

Do We Want God With Us?

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

Date: 19 March 2023

[0 : 00] I'm going to begin by singing to God's praise. I'm singing in Psalm 42, in the Scottish Psalter version, Psalm 42 on page 262 of the psalm books. We're going to sing from verse 1 to verse 5.

Like as the heart for water brooks and thirst doth pant and bray, so pants my longing soul, O God, that come to Thee I may. A great song of worship as we come to approach God, and may we thirst for Him as we do. So we'll sing verse 1 to 5 to God's praise.

Amen. My soul, O God, that come to Thee I may. My soul, O God, the living God, doth curse, when shall I hear?

And to Thy countenance approach, how dead cross I appear.

My tears shall come to Thee beneath, O tender night and day.

[2 : 00] Why not to Thee, O tender night and day. My soul is born and out in me. When is I may? God, that come to Thee beneath, O tender night and day. My soul is born and out in me. When is I may? God, that come to Thee beneath, O tender night and day. My soul is born and out in me. When is I may? God, that come to Thee beneath, O tender night and day. My soul is born and out in me. When is I may?

God, that come to Thee beneath, O tender night and day. My soul is born and out in me. When is I may?

God, that come to Thee beneath, O tender night and day. My soul is born and out in me. When is I may? God, that come to Thee beneath, O tender night and day. My soul is born and out in me.

When is I may? God, that come to Thee beneath, O tender night and day. My soul is born and out in me. My soul is born and out in me.

God, that come to Thee beneath, O tender night and day. My soul is born and out in me. When is I may? voice of joy and praise.

Near with the multitude hath kept the solemn holy day.

[3 : 24] O why art thou caster, my soul? O why in me so dismayed?

Trust God, for I shall praise him yet. His confidence is my name.

We draw near to God in prayer. Let us pray. Our Father in heaven, we come to you this day. I knew we come thankful for the great privilege and delight that there is in worship.

We thank you for the delight and praise that we can come singing to you and help us that we may have that thirst of the psalmist that we've sung about, that we will long to meet with you, that we will long to hear your word, that we will long to worship you together, that that will be our great delight, and that we will remember that as we do, that you are here with us, that we do not just gather together.

as our people here, that we will not just gather together as our people here, that we will not just gather together with you as our God, and help us to long for you to be with us, to want you in our midst, that you would bless all that we do and all that we see.

[5 : 02] We thank you, Lord, that together we come, young and old alike, we come to praise your name, and may all that we do be for your glory today, both here in the church and also as the Sunday school and the creche and the tweenies meet next door as well.

We thank you for your word that speaks to us all, that whatever age we are at, we are reminded of the great love that you show towards us, the great mercy that you have given to us, that you have given your son, Jesus Christ, and that we come in his name today.

May we learn more of him, and enjoy him more, and experience him more and more, day by day, and that he will be our great delight. So, Lord, bless us, we pray, and be with us in all that we do, be with all our families and our loved ones, our communities at these times.

Lord, may we know your goodness with us, and your grace and love upon us. So, guide us, we pray, and pardon all our sin, as we ask it all in Jesus' name, and for his sake. Amen.

Amen. Well, I'm sure many people here, you enjoy maybe baking or cooking. Who enjoys baking or cooking?

[6 : 18] Anybody thinking of maybe doing something special today? Maybe making a special meal or a special cake for Mother's Day or something like that? Maybe it's somebody's birthday, or maybe it's just a special occasion, and you enjoy the idea of making something special for someone.

And when you're going to bake or when you're going to cook, you have to bring all the ingredients together. So, for example, if you're going to bake a cake, you need a lot of different things, don't you?

You maybe need flour, especially. That's so important if you're baking a cake. You'll need eggs. You'll need things like salt and sugar. Baking soda.

Maybe you need to put some milk or oil in it as well. But all the ingredients have to come together. Now, if you're making a cake for someone, would you just bring all the ingredients on separate plates before them with a cup of tea?

Do you think we'd just bring them a plate of flour and say, there's the flour. Have that with your cup of tea. Do you think that would be good? Would you enjoy eating a plate of flour? No, I don't think so.

[7 : 30] Nobody would want that. Or maybe a little bowl of sugar. It might taste quite sweet initially, but you'd probably get sick of it after a while. Or maybe a few spoons of salt. Who would like to just sit down with a few spoons of salt?

It doesn't sound very appealing, does it? No, what you have to do is you have to bring it all together and mix it all together so that then, all together, that will make a cake that you can bake and that then you can serve that and give that maybe with a cup of tea.

But it's important that everything is mixed together, that everything comes together. And this morning in our passage, we're going to be looking at the Old Testament and a book called Isaiah. And there we're going to be looking at a passage that reminds us that so often people can have all the ingredients to do with God there before them. They can have everything set before them, but so often what we end up doing is taking things separately and individually and not bringing it all together and mixing it all together.

So, for example, we maybe think, well, what day of the week do we worship God? Maybe we think, well, that's Sunday. But is that the only day we're to worship God?

[8 : 45] It's not just about Sunday. It's about every day. Because if we only do it on Sunday and forget about it the rest of the week, what good is that to us? We're missing out part of the essential ingredients that we're mixing it all together with everything that we do.

Do we only sing praise to God when we come to church? No, we can sing praise to God at any time. And we should do it during the week.

Even when we're by ourselves, we can praise God. And prayer. We have to pray. And again, it's not just when we're gathered with everybody else together. We pray by ourselves as well.

But in the passage that we're looking at this morning, we're seeing that the people were having all of these things at different times, but not mixing them together in the right way.

And what they were doing was saying, well, really, we only want God with us some of the time, but not all of the time. And the question for us today as we come to worship is not just that we have the ingredients here for today, but that every day of our lives we have all the ingredients together.

[9 : 49] We mix them all together so that every day we have God with us. That every day we think of maybe today a special day for Mother's Day. But every day is a day to appreciate your mother, not just one day in the year.

We're to do it every day of the year. And it's the same with God. We don't just do it one day of the week or sometimes in our lives. We do it all the time. And it's to remind ourselves that we always have all the ingredients before us, not taking them just separately at different times, but mixing them together every day so that we enjoy God's blessing and his favor every day of our lives.

So may he help us to know that he is with us. And may we appreciate that he is with us day by day and live for him day by day.

We're going to say the Lord's Prayer together now. We'll say the Lord's Prayer. Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come.

Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
[11:05] For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever. Amen. Amen. We're going to sing together again to God's praise.

This time in Psalm 31. And let's sing Psalms version. It's on page 36 of the Psalm books. Psalm 31. We're going to sing from verse 1 to verse 8.

In you I have taken refuge, Lord. You are my shelter in distress. O let me never be ashamed, but save me in your righteousness. We'll sing from verse 1 to verse 8 to God's praise.

In you I've taken refuge, Lord. You are my shelter in distress.

O let me never be ashamed, but save me in your righteousness.

[12:21] Lord, turn you dear to hear my cry. Come quickly to deliver me.

And be my rock and firm defense, my stronghold and security.

You are my fortress and my rock. For your name's sake, be my sure guide.

Reserve me from the trap that's set. You are the refuge where I hide.

Redeem me, Lord, O God of truth. My spirit I commit to you.

[13:47] I hate all those who trust false gods. I trust the Lord, for he is true.

I will rejoice and take delight in all the love that you have shown.

For my affliction you have seen. To you my soul's distress is known.

You have not left me to my foe, or given me into his hand.

But you have set my feet within a spacious place where I may stand.

[15:16] We're going to read together in God's Word now in the Old Testament, the book of Isaiah. We're reading in chapter 58. Isaiah chapter 58.

We can read the whole of this chapter together. Cry aloud. Do not hold back. Lift up your voice like a trumpet. Declare to my people their transgression, to the house of Jacob their sins.

Yet they seek me daily and delight to know my ways, as if they were a nation that did righteousness and did not forsake the judgment of their God. They ask of me righteous judgments.

They delight to draw near to God. Why have we fasted and you see it not? Why have we humbled ourselves and you take no knowledge of it?

Behold, in the day of your fast you seek your own pleasure and oppress all your workers. Behold, you fast only to quarrel and to fight and to hit with a wicked fist.

[16:26] Fasting like yours this day will not make your voice to be heard on high. Is such the fast that I choose a day for a person to humble himself?

Is it to bow down his head like a reed and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? Will you call this a fast and a day acceptable to the Lord?

Is not this the fast that I choose? To loose the bonds of wickedness? To undo the straps of the yoke? To let the oppressed go free and to break every yoke?

Is it not to share your bread with the hungry? And bring the homeless poor into your house? When you see the naked, to cover him. And not to hide yourself from your own flesh.

Then shall your light break forth like the dawn. And your healing shall spring up speedily. Your righteousness shall go before you. The glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard.

[17:26] Then you shall call and the Lord will answer. You shall cry and he will say, here I am. If you take away the yoke from your midst, the pointing of the fingers and speaking wickedness.

If you pour yourself out for the hungry and satisfy the desire of the afflicted. Then shall your light rise in the darkness. And your gloom be as the noon day.

And the Lord will guide you continually. And satisfy your desire in scorched places. And make your bones strong. And you shall be like a watered garden.

Like a spring of water. Whose waters do not fail. And your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt. You shall raise up the foundations of many generations.

You shall be called the repairer of the breach. The restorer of streets to dwell in. If you turn back your foot from the Sabbath. From doing your pleasure on my holy day.

[18:28] And call the Sabbath a delight. And the holy day of the Lord honourable. If you honour it. Not going your own ways. Or seeking your own pleasure.

Or talking idly. Then you shall take delight in the Lord. And I will make you ride on the heights of the earth. I will feed you. With the heritage of Jacob your father.

For the mouth of the Lord has spoken. And so on. And may God bless that reading from his word to us. We'll again engage in a word of prayer.

Let us pray. Amen. Our father in heaven. As we continue in our dependence upon you. We're reminded in your word.

That it is in you that we live, move and have our being. And yet our lives so often neglect that. Our lives will so often reflect a very different attitude.

[19 : 24] Where we feel that it is through our own strength. That we do all of these things. That it's through our own wisdom. That we live, move and have our being. But Lord you remind us again and again in your word.

That we are dependent upon you. And you remind us of that in our experience in life as well. In all the providence that we experience. Whether it's in the good providence that we are blessed by. And enjoy good things from your hands. Or whether it's in the hard providence that we experience at times as well. When we feel overwhelmed. When we feel perplexed.

When we feel as if the world is turned against us Lord. We thank you that there is a promise that you are with your people. That you are with those who will call upon you.

That you will be with those who delight in serving you and honouring you. And delight in worshipping you. And we thank you for these words that we've read together.

[20 : 25] They remind us of the instructions that you give. Of the many areas Lord where we go wrong. Where there are many ways in which we can make our lives a sense of formality.

Of going through the motions. Of even coming to church on a day like this. And expecting your blessing just in our appearance. Just in being here Lord that we may expect great things from you. But as your word reminds us that when our hearts are far from you. When we are not right with you. And when we are just going through the motions. That there is no blessing for us.

But Lord we thank you that your word gives instruction to. That we are to bow before you. That we are to open our hearts and pour them out before you.

That we are to seek forgiveness from you for all our sins. For how far short we fall so often. But we thank you too Lord that there is great words of healing.

[21 : 26] Great words of restoration. Restoration for your people. Restoration for your church. Restoration and healing for the nations of this world.

But we need to hear the Lord. And that is the trumpet call that comes through the prophet we have read Isaiah. And the trumpet call that comes to us even in this day.

That we are to be a people who hear you. And who listen to your word. And who obey all that you command of us. So Lord we seek your face.

We seek your blessing. That you will turn us towards you. That you will help us to honour you in all that we do. And we do thank you that we can come together as a people to worship.

That we have this great privilege. And that we join in with your people. Scattered far and wide. Lifting up our voices to you in praise and in prayer.

[22 : 26] Thankful Lord that we come. In a name that is above every name. The name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The one who came into this world.

The one who wept over this world. And the disarray of the people. But the one ultimately who bore the sins of the world. As he went to the cross.

And as we have remembered even recently his death. We thank you too for the reminder that every Lord's day is a reminder of the resurrection. That we come in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ who is risen.

And ascended on high. And the one who is able to do so much more than we ask or imagine. And so help us in our prayers. Whether it's for ourselves and in our need of you.

Whether it's in the needs around us and others and families or neighbours or our community. Or the broader needs of this world. That we would come praying to you as the one.

[23 : 27] The only one who is able to help. So may this day and this time. Not be for our own pleasure as your word has said to us.

But may it be for your glory. May it be for our upbuilding. May it be Lord that we will go from here strengthened and encouraged. Through your word.

Built up in the faith. And seeking to honour you not just today. With our attendance here. But with our lives day by day. That we would be salt and light.

That we would be your witnesses. That we would live our lives for you. That we would devote ourselves to you. To serve others. And to love the Lord. So we pray your blessing on your word to us.

And remember us as a people. Remember those who need you in particular ways. Those who are unwell at this time. Those who are confined to their homes. We thank you to be able to reach out into homes.

[24 : 25] Even through the live stream. And the blessing that that is to those unable to attend. We pray for each one of our homes and our families.

We pray Lord your blessing upon us. We pray for those who mourn and grieve today. In our community and further afield as well. In the loss of loved ones. We pray Lord for you to comfort as only you can.

To console oh Lord. And to bind up broken hearts. And to be. To find a people who will call upon your name. In the midst of such great troubles.

We pray Lord for our land. We continue to pray for our leaders over us. We pray Lord for you to grant them wisdom. For you to come into their hearts. For you to Lord speak to them.

That they would hear your voice calling to them. That they would be helped by you. To lead us in the right ways. Your ways. Ways that seem so far removed from us today.

[25 : 28] But ways in which we need to find our paths once again. That we would honour you. That you might honour us. So Lord may your wisdom and your guidance be given. To those in power over us.

And throughout the world. In conflicts and natural disasters. And all that's going on around us. In all the pain. And the grief that is suffered. We pray Lord for a day of your healing.

And a day of your power. Bless us this day Lord in all that we do. In our fellowship together.

Throughout the day. And into this evening as well. As we thank you for the congregational fellowship this evening.

And thank you for Muriel. Who has been with us over these months. And as she prepares. To go away once again. Lord we pray for your help towards her. In her preparation. And in all that's got to be done.

And above all. Your blessing with her. And your protecting hand over her. Encourage her Lord in her heart. And keep her. As we keep her in our prayers. And Lord we thank you for all things from your hand.

[26 : 28] Every good and perfect gift that is from above. And we praise your name today Lord. That we have so much to be thankful for. So hear our prayers. Receive our thanks.

And pardon all our sin. As we ask it in Jesus name. Amen. We're going to sing again to God's praise. This time Psalm 98.

In the Scottish Psalter. Page 360. Psalm 98. We'll sing from verse 1 to verse 6.

Page 360 of the psalm. So sing a new song to the Lord. For wonders he has done. His right hand and his holy arm. In victory have won.

We'll sing from verse 1 to 6. To God's praise. Do you sing from verse 1 to 6. Do you sing from verse 1 to 6?

[27 : 25] Do you sing from verse 1 to 6? To the Lord? For wonders he has done.

His right hand and his holy arm. In victory have won.

The Lord for his salvation.eds and■■■c.

and blood in ensign the opening of the show.

In light full of His grace and truth, to His just powers have been, and the salvation of our God all ends of earth have seen.

[28 : 52] Let all the earth come to the Lord, send forth a joyful noise.

Let Thou pure voice have love to Him, sing praises and rejoice.

With heart, with heart, and voice of sound, unto Jehovah sing, with trumpets, florent the peace of sound, and pray for the Lord the King.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Well, we can turn back to our reading in Isaiah chapter 58. We're going to reflect on the whole of this chapter together.

We can read again at verse 1. Cry aloud. Do not hold back. Lift up your voice like a trumpet.

Declare to my people their transgression, to the house of Jacob their sins, and so on.

[30 : 24] What's the one thing in life you could not live without? What comes into your mind when you think of that?

What's the one thing in life you could not live without? I'd love to ask everyone to give a response to that immediately, but there may be different things that come into your mind when you think of that question.

It could be, first of all, maybe it's something very personal to yourself. It might even be a person that comes to your mind. I just cannot live without that person. Or it might be an item, a possession that you hold dear.

I cannot live without that. It could be something practical for yourself. Well, I just can't live without my mobile phone. I'll just be lost without it.

I can't live without my car. Or just something that's very personal and practical to yourself. Or it may be the things that are essential for everyone that we cannot live without.

[31 : 26] Things like food and water and the air that we breathe, we cannot live without that. What can we, could we live our life, what could one thing could we not live our life without?

But I hope among us, one of the first things that comes to our mind is the Lord. That apart from God, we can do nothing.

The Bible reminds us of the most essential thing for us. And it's a thing that we so often neglect or maybe put away for a time or think, well, we can do without him at certain points in our life.

But the Bible reminds us that we need God with us at all times. And so many of the promises that we see throughout Scripture remind us that God has promised to be with us.

When God sent his son into this world, he said to them, you will call his name Emmanuel, which means God with us.

[32 : 36] A powerful reminder that we need God with us. We need him for our salvation. We have other reminders through Scripture where God says things like, I will never leave you or forsake you.

I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Even when Jesus is taken up into heaven, he says, I will send my comforter, the Holy Spirit, one who is called alongside you so that we have his presence with us always.

We are reminded in the Scripture again and again of the main thing that we cannot live without, we cannot die without, is God with us.

And God has shown his promises to us that he will be with us if we call upon him, if we look towards him. And as you think of the various promises of God, they focus on God's promises to us.

But as we look through this passage today and as you think about God with us, what I want to focus on today is to think about it from our perspective. God has promised to be with us, but what do we want of God ourselves?

[33 : 54] And to think about it under this question, do we want God with us? Do we want God with us?

Billy Graham's daughter in an interview once said, For years we've been telling God to get out of our schools. We've been telling him to get out of our government.

And we've been telling him to get out of our lives. So she went on and said, How can we expect God to give us his blessing and his protection if we demand he leave us alone?

If we're saying we only want God on our terms, or we only want God when we feel we need him, If we think otherwise we can just say we leave him alone, that he would leave us alone, how can we expect his blessing and his protection?

So the question is, do we want God with us? And how much do you want God with you? Isaiah the prophet was one who was constantly warning a people.

[35 : 07] And there's a people who took God for granted so much. They were God's people and yet they expected God to be with them on their terms. That he would always be there for them, but that almost they could do what they pleased.

They could do things for their own pleasure as we see in this chapter. And then expect God just to be there at the first call, at the first time of need.

But what they didn't realize was how far from God they were. They were going through the motions outwardly, but inwardly in their hearts, they were just pushing God further and further away.

And today in our lives we so often long to see things change for the better. When we live in a world that's confused and in so much need, we long for things to change and to change for the better.

But that boils down to this question. If we want things to be better, do we want it on our terms and for our own pleasure? Or do we want it on God's terms and for his pleasure and his glory?

[36 : 19] And the question is, do we want God with us? And if so, how do we want God with us? So as I say, I challenge us to people here in chapter 58.

There's three sections I want us to look at here that speak to us about different things. The first section we see is a trumpet call. And that's really in verse 1 to verse 5, where Isaiah is outlining the faults of the people.

And then we'll see a change of direction. And that goes from really verse 6 down to verse 12. And then in the last part, verse 13 to verse 14, the last section there, we have a call for commitment to worship.

So there's three sections in this chapter that we're going to look at. And they're all under this heading, do we want God with us? And the first thing we see is this call that Isaiah is given from God.

A trumpet call. He says in verse 1, the Lord speaking, A trumpet was a warning cry, that there was imminent danger.

[37 : 39] And this is what God is saying through the prophet Isaiah. There is this imminent danger towards you. So he's saying, lift up your voice like a trumpet. Lay out to my people their transgression.

Our world is often a noisy world. There are so many sounds that we hear probably on a daily basis. When we hear the sound of life going on all around us.

We'll hear the sound of people around us in different ways. We'll hear the sound of machinery and work going on around us day by day.

We'll hear the sound of transport, of cars, of lorries, of buses, of ambulances. All kinds of sounds that we hear. The list goes on and on.

There's always noise around us. A noise to hear. This week though, on Thursday, it'll mark three years since the first lockdown with COVID.

[38 : 43] And when you think back to that day and that time, one thing that was so noticeable in our nation and indeed around the world was how all that noise that would go on day by day came to a sudden halt.

That the world went almost quiet. The world went almost silent in so many ways. And in that silence, when things came to a shuddering halt, for a time, there was a realization of the needs. The need that there was in the midst of this silence. What was happening in our world? What was going on? What was the future going to look like?

How were these days going to work out? When everything came to a stancel and a silence, there was this sense that God was speaking. And for a time, it seemed like people were going to listen. That they may hear the voice of God in the midst of this silence. And I remember at the time hearing a quote. And the quote said this, When the whole world is silent, even one voice becomes powerful.

[39 : 58] And you think of that in the midst of a silent place. Very often in a sports stadium, they have a mark of respect, they have a minute's silence.

And the whole place descends into quiet. Even a crowd of 60,000 to 80,000, there can be a silence. But if one person shouts out, that voice can be heard so clearly.

And it's amazing looking back over these years, how when the place went quiet, that people were looking for a voice, something to listen to. It seemed as if God was the one that people were going to hear.

But as the silence started to come back to noise once again, as the world became a busy place, and as people went back to their ways once again, that silence wasn't there, and the noise only increased.

But the question was, what were we listening to? And were we listening to the voice of God? Or how we again maybe pushed God away, back into the background, that we can manage fine without Him?

[41 : 11] We needed God with us then, and many people realized it. But do we still need God with us today? Well, Isaiah's day was a day of much noise as well.

Much noise of the people, much noise of people busy in life and in the world. But a people who were turning away from God and worshipping idols, making covenants with other nations.

And you see it right throughout this section, chapter 56 through to chapter 58 as well. How the people had turned away from God.

In verse 8 of chapter 57, there it says in the middle of the verse, that the people were deserting me. You have uncovered your bed. You're going away from me.

You're deserting me. Also in verse 11 of chapter 7 there as well. You do not remember me. You know, the Lord who had been so good to them.

[42 : 14] The Lord who had done so much for them. And yet they're turning away from Him, and they're not remembering Him. And again, we've seen that in our own day and age as well.

God who was good to us in so many ways. But then when we get back on our feet, when we reestablish ourselves, when we build ourselves up again, we drift away.

And why had they drifted away here? Well, they had drifted away because from the top down, from the leaders down, people had started to just turn away from God.

They were doing things for their own pleasure. In verse 12 of chapter 56, it says, Come, they say, let me get wine. Let us fill ourselves with strong drink, and tomorrow will be like this day.

Great beyond measure. They're doing things for their own pleasure. They're back to their own ways, their own desires. And every day they're saying it's going to be good. But is it without God?

[43 : 15] Well, in chapter 58, they're showing a sense of, well, we can have God on our terms. In verse 1 to 5, you're seeing that the people are just going through the motions.

It says in verse 2, You seek me daily and delight to know my ways. It's as if they want God and they're going through the motions, but God is reminding them that you're not really doing it for me.

He says in chapter, in verse 3 there, Why have you fasted and you see it? Why have we fasted and you see it not?

Why are we humble ourselves and you take no knowledge of it? They're saying to God, Look, God, we've done all these things. We've fasted before you. We've humbled ourselves before you.

Why are you not paying attention? Why are you not giving us your blessing and your favor upon us? They're going through the motions. They're not doing it for themselves.

[44 : 17] It says in verse 3 there as well, Behold, in the day of your fast you seek your own pleasure. This is why you're doing it.

For yourselves and for your own pleasure. So their hearts are not right with God. It's a day when things seem to be going well for them, but things are not well.

Things are not right. And for ourselves too, this is a warning that we need to heed as well. That our lives are not to be lives lived for our own pleasure.

A sense of going through the motions. How we can even come to church and worship God. We can sit in the pew. We can hear God's word.

We can sing God's praise. We can offer up our prayers and almost say to God, Look, God, I've done my part. I have come and I've sat and I've listened. And I've even sung to you.

[45 : 22] Well, why, Lord, will you not help me in the rest of my time, in the rest of my days? Well, because God is saying, because you are doing it for your own pleasure.

You are doing it seeking your own good. And not ultimately to give praise to me. You're not showing your love towards me day by day.

You're not showing honor towards me in all that you do. You are doing things for your own pleasure. So, and this is a situation where Isaiah is told to cry out, to lift up his voice like a trumpet, to sound the warning.

And the trumpet was a warning of the enemy upon them. So what was the enemy here for them? It was their own hearts. They were doing things for their own pleasure.

And they were far away from God. And so he's reminding them here, Stop what you are doing. Look at what you are doing and ask yourselves this.

[46 : 30] Do you really want me with you in it? Do we want God with us? Or are we doing things for our own pleasure and our own ways?

So there's this call. Then we see that there's this change of direction that God calls for. Repentance is about change of direction.

And instead of deserting God, it should be deciding God. And as he continues here in verse 6 through to verse 12, the focus returns to how God wants the people to know them, Him with them.

And he begins by really giving them a warning. When you look at what Isaiah says to the people here, where they have gone wrong, it seems to speak about social justice, about helping the poor.

And you wonder to yourself, well, this seems a bit strange. That of all the things that he's going to warn them about, it's first about helping the poor. What's that to do with the worship of God?
[47 : 37] Well, as you go through this section, you realize that even that is at the heart of worship for God. Because if they are doing things for their own pleasure, then this is something that suffers as a consequence.

Helping others and loving others. Because if they were truly hearing the word of God, and their hearts were right with Him, then this would not be an issue. There wouldn't be these great needy people around them. When there's this wickedness going on. When there's this yoke, this burden that they are putting upon people. Where they're not sharing the bread with the hungry. Where they're not bringing the homeless, the poor into their homes. Where they're not helping them. There's all of these needs around them. And if they were right with God, they shouldn't be there. As a people, as a nation, if we were right with God, we should be getting these things right too.

[48 : 35] That's what Isaiah is saying. And the ingredients were all there before them. But they weren't being mixed together in the right way. They were doing things for their own pleasure, instead of helping others.

They didn't have God with them, because they didn't really want God with them. Because it upset their lives and their lifestyles. And this was the fruit of their lives.

That there was people in need. Those who should have been helped by them were still suffering. And as Jesus says in the New Testament about false prophets, you shall know them by their fruit. So it is with the people here. The people of God, they are known by their fruits. And their fruits are not good. What needed to change? Well, it was a change of direction. Instead of doing these things for their own pleasure, that they would live their lives for God. That they would fulfill the commands of God.

[49 : 43] Just like Jesus taught in the New Testament about the greatest command of all. He said, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind.

This is the great and first commandment. And the second is like it. You shall love your neighbour as yourself. Well, it's as if Isaiah here begins with that second part.

You shall love your neighbour as yourself. And when you get that right, he goes on to say, then everything else falls into place.

Because when you look at verse 8 onwards, then you see there the blessing that comes when we do right with God. When we worship God and honour Him as we should.

We know God with us, is what Isaiah is then saying in verse 8. Verse 8 to verse 12 is all about healing and renewing and blessing that God gives as we turn to Him and seek Him with us.

[50 : 49] 2 Chronicles 7 verse 14 says, If my people who are called by my name, humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land.

And that's so similar to what we have in these verses as well. In all that's wrong, God is saying, turn back to me. And when you do, we could just pick out four things that he says will happen.

In verse 8 and verse 9, he says, Then your light, then your light break forth, then shall your light break forth like the dawn.

Into the darkness, God brings His light. And His light breaks forth. It's like this sudden, this rapid change. That even as we turn back to God, He is able to transform.

Things that seem impossible to us, God can change in the blink of an eye. He says then, your healing shall spring up speedily.

[52 : 04] The healing he's speaking of here is the healing of an open wound. Maybe you've had a cut or a bad cut somewhere on your body and you thought to yourself, how on earth is that going to heal?

It just never seems that that could heal itself again. And yet the skin will grow and the wound will heal. And that's the kind of healing that it speaks of here.

Your healing shall spring up quickly. When we turn to Him, He is able to heal the wounds in our land, the wounds in our churches, the wounds in our lives.

He is able to bring healing into our difficult experience. Then you have this wonderful promise of His protection there in verse 8.

The glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard. He shall be behind you. He shall be watching you. He'll be with you. There is this promise, He is with us.

[53 : 05] So as we think of that question, do we want God with us? Well, here we see the blessing that knowing that He is with us, that He is bringing light, that He is bringing healing, that He is watching over us.

Then in verse 9, He says, Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer. You shall cry, and He will say, Here I am.

He is with us. What a wonderful promise we have there. That a promise that a change of direction can bring. A promise of a change as we listen to His voice.

As in all the noise that's going on around us, we start to listen and to heed His word. And do as His word commands us. Here we see it's, Love your neighbor as yourself.

But it's not just about that. Because finally you see here in verse 13 and 14, He pleads for a commitment to worship.

[54 : 13] This is what is at the heart of it all as well. It's not all about social justice. It's not all about loving those around us.

It's coming back now to that first part of the great commandment. Love the Lord your God with all your heart. That this is the center of how we know God with us.

That we worship Him aright. And look at how He puts it here in verse 13 and 14. He puts it about the Sabbath. The worship.

If you turn back your food from the Sabbath, you're doing your pleasure on my holy day. And again you see that word, doing your own pleasure.

So everything that they were doing in a loving their neighbor sense, they got it wrong because they were doing things for their own pleasure. Now He's coming back to the heart of worship and the worship of God.

[55 : 12] And He's saying, You're using even this for your own pleasure. And He's saying, Turn your way back. Turn back your food from the Sabbath for doing your own pleasure on my holy day.

And call the Sabbath a delight. So what gives you a sense of delight today? What gives you a sense of delight in your life?

We sometimes delight in football scores. We delight in holiday times. We delight in good weather. We delight in good food.

We delight in so many different things. Do we delight in the Sabbath? Now the Sabbath here was the Saturday in the Old Testament.

It was the day God set aside from the very beginning of creation. The seventh day when He rested was a day to observe as rest and worship. And He's asking the people, Do you delight in it?

[56 : 21] For ourselves, the Sabbath is now the Sunday. The Lord's day, the first day of the week. And the question for ourselves is, As we come to the Lord's day, as we come to worship, Do we long for God with us?

And do we delight in the Lord's day and the Lord? It's a day to delight in. A day not for our own pleasure.

And if we want to know God with us, Is there any better way to know it than to delight in the Lord's day? And to delight in the Lord and the worship of Him.

When we think of our nation today, Even our islands, how we've drifted away from acknowledging this day. From delighting in the Lord's day.

And ourselves, we know too, we don't always get it right. Even as we seek to honour the Lord's day, We can so often fail to delight in it, Because we focus on what we shouldn't do, As opposed to what we should do.

[57 : 32] And the more we show people the reason we have to delight in the Lord's day. And not just to say, you don't do that on the Lord's day. But we show them instead, this is what we do on the Lord's day.

We worship God, we come together, We delight to be with His people, We delight to be with His word, We delight to do all things to the glory of God.

It's not a day for our own pleasure, In the sense of just doing our own thing. But doing it all for the glory of God.

So do we delight in the Lord's day? And do we show our delight in the Lord's day? Or has it become just a burden where we go through the motions, As it had become for the people here?

We go through the motions and we say, Look Lord, we've done all of this. Will you be with us? Well, the Lord is saying, No, if your heart is not delighting in me.

[58 : 35] But we don't come saying, Lord, look, we've been to church on Sunday. Be with us the rest of the week, Because we deserve that. But we come, Worshipping God humbly.

Seeking His presence. Delighting in Him. Loving the Lord with all our hearts. Seeking to love our neighbour as ourself. And delighting in all of these things.

We go on with the promise and assurance that, As we continually delight in Him, That He will be with us to bless. We have so much reason to delight in the Lord's day.

The day that remind us that Christ came to give His life, And on the third day, He rose again. The resurrection and the hope that that brings is reason for delight.

Do we, do you, do I, do we delight in it as we should? And do we delight in the one who is the Lord of the Sabbath, Our Lord Jesus Christ.

[59 : 41] Do we delight in Him and know His blessing? Do we want God with us? And do we want Him on our terms or on His?

Do we delight in Him? After attending church one Sunday morning, A little boy in the evening went to bed, And he knelt down by his bedside to pray.

And his prayer was this, Dear God, he said, We had a good time at church today, But I wish you had been there.

It's not about coming to church for our own pleasure, But coming to meet with God, The one who is Lord of all, Lord of the Sabbath, The Lord who we can delight in.

The warning of the trumpet is, If we put Him away, He's not going to be with us. If we try and pander to Him for our own pleasure, He's not going to be with us.

[60 : 50] But if we truly delight, And worship Him as we should, He will be with us. How can we expect God to be with us, And give us His blessing, If we demand that He leaves us alone?

Instead, let us hear His voice. Turn to Him, That we might know His blessing, And praise His name.

Let us pray. Our Father in heaven, May we delight in this, Your day. May we delight in Your word, And may we delight even more, In Your Son, The Lord Jesus Christ.

May we find our joy, And our salvation in Him, Recognizing that apart from Him, We have nothing in this world. Apart from Him, We cannot live.

And apart from Him, We cannot even face the consequences of our sin, In this world and in eternity. But we thank You for the promise of Him with us.

[61 : 54] And that as we turn to Him, As we praise His name and seek His face, That He has promised to meet us. And so may we delight in Him always, As we ask it in His name.

Amen. We're going to conclude by singing to God's praise in Psalm 18, In the Sing Psalms version. Psalm 18 and at verse 21. We're going to sing down to verse 28. Psalm 18 and verse 21.

For I have kept the ways of God, From Him I have not turned away. I have not strayed from Your decrees, His statutes ever with me stay. We'll sing from verse 21 to 28 to God's praise.

Psalm 18 and verse 21. Psalm 18 and verse 21. Psalm 18 and verse 21. Psalm 18 and verse 21.

Psalm 18 and verse 21. For I have kept the ways of God, From Him I have not turned away.

[63 : 04] I have not strayed from His decrees, His statutes ever with me stay.

Before the Lord I've kept myself, From blimp and all transgression free.

Since in His sight my hands were clean, The Lord my God rewarded me.

With faithful people you keep faith, And to the painless you are good.

With pure men you yourself are pure, But with the crooked you are sure.

[64 : 36] You saved the humble and the mead, But bring the proud of their height, You Lord will keep my lamp aflame, O turns my darkness into light.

After the benediction I'll go to the door to my right. We'll close with the benediction. Now may grace, mercy and peace from God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Rest upon and abide with us all, Now and forevermore.

Amen.

Thank you.