

Way of Salvation 10am

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[0 : 00] ...that is ours to worship you in spirit and in truth. And we ask that the truth of your word might inspire your Holy Spirit in all our hearts, that we may love you with all our heart, that we may be unashamed of the gospel which you have committed to us.

We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. David has chosen that we should preach on the prophet Isaiah for the whole of this summer.

And you either get with it or you're lost. But to help you, I have been struggling all week long in a kind of physical agony with how on earth you preach from Isaiah.

To the society in which we live. The trouble with the Christian faith is it can't be reduced to a sect. You know, of just the few select people who know and understand while the rest of the world goes to hell. One of the things that we need to, that we have to do, is the gospel we have is for all the nations and for all the world.

[1 : 29] And everybody needs to hear it. So why is it so hard? And apparently, why is Isaiah so totally irrelevant to our world? And it all came to me at 5 o'clock this morning when I would like to have gone to sleep.

And the words of Isaiah sort of came to me as a Canadian. And I thought to myself, I am an arrogant man and I live in the midst of an arrogant people.

And such people don't hear Isaiah. And our time and our culture is marked by arrogant self-sufficiency.

And you run into it wherever you go. I mean, it's a new publication that came with the Vancouver Sun this week. It was a magazine in brilliant colors, full of erotic things, and advertising, of course. And, but just full of arrogant self-sufficiency. David said in his sermon two weeks ago, I think he talked about arrogance dressed up as religion.

[2 : 46] And we run into that all the time. So it's not surprising to my mind that Isaiah can't be heard. It can only be heard by a people who have a broken and a contrite heart.

It can only be heard by those, by humble and grateful people. And we can only come to that place as God the Holy Spirit moves in our hearts and lives and brings us to that place.

Now, Isaiah then is the prophet. And he speaks to us the word from God, the word of God.

And the danger is that our self-sufficient arrogance won't let us stop to listen to it. There's a cacophony of voices screaming at us all day, every day.

And somehow we need to go and hear the prophet. The prophet by whom God spoke to our forefathers, even as he has spoken to us through Jesus Christ.

[4 : 06] So we need to hear that prophet. And we need to hear a prophetic voice at this time and point in history when there is so much confusion.

And I was, I mean, I think we're in a kind of an emotional, spiritual, intellectual deadlock and not able to move anywhere or do anything.

So you see why you need the work of the Holy Spirit to break out of that in our hearts and lives. We're in that kind of deadlock.

In the Manchester Guardian this past week, they talked about a prophet and his function. And they said that we have at present a major prophet, a radical hero of our age.

Arguably, they said of him that he is the most important intellectual alive today. His name is Noam Chomsky.

[5 : 12] His message at a conference that was being reported on was to tell that conference that capitalism doesn't work. And he went to the conference and they listened to him and concluded he failed as a prophet.

Because he didn't have the text to prove his case, nor did he arouse the response of the multitude.

So the prophet has to do those two things. He has to have the text to prove his case and he has to be able to arouse the multitude. And so that's the function.

Noam Chomsky speaks out of the industrial, technological, economic sort of milieu of our world. And he, best able, best qualified to be a prophet, has nothing to say, according to Manchester Guardian.

I'm not passing judgment on him. I'm just passing on the judgment. So you look at Isaiah.

[6 : 25] And Isaiah speaks for God from the presence of God from eternity into time. And as you look at Isaiah and you see all the disasters through which people were going in those days, David Jeffrey, in talking about it, says that Martin Buber, who's a man to be respected, said, behind every proclamation of disaster, a message of consolation lies hidden.

That's why you shouldn't read the Vancouver Sun. Because they just give the message of disaster. And you can only read it as long as you're careful to read the Bible afterwards and get your perspective restored.

David Jeffrey went on to say, the prophet of God, in contrast to the prophet of the present economy, speaks from the eternal presence of God to a community of faith who need a message of consolation and avenue of hope beyond the despair we feel and peace beyond the tyranny of marching history.

Great statement, I thought. So, that's, that's, I mean, we were subject all the time to the tyranny of marching history and not least this week.

Isaiah lived at a time when you watched the tyranny of marching history, raised the Sumerian Empire and then it passes away, raised the Assyrian Empire and then it passes away, raised the Persian Empire and then it passes away, raised the Babylonian Empire and then it passes away, raised the Egyptian Empire and then it passes away.

[8 : 27] And he saw the tyranny of marching history and he had to give a message of hope to the people. From the secular press this week, somebody stood up and talked about the tyranny of passing history in the midst of which we live.

At a conference where everybody was anxious to say something nice, somebody got up and said, look at the reality of the situation. Japan is mired in recession, Asia in crisis, Russia plagued by a kind of primitive gangster capitalism, Europe stagnant, Africa largely written off, Latin America adrift, not to mention India, Pakistan and Indonesia.

That's the tyranny of marching history. And how come we can be arrogantly self-sufficient? Well, let's look at Isaiah and see what he says in chapter 11.

And he says, he breaks chapter 11 down into seven headings. And I went to a film this week which pictured some Southern Baptists.

And when I watched them, I knew I wasn't in St. John's. But they had a system which I really like.

[10 : 01] And that is the preacher says it and then the congregation says it and then the preacher says it and then the congregation says it. So, I'm going to say, I'm going to make these seven statements and you can get as emotional as you like.

But I want you to, I want you to say them back to me. I'm going to say them to you and you say them back to me. Will you? Okay. This is Isaiah chapter 11. There is a stump.

There is a stump. There is a leader. There is a mountain. There is a mountain. There will come a time. There is a banner.

There is a banner. There is a banner. There is a banner. There is a remnant. There is a remnant. There will be a highway. There will be a highway.

Now those are the seven things that are in Isaiah chapter 11. Let me talk to you about them briefly. The stump. It's as though you went into the site of an old growth forest and all you saw for acres and acres around you was stumps.

[11 : 10] Death. The old growth was gone. All the loveliness and beauty and the product of centuries of growth was gone and all that remains is a field of stumps.

And you feel utterly desolated by it. But then in the midst you see one stump and out of that stump comes a shoot and the shoot is out of the stump of Jesse and it's out of that stump that King David had come and now a greater king was to come.

Remember the lovely story in Samuel when he goes out to Jesse and says I want to meet your sons because one of them is to be anointed to be the king.

And Jesse brought his seven sons before Samuel and Samuel looked at them from the eldest to the youngest and all of them looked highly qualified for the job that he had for them.

But one after another the Lord said not that one not that one not that one and all the way down the line and finally he said to Jesse haven't you any others?

[12 : 28] He said there's only one more and he's out looking after the sheep and so David was summoned and the Lord said that's the one. Well this is this is almost a continuation of that story in that now from the stump of Jesse comes a greater king.

This is the one the one that nobody thought or nobody understood was to be king and turns out to be king. This is from the stump of Jesse so that that is that is the stump and out of it the shoot and from the shoot the branch and from the branch the fruit all this is where it's to come from steeped in history steeped in the sort of story of humanity out of all this comes one who is to be the leader for secondly it says in the chapter there is to be a leader and this leader is to be characterized because on him the fullness of the spirit of the Lord is poured out on him and he is made the one who receives from the spirit wisdom understanding rest counsel power knowledge and the fear of the Lord all those things are to be poured into the leader who is coming and this leader is going to delight in the fear of the Lord and you may not think it's a matter of delight but what you're here to do this morning is to delight in the fear of the Lord just to be made aware of the majesty and holiness and righteousness and justice of our God and to be aware of what a small self-sufficient and arrogant people we are and in a sense to throw that away in acknowledgement of delighting in the fear of the Lord and that's what that's what what this leader does he delights in the fear of the Lord and this leader with these gifts of the spirit brings to the people a deep penetrating justice not a justice that can only be found in the supreme court of Canada but a justice which percolates down and down and down through all the levels of society to the very bottom where the poorest and the neediest people have justice brought to them in their daily life and in their circumstances not justice that gravitates upward but justice that pours down and down and down so that in every relationship in every circumstance of life this justice will come this judge will not be deceived by appearances he will not be misled by the media but he by the things he hears but that he will be able in his wisdom and in the exercise of the gifts that he's been given he will be able to legislate justice into the hearts of the smallest and most insignificant people in society that's the kind of justice he will bring it's a justice against which there will be no appeal because there will be no need of appeal he will be clothed with righteousness and faithfulness he will be perfect moral integrity personified in leadership so that that sets the example for the whole of community well that's that's the leader that comes the third what are we up to we've been through the stump we've been through the leader now the mountain and it talks

about the mountain and the mountain is where the city is it's you know it's the place from which to which the people come from all around the countryside they come to the mountain and there the leader resides and there the leader exercises his authority there you come in touch with his power his understanding his wisdom and his counsel his rest and his and the fear of the lord you come there and that's that's where everybody comes and then it gives this wonderful story it's it's that text in scripture from which is derived the story we all know of Winnie the Pooh you might know that that comes from Isaiah 11 but read it carefully because there is the tiger and there is the bear and living happily with with other lesser animals and a child leading them well that's the kind of thing that is thought of here here when they come to this mountain the wolf and the lamb will be together the leopard and the goat the calf and the lion the little child shall lead them the cow and the bear will graze together the infant will play on the hole of the cobra and the young child will reach out and put his hand and his hand will be welcomed not poisoned in the viper's nest so you see there is when people come to this mountain there is a radical change takes place because of the presence of the leader the leader who is endued with the gifts of the spirit and it says of that mountain that it's because of the leader it means that no harm can come and the power to destroy is broken in and through this perfect leader the knowledge of the Lord will fill the earth as the waters cover the sea and talks about knowledge knowledge knowledge is one of the gifts of the spirit but knowledge is not the kind of thing we think of as knowledge we think of knowledge as a kind of abstract commodity which is stored in a computer but when they talk about knowledge they're talking about knowing something and being committed to that which you know if you don't if you're not committed it means you don't know so knowledge involves commitment and it's the word that is used in the

Bible to describe the relationship between a man and a woman and it's the basis if you want of monogamous marriage because the principle that is established in scripture is if you're not committed to me you're not going to know me and to retain that as the principle and that's the kind of knowledge that is talked about when it says the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea because here it is to know the Lord is to be committed to him and not to know him is not to be committed to him and we our world is so confused about that to think that it can have commitment without knowledge and or knowledge without commitment it's a strange thing well that's the mountain and there is the presence of the leader on the mountain and there everything is turned upside down our society is in a sense trying to legislate the wolf's right over the lamb and the leopards over the goat and the lions over the calf in other words to say wolf you were born that way so you must express who you are and lion you were born a lion be a lion and somehow this experience of the mountain is an experience where the whole basic character of a person is to be radically and fundamentally changed that belongs to all who come to that mountain time then the next one is time and

Isaiah is talking about the time when the day of the Lord will come when eternity will break in on history and when the time that will come when the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea it talks about that time for Isaiah that time was something that he was looking forward to in history for us that time is when Jesus Christ has come and has been lifted up amongst us and ascended into heaven that time has come for us and we are living as it were in that time and in that time it says a banner will be raised or an ensign will be raised that everybody can see and all the nations will say that's what we've been looking for this will be the fulfillment of the desire of the nations throughout all history as they live with the frustration of ascendance and breakdown victory and defeat there is a banner raised among them and the banner is one to which they come it's the banner to which all the nations will come as armies have been raised for war so this banner will be raised and people will be drawn to it the leaders of ancient

[23 : 25] Israel that's what they did they set up their banner and those who were with them came and joined forces with them so the preaching of the gospel is in a sense the waving of the banner so that people seeing the banner and the banner is Jesus Christ seeing the banner they will come to him they will be drawn to him that's what our responsibility is and who is it that comes to the banner it's the remnant the remnant lead the way back to the mountain the remnant lead the way and rallying around the banner and it says from exile and from captivity from all the quarters of the earth the people will come they will come to the mountain and at the mountain they will encounter the leader and they will come under his rule and they will know him and be committed to him and the remnant will lead the way and the seventh of the pictures that were given is a highway and just as the character of the wolf and the lamb are altered so all the natural barriers which prevent people from coming will be overcome and it says the red sea will be filled in and the euphrates river will be dried up so that people will have no barrier there will be a highway which leads to the mountain and at the mountain there they will know the leader so that they will pass dry shore and remember because remember as the chapter ends it says this you know that the exiles come from their enslavement from their imprisonment from being driven away they will now return and come back and it won't be hard for them to come back because there will be a highway and as the remnant leads the way back so all the nations will come back and will be brought back now you see that's why chapter 11 is the consolation of the people of

God that's what God is doing in history we're so filled with what we're doing in history the way we are shaping and ordering our global economy the way we are taking advantage of our technologies the way we are exalting humanity the way we are finding freedom from all our inhibitions all those glorious things that we think are so magnificent and yet which we know must come crashing down those things are not they're what we're doing this is what God is doing when there is when we have clear cut our culture and only the stump remains the chute comes up who is the chute he is the leader what does he do he goes to the mountain and invites us to come he says there is a time and we are to come to that time and then he says and there will be a banner in which throughout all the world the proclamation will be made concerning the person of the king the leader who is Jesus and people will come from all nations to him and they will be led to him by that remnant of the faithful who will lead the way along the highway which brings us back to him and back to encountering or experiencing the reality of what God is doing in our world when you get to be an old man most of you haven't got there yet but I am there and I'll tell you the futility of all we accomplish

humanly speaking is a kind of an increasing reality every day and it's a delight to read that beyond history and beyond time God is at work fulfilling his purpose and even 3,000 years ago Isaiah spoke to the people and told them of what God is doing and how we are to recognize the reality of what he is doing and that we are that he is going to raise up a perfect leader for us and then he's going to create a people who respond to that leader and that people are going to come in faith and put their trust in him so you have that that picture so that we are in this world a people who like well a people who belong to the community of faith whom who are addressed in in the book of the Hebrews when it is written seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses let us lay aside every weight and the sin which does so easily beset us and looking unto Jesus we come to him we come to that mountain we come to that place where he will order and structure our lives we come to that place where there is hope and where there is peace above the cacophony of our self assertive arrogance a reality which brings into our hearts a delight in the fear of the Lord and a longing to do no more than give the whole of our lives to the worship of our God that's what Isaiah 11 is about the stump the leader the mountain the time the banner the remnant and the highway our God grant that that we may be made deeply aware of your presence by your [30 : 24] Holy Spirit among us we ask in the name of our Lord Jesus Amen God God God to the being