16 : 58] And that's what we see here as a purpose in God's predictive prophecy. Three purposes that we see here in this passage. Now, in verses 1 through 3 of chapter 45, God says that he is going to raise up and employ this Cyrus of Persia.

He's going to level obstacles in Cyrus' path. He's going to bring him power and wealth. But notice, look in your Bibles at the end of verse 3, the intent behind this.

that you may know that it is I, the Lord, the God of Israel, who call you by your name. God's purpose for Cyrus is that Cyrus would come to know and believe that the Lord, Yahweh, the promise-keeping God of Israel, is the one and only true God.

And God, by predicting of Cyrus' rise to power and victory 150 years in advance, he gives Cyrus every opportunity to do so. In fact, a Jewish historian records Cyrus seeing Isaiah's prophecy and being so impressed with it that he wanted to fulfill it.

But sadly, history suggests to us that Cyrus never gave exclusive allegiance to God. He believed Yahweh was just one of another thousand gods. But God didn't only have purposes for Cyrus.

[18 : 21] God would raise up Cyrus, especially to fulfill his purpose for Israel. Look at verse 3 of chapter 45. For the sake of his chosen servant Israel.

This has been central to Isaiah's prophecy so far, hasn't it? That God is controlling and advancing the narrative of human history for the good of his people, his chosen people, whom he loves.

Remember, he had said you're precious, honored, and I love you. God is doing these things especially for his people. But we also see a third purpose.

There's a purpose for the whole world. To God's predicted raising up of Cyrus is, look in verse 6, that people may know from the rising of the sun and from the west that there is none besides me. I am the Lord and there is no other. This phrase should sound familiar to us at this point because in every single passage we've been so far in Isaiah, the Lord has declared something similar and the thought is repeated six times.

[19 : 35] I hope you caught it when Ian was reading. Six times in today's text. Look at verse 5. I am the Lord and there is no other. Besides me there is no God. And then here in verse 6.

I am the Lord and there is no other. Then jump down to verse 14. The nations will say, surely God is in you and there is no other.

No God besides him. And then in verse 18. I am the Lord and there is no other. And verse 21. And there is no other God besides me. A righteous God and Savior. There is none besides me.

And finally verse 22. For I am God and there is no other. Yahweh, the faithful covenant-keeping God and King of Israel is the only God and only Savior of the world.

And he wants every tribe, tongue, and nation on the face of this planet to know. God. So we see here in this first section of the text that God, the sole creator, the sole ruler, the sole redeemer of the world, that he moves and acts within time and space, within human history for the good of his people and for the conversion of the nations and for the glory of his name.

[20 : 54] God is wielding the rulers and authorities of this world, the movements and events of history at will to accomplish that purpose.

And what does this mean for us, saints in the room? What does this mean for us? This means, in light of the season we're in, we can engage prayerfully and thoughtfully in our political process, but neither fear nor hope in any presidential or political candidate.

Right? We fear, we hope in, we trust in the name of the Lord our God. We look to the only true God and Jesus Christ whom he has sent.

Jesus said in John 17, 3. Church, and we know, we know that whatever the outcome of this election is, whatever direction our country goes in after, that God holds absolute power and he is working for our eternal good.

He holds ultimate power whatever happens and he is working for the good of his people. Now this principle holds true not just in political elections, but in all of the circumstances and events of our lives.

[22 : 15] God is superintending over all of it. Whether you're awaiting your next, you know, PCS orders, that's the permanent change of station Navy guys get.

Whether you're facing a health crisis or financial crisis, whether you're here desiring a spouse, but in the midst of singleness, or just whether in the mundane of never-ending laundry and dishes and diapers, the God of absolute power, the only God, is governing over all these things for our sake. You know, Reese preached from last week from Psalm 121 that God is our keeper, right? He's working for our blessing even when we can't see it. Reese said that he's buffering us from the worst that evil could bring, and he said that God is not just a force but a face, right?

In other words, God is present with us and favorably disposed towards us. These same themes are emerging here in Isaiah. So what do we do with this?

What do we do with this? You know, Isaiah goes on to show us two possible responses. Two possible responses. Prayer or pretense.

[23 : 44] The first response that we see here in verse 8 of chapter 45 is the righteous response of prayer. Now here's how Isaiah responds to God's preceding revelation.

Look at verse 8. Shower, O heavens, from above and let the clouds rain down righteousness. Let the earth open that salvation and righteousness may bear fruit.

Let the earth cause them both to sprout. Here is a prayer for God to pour out heavenly blessing from on high which he has promised.

For righteousness to fall like rain. For salvation and righteousness to be sown like seed in abundance. Here also is a prayer for responsive faith and commitment.

Right? For the earth signifying humanity to gratefully receive the outpouring of God's blessing so that it bears fruit. fruit. So this is a prayer for both divine blessing and human response resulting in the salvation and the righteousness of life that always flows from salvation.

[24 : 58] Saints, this is the kind of prayer that we ought to be praying. This is the kind of prayer that's a prayer in Jesus' name. Right? In accordance with the character and concerns of God that receives the affirmative answer from the Father just like Jesus promised his disciples four times in the upper room.

You guys remember that? Four different times. Like write this prayer out. Isaiah 45.8. Write that prayer out on a note card. Make it, you know, a virtual sticky note on your desktop or laptop. Commit this verse to memories. Christy challenged us to memorize verses last week. And then wrestle the words of this prayer into your own before the Father. You know, this prayer is basically saying, God, do the thing that you've already promised to do.

That may sound strange. Why would I pray if God has already promised to do this? Well, this is what we see the saints doing all the time in Scripture.

They are praying into reality those things that the Lord has already promised to bring about. So let's join them. Let's join them in this prayer. Mysteriously, what we see all over Scripture is that God chooses to bring about His plans and purposes through the fervent prayers of the saints.

[26 : 15] So let's pray fervently. Now notice this prayer is answered by God in the very last line of the verse. I, the Lord, have created it.

Blessing from on high, responsive faith, I am bringing these things about. What astonishing power and grace that our Lord has.

Now unfortunately, prayer is not the only response to God's revelation. We see here an unrighteous response of pretense, pride.

Now whether Isaiah was preempting backlash or responding to it, it's clear that there were or would be those who found God's plan distasteful and offensive.

I mean, you mean to tell me that God is going to raise up a more powerful pagan king to be our deliverer? Can you see how that would be a little offensive? Israel's been carried off into exile by a pagan nation and now God's saying, I'm going to bring another pagan king, a more powerful pagan king.

[27 : 18] He'll be your deliverance. You know, only a few months ago we walked through the events of Jesus' arrest, trial, and crucifixion in John 18 and 19 and we talked about how offensive the proposition was and still is to the Jews that their Messiah could possibly be a man sentenced to death, crucified as a criminal, cursed by God and yet that was God's plan for their salvation and for our salvation.

So we see here centuries earlier they're responding in a similar way to God's revealed plan for their salvation and what is God's response? He rebukes them for their pretense, right?

For their arrogant and irreverent questioning of what he has indeed ordained and he uses here two different analogies to essentially tell them you know, what we might tell our kids sometimes like, I'm sorry, did you think that was a discussion?

I think you're confused. I wasn't asking, I was telling, right? That's kind of what God is doing here. I mean, how ridiculous would it be if the clay pot, clay pot, right there, argued with its potter, right? Calling into question the potter's intentions or abilities, right? The pot, the point is the pot is completely subordinate to the potter, right? And how ridiculous would it be, Isaiah is kind of showing us, if someone were to ask one of the many expectant moms here, so what are you even growing in there anyway?

[28 : 52] You know? Like, that would be foolish, for one thing, but the point here is especially that it would be entirely inappropriate, right? So don't do that after the service, please.

Guys, because they would be the ones that do it. And how ridiculous would it be for those whom the Lord has created, formed, for those weak and wayward people whom the Lord is saving by his own power and grace to say, God, is that really how you're going to save us?

Like, are you sure that's a good idea? Like, I can think of at least four better plans than the Cyrus plan. And God's like, are you really questioning me?

I'm the creator. I made the universe and you. Like, I will raise up Cyrus. That's what he goes on to say at the end of this part here.

I will raise up Cyrus. I will pave the way before him and he will bring about your redemption. Now, let's get real for a second. You and I are a lot like Israel.

[29 : 59] I mean, we do, by God's grace, we do have our Isaiah moments, right? Where we're praying fervently to the Lord to bring about what he's promised. But so often, we're like these exiles, you know, biting the hand that feeds us.

Being beggars and trying to be choosers at the same time. Like, trying to tell God what he should and shouldn't do. Now, there is, I want to say, there is a kind of humble, submissive, trust-deepening questioning of God.

There is. The Psalms give us so many examples of those. Psalm 73 is one example, but there's so many other ones. Saints who wrestled honestly, but humbly with the Lord.

Right? They bring their unfiltered, their honest, raw doubts and emotions and fears before him. But those Psalms, you'll note, they always lead to deeper trust and praise in God. Now, this passage in Isaiah, it's showing here a darker side.

Right? There's a kind of pretentious, prideful questioning of God as if we're the judge. Right? And he's on trial. As if we have the divine wisdom and the sovereign perspective.

[31 : 09] As if we could command God what to do. This kind of attitude leads to cynicism and worse. Are you questioning God today?

I know I do sometimes. Do so in humility and reverence. Recognizing that he is the only God and Savior.

Recognizing that though it might not always feel like it or seem like it, that the truth is that he is moving history for the good of his people.

And that brings us back to the text in which God continues to add color and clarity to the picture of how he is advancing history for his people's redemption. The third movement here in the text.

God's astonishing promise and plea. Promise reaffirmed and expanded. So we see this in verses 14 through 17.

[32 : 12] Look at verse 17 of chapter 45. Isaiah says there that unlike those who turn to idols, Israel is saved by the Lord with everlasting salvation.

You shall not be put to shame or confounded to all eternity. God has been promising Israel rescue from their bondage to Babylon, right?

But the scope of his promise must far exceed that near-term deliverance from exile. Everlasting salvation. Right?

Not put to shame or confounded to all eternity. There's something bigger is going on here than just Israel's return from exile. And the time factor is not the only thing being expanded.

Right? Because in the preceding verses, if you look at verses 14, verse 14, especially, God is promising Israel, there's going to be an in-gathering of other people groups.

[33 : 11] Egypt, he says, Cush, which would be modern-day Ethiopia, the Sabaeans, which were an Arabian tribe, they here represent the nations, just like, remember the term coastlands we saw a few times, a few chapters ago.

They represent the nations, and Israel is going to be like a magnet attracting the nations who will willingly subject themselves to Israel and her God. That's what this text is talking about.

They, the nations, will plead with you saying, Surely, God is in you, and there is no other, no God besides him.

So this promise of everlasting salvation and freedom from shame for all eternity is a promise for Israel and all those who have been grafted in through faith in the one true God, through identification with him and his people.

God's promised redemption to Israel is reaffirmed but radically expanded, right? For this promise is both eternal and global in scope. Now where does, sorry, this thing's really giving me problems today.

[34 : 23] Where does such an expansive promise find its fulfillment? Where? Cyrus entered the world scene, right? In the mid-500s BC.

He brought about the return of the Jewish exiles to Jerusalem, right? Read the book of Ezra. He initiated the rebuilding of the temple. And then he promptly exited stage left on the world scene, right?

Jerusalem remained largely in ruins. The remnant of Israel remained weak and vulnerable. Not a whole lot of that magnetic attraction of the nations was going on.

king. But just over 500 years later, another conquering king was born, right? His victory would come not through military conquest, but through suffering and death.

And through his death on the cross, he would trample underfoot not dictators and kings, but the sin and shame of humanity. mercy. And as a result, salvation and righteousness spring forth in the hearts of all those who place their faith and trust in him.

[35 : 36] For there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved. But he didn't exit stage left upon his death, did he?

No. Three days later, he rose triumphantly from the grave so that he and all those who believe in him would not be put to shame or confounded to all eternity.

This gloriously expanded promise finds its fulfillment in the person and work of Jesus Christ and in all the saints of generations past who have trusted in him and it can find its fulfillment today in you if you turn to Jesus.

Now that's getting ahead of ourselves though. for in this text, God issues not just a promise but also a plea. The last section of the passage, verse 18 to 25, we see a plea is re-offered and extended. Now the plea itself and I think the climax of this whole passage, it comes in verse 22. But God sort of builds towards that plea in verses 18 through 21.

[36 : 47] So if you look at those verses 18 through 21, God begins with another declaration of his creative power and also intent. This universe, he says, was not the product of time and chance.

Human beings are not just one of many species. No, no, no. This universe is the well-ordered work of the divine creator and humanity is the crowning beauty of that work.

made to reflect and reverence the creator God who made us. That's what he's saying in verses 18 and 19. And though God's ways are higher than ours and his mind beyond fathoming, which sometimes make him feel hidden from us, which was, that was Isaiah's sentiment in verse 15.

But now here in verse 19, he's saying that that he reveals, God reveals himself to us so that we might actually seek him and find him and delight in him, right?

Be satisfied in our souls, in him. God is revealing himself to us. This book is evidence. Creation is evidence. God is revealing himself to us.

[38 : 06] Then in verse 20 and 21, we're moved back into another courtroom scene, right? We've seen a bunch of these courtroom scenarios here. The nations are once again called to take counsel together and to attempt to present their own coherent worldview, right?

Try and explain to me all the past events and all the future events like I've done. And of course they can't, right? The nations are silent before God. God is the only one who is able to do this.

He's the only God. He is the righteous God and Savior besides whom there is no other. But he doesn't cast them out of court, does he?

Like he doesn't even sentence them here to punishment. No, no, no. In astonishing grace, God offers them a plea. Now this is the same plea that he has made to Israel, but now it's radically extended.

Verse 22, turn to me and be saved. All the ends of the earth. For I am God and there is no other.

[39 : 17] Turn to me and be saved. All the ends of the earth. This plea, this offer to the nations, it's been implied throughout the book of Isaiah, but here it's made clear, simple, explicit.

God is offering salvation freely to the nations and all they must do is turn to him. That's it. All they must do is abandon their idols, you know, their false, self-devised means of salvation and trust in the Lord.

This is perhaps the reason God calls them the survivors of the nations in verse 20, or fugitives, refugees, that's what the word means, because they need to flee their pagan nations and then join themselves to Israel and to her God.

Now if they do this, though they will be ashamed in God's presence because of their sin, verse 24, it's a picture of repentance, coming to God in shame, realizing he's holy, we're sinful.

So repentance starts, they turn to the Lord, yet, verse 25, by faith, they too will become the offspring of Israel. Justified, that means declared righteous, made right with the Lord, and then overflowing with praise and glory to the Lord.

[40 : 44] Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth. There is only one God and Savior of the world, so turn to him and be saved.

The Apostle Paul applies the end of verse 23 to Jesus, the second person of the Trinity in his well-known hymn in Philippians 2, 5 through 11 that Matt read for us earlier, and I want to reread it. Paul says that Jesus, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men, and being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Therefore, God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

There is only one God and Savior of this world, the God-man, Jesus Christ, who has laid down his life for your and my salvation, so turn to him and be saved.

[42 : 16] Shoreline, saints that are in this room, this passage shows us that God's desire is for all nations to turn to him, be saved, right?

He intends for us, the church, to be like a magnet, attracting the world to him. Now, we saw in Jesus' high priestly prayer in John 17 that God uses the holiness and the unity of the church to draw the world to faith in Christ.

God has chosen us, Jesus prayed, out of the world, right? Out of the world, but he's left us in the world so that our holy distinction, our supernatural unity, both reflective of God, right?

The triune God, holy, one, perfect love and unity, that the church's holiness and unity would compel the world to Jesus. So as a church, let's pursue those things, pursue holiness, pursue unity for the sake of God's glory and the salvation of sinners.

So God uses the holiness and unity of the church like a magnet. God also uses this gathering right here, our corporate gatherings. Now Paul commends the Corinthian church to orderly an intelligible gathering so that, he says in 1 Corinthians 14, when an unbeliever or outsider enters, he is convicted by all.

[43 : 51] He is called to account by all. The secrets of his heart are disclosed and so falling on his face, he will worship God and declare that God is really among you. Saints, this means that you're faithful, spirit-filled, engagement and participation here before, during, and after the service, it not only glorifies God, it does that primarily, it not only edifies the saints, it does that as well, but also, it leads to the salvation of the lost by the grace of God.

That's one of the things God is doing through the corporate gathering of the saints. we ought to be praying for that to happen week in, week out. I'm praying for that week in and week out.

I hope the saints, that you all are joining me in that prayer. So God uses the holiness and unity of the church, God uses the gatherings of the church, church, and third, God brings about the salvation of the nations through worldwide evangelism.

And this is something that if you're saved, if you're a believer in Christ, you're called to this work of evangelism to the nations, you're called to this. Now I want you right now though, think of a few unbelievers!

In whose lives God has placed you, He's placed you in their lives. one of His gospel-wielding ambassadors. Are you praying regularly for their salvation?

[45 : 19] If you're not, start today. Put them on a note card. Put them somewhere you're going to see. Pray for the salvation of the unbelievers in your life. Consider this quote from the book *Honest Evangelism* by Rico Tice.

In God's sovereignty, what is going on in history is that God is reaching out to people so that they will reach out for Him. The reason your neighbor lives where he or she does is so that they will get reached for the gospel.

God's placed us next to people on our streets, in our workplaces, in our families so that we can share the gospel with them, right? You're not only praying for the people that you just brought to mind, but witnessing.

Witnessing. This certainly happens in deeds, right, of love and of faith. We live out the gospel before their eyes and those deeds also need to be coupled with words, right, because the gospel is first.

What? What is the gospel? Anybody? What does gospel mean? Good news. The gospel is first news. It's good news, right? It needs to be heralded, spoken.

[46 : 32] Rico Tice, in that book *Honest Evangelism*, he talks about chatting our faith, meaning just bringing up our faith in casual conversation all the time, and then at some point, he says, we've got to cross that pain line, right?

We've got to take the conversation to a deeper level by asking a probing question. It might be awkward. That's okay. We're talking about eternal matters, life and death.

It's worth crossing the pain line for the salvation of sinners. sinners. The goal here is to create opportunities to explicitly share the gospel.

We're all called to this. We're all called to this. This is great work. You know, as we exercise our muscles of prayer and evangelism locally, God will also grow our hearts for worldwide evangelism, right?

In other words, missions. That's what missions is. It's worldwide evangelism. You know, as a church, Brad was just praying for Randy Matthews, the whole family. We support them through prayer, through financial giving.

[47 : 37] I want you all to consider how else might you support the overseas missions work that's going on as an individual, as families. How might you support that work that's going on? And I want you all to be praying about whether the Lord is calling you, right?

Maybe he's calling you to go yourself. And then if you believe he is, like, don't keep that to yourself. Talk to somebody about it. Talk to a pastor about it. Now, finally, this part might be obvious, but it needs to be stated.

That as this church, with a number of children, that we have