

The Happy Book of Isaiah

June 2, 2024

Welcome to the Beamsville Church of Christ online ministry. This week's message is titled "The Happy Book of Isaiah." Thank you to Dave, Amy, Gloria, and Don for being part of the video. The scripture reading is Isaiah 1, 18 to 20. Happy birthday this week to Aisha and Connie.

Welcome, Announcements, Prayer

Good morning and welcome. We are glad you're with us this morning. A few announcements that we need to make. Many birthdays, of Stephen and Sofia and Seth and Barbara celebrating birthdays this week. Ruth's May report is in the email bulletin and posted on the bulletin board at the back. Prayer requests. We are continuing to pray for Ed's recovery but he's here and we are thankful that his brief albeit somewhat tense encounter with the medical community. He is looking good and feeling much better. Care Alexander passed away and that would be yesterday and in lieu of flowers the family request donations be made to Great Lakes High School or to the hospice in Waterloo.

How blessed we are to be here, to live during the time where we are so blessed. I have a reading from Psalms 103. I'm going to skip around: verses 11 to 13, verse 17, and 20 to 22. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far as he removes our transgressions from us. As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him. But from everlasting to everlasting, the Lord's love is with those who fear him and his righteousness with their children's children. Praise the Lord you his angels, you mighty ones who do his bidding, who obey his word. Praise the Lord, all his heavenly hosts, you his servants who do his will. Praise the Lord, all his works everywhere in his dominion. Praise the Lord, oh my soul. Let's pray.

Father we are so thankful for life itself. For all that you have provided for us and continue through your spirit that lives within us. May we raise our voices in praise and worship and may it be acceptable. Through the name of Jesus we pray, amen.

Communion

Good morning. A couple of weeks ago, Adam and I had an opportunity to attend the Pepperdine Lectures, which was three days that started at 7.30 in the morning, if you wanted to start at 7.30 in the morning, and went until 9.30 at night, if you wanted to go until 9.30 at night, and every single speaker had a PhD. It was very rich and very dense, and a lot, a lot of strong ideas came forward. And when I was preparing for this, I was reading through my notes from that, and I want to take a note that I took from the section of Mike Cope's keynote address, which I think is going to be linked with this video when this video comes out. So you can watch his full hour-long version of this.

I'm going to give you a three-sentence paraphrase of something that really stuck with me. So Mike Cope said, "The sting of death is sin, not the sting of sin is death. Western Christianity focuses on sin. Eastern Christianity focuses on death. All sin is trying to reconcile, I am going to die." I'm going to give you a minute to just like process that in your own life. All sin is trying to reconcile, I am going

to die. If we make the cross, if we shift our focus of the cross to the cross is about overcoming death, not the cross is about overcoming sin, I think it becomes a more universal message of hope.

When you are in the throes of a sin, and the earthly consequences have not come home to roost yet, it can feel like a difference of opinion with God. I think this, he thinks this, I don't really get it. How many of us have had one of those that when we were in the throes of it, we were like, "I don't know. I don't see what God was saying about this." But when it comes home to roost in our relationships, in our earthly bodies, in our finances, in our environment, in our workplace, we go, "Okay, you might have had a point there. I just didn't see the long game on this." But when we say the cross and Christ is about overcoming death, we can all agree that that is something we want to overcome.

Preparing for this, I pulled three just common hymns and said, "What if we change the word sin to death? So what if my death is nailed to the cross and I bear it no more? Or what can wash away my death? Nothing but the blood of Jesus. Would you be free from the burden of death? There's power in the blood." That is a message of hope. That is a message of hope that we can all get alongside, regardless of where we are in our sin walk. I think we all can get alongside. I would like to be washed away from death. I would like to overcome the power of death. I would like my death to be nailed to the cross, and I would like to bear it no more. Let's pray together.

Holy God, you have overcome death. You have risen beyond death, and you can raise us from the dead. God, at the sound of your voice, dead people still rise, and we ask you to call that out in our lives, in our hearts, in this place. God, we recognize that the Spirit that rose Christ from the dead is living in us, and we ask that you have that Spirit move mountains in our lives, in our community, and in our spheres of influence. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Scripture Reading

Isaiah 1:18-20

The scripture reading this morning is from Isaiah 1, verses 18 to 20. Come let us settle the matter, says the Lord, though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. Though they be as red as crimson, they shall be like wool. If you are willing and obedient, you will eat the good things of the land, but if you resist and rebel, you will be devoured by the sword, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.

Sermon

The Happy Book of Isaiah

Good morning, everyone. Thank you very much for being with us. Today I want to do something a little bit different. I want to go through some scriptures from the book of Isaiah. The book of Isaiah, at least it is for me anyway, a very happy, positive book. It talks about all things becoming new. It talks about all things being restored. It talks about all things being revived, and talks about forgiveness. And in chapter 1 and verse 18, he says, come, let's reason together, says the Lord, though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. As impossible as it seems, God

sees the entire world as his family, and that one day the Garden of Eden will be restored. It is a Bible within the Bible.

So Isaiah is a rather lengthy book, and you'll be very happy to say that I'm not going to read a lot of it. But I want to just comment on several scriptures that is really unique. Sometimes the language is a bit different. It's somewhat apocalyptic. It's some futuristic. And yet at the same time, it relates to us today, even though it was written so many years ago. But it's just a wonderful, beautiful book with poetry and everything else. In chapter 1, he says in verse 2, hear me, you heavens. Listen, earth, for the Lord has spoken. I have reared children and brought them up, but they have rebelled against me. And then in verse 4, a sinful nation, a people whose guilt is great, a brood of evil doers, children given to corruption, they have forsaken the Lord, they have spurned the Holy One of Israel, and turned their backs on them. How do you like the sermon so far?

But there's positives, beautiful positives. Isaiah gets this commission from God. Says in the year that King Isaiah died-- watch this. Imagine being there. I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted. The train of his robe filled the entire temple. Above him were seraphs, each with six wings. With two wings, they covered their faces. With two, they covered their feet. And with two, they were flying. And they were calling to one another. Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty. The entire earth is full of God's glory. We miss that, don't we? We sometimes forget. The whole world is full of his glory.

We sometimes just have to work pretty hard to find it and to see it. But God has sent it to us. He says, here I am. Here I am. God says, who's going to send this message? Here I am, he says. Go, I shall go and tell all the people.

So Isaiah has this beautiful relationship with God. He sees that the earth is not living the way it should be. And so he has eyes in his heart of beauty and peace and encouragement. And so through this wonderful book, it talks about future. It talks about Christ coming into the world. And it talks about us, some 800 years before it actually happened. And then he says, to all of us, I suppose, will you try the patience of God? Therefore, the Lord himself will give you a sign, the Virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and he will be called Emmanuel. So we know he's talking about Jesus. And it was way in the past, but it brings it right up to his birth. And what's the result for us? So in this book, he talks about some beautiful understandings for all of us.

He says this, because I think all of us have been in this particular place. The people have been walking in darkness, but we have seen a great light on those living in the land of darkness. A light has dawned. And then these beautiful words that we use at Christmastime. This was written so many years beforehand. "For to us, a child is born. To us, a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders, and he will be called--" you can say it out loud with me if you remember it-- "wonderful counselor, mighty God, ever-lasting father, prince of peace." And then it says, "of the increase of his government and peace, there will be no end." The peace of God will never stop. It flows to us. So if you're having a bad day, if you're having a bad week, if you're having a bad month, if you're having a bad year, just look at some of these words in Isaiah. "I'll never leave you. I'll never forsake you. We have been given a child, Jesus Christ himself, and he will establish and uphold you throughout your life. It is the promise of God."

So when we look at some of these wonderful scriptures, they're very positive and very active. Sometimes it's somewhat scary, but it always comes back to this peace. So in Isaiah chapter 11, it says this, talking about how the world will come together as one, one day. He says this, "the wolf will live with the lamb." I thought maybe it would say, the wolf will eat the lamb. That's what wolves do. No, the wolf will live with the lamb, and the leopard will lie down with the goat. The calf and the lion, the yearling together-- and then picture this in your mind-- and the little child will lead them. Can you imagine a little child pulling the pets along, a lion, and a variety of other things? It's this precious understanding of God saying that no harm will destroy, neither harm on my holy mountain. Then he says this, "for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the--" to me, it's just too overwhelming. "The earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea." One day, the whole world comes together with this beautiful peace.

And yet, there's difficulties as well. In chapter 12, he says, "I will praise you, Lord, though you have been angry with me, your anger has turned away and you have comforted me." I think there are times in our life where that's true for all of us, where God's comfort comes to us, surrounds us for no particular reason, and the peace of God is there. So what do we do with that? He says, "Give praise to the Lord. Call on His name. Make known among the nations what God has done. Sing to the Lord, for He has done glorious things. Let this be known to all the world. Shout aloud and sing for joy, people of Zion, for great is the Lord among you. Again, I'll never leave you. I'll never forsake you. I am, if you will, your cheerleader. I'm with you every step of the way."

And so we look in this wonderful book many, many years before Jesus comes into the world. And He talks about nations that were fighting with one another. And of course, that's what's happening in the world even today. And then He says this. And at first, it may not sound very profound, but it really is. "In that day, there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria. The Assyrians will go to Egypt and the Egyptians to Syria. And they will worship together."

You see, they were sworn enemies. They couldn't stand one another. There will be a highway, not leaving to get away from the enemy. But there will be a highway to join together, everyone coming together. "In that day, there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria. The Assyrians will go to Egypt and the Egyptians to Assyria. And the Egyptians and the Assyrians will worship together on that day. The Lord Almighty will bless them. Blessed be Egypt, my people, and Assyria, my handiwork, and Israel, my inheritance." It's the peace and the healing of all nations, which is exactly what is said by John in the last book of the Bible, Revelation. Peace and healing of all nations. There will be no more hatred. There will be no more pain. There will be no more war. There will be no more death. All things will become new.

This was written thousands of years. But look where we are today. The promise is even for us today. So in this wonderful little book-- I shouldn't say little. It's kind of a lengthy book. And I'm skipping a lot. But it's peaceful. It's encouraging. He says this, "Be strong, and God will honor you. He will revere you. You have found refuge for the poor. You have helped the needy in their distress. You have become a shelter for the storm of those who have been lost. On this mountain, the Lord Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food--" listen-- "for all people of the earth. There will be a banquet of aged wine, the best of meats, the finest of wines. On the mountain, He will destroy the shroud that unfolded, the captivated. But the sovereign Lord will wipe away every tear from all

faces. He will remove disgrace from the earth." And then he says, "I will create a new heaven and a new earth." It's a glimpse, even though so many years before Jesus comes into the world.

And then this. I take a pause because recently, there have been so many deaths. I've done many, many funerals in the last little while. I don't know why it's happened, but it has. And as I was thinking about it, this scripture came to mind. Death is horrible, but death can also be beautiful. People who are in a lot of pain-- and many of us have heard people say, God, please, just take me. It's time for me. Please, just take me. But here's what Isaiah says. "But your dead will live. Their bodies will rise. Let those who dwell in the dust wake up and shout for joy. This is my promise." And God doesn't mince his promises. He tells the truth of his promises.

So all throughout this wonderful book, it talks about the redeemed. That's not a word that we use very often, but it's a positive, positive understanding. The joy of the redeemed-- forgiveness of sins, relationship with God. He says this. "Then will the eyes of the blind be open, and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy. And there will be a highway there. It will be called the Highway to Holiness." Powerful. The Highway to Holiness. I've never seen that on a grave stand, but I'd like to put that. Don, where have you gone? Oh, I'm on the Highway to Holiness. God's place. I'm on my way there. And for all of us, for sure. He says, "Then will lame like a deer, mute tongue shout for joy." And throughout this book, he's given us these understandings that are so powerful, so happy, so incredible.

Many of us remember Martin Luther King, who quoted many scriptures when he was giving his lectures. One of the scriptures he says is this. "Comfort. Comfort, my people," says your Lord. "Speak tenderly and proclaim to Israel that her hard service has been completed, and that her sin has been paid for completely. She is received from the Lord's hand the double for all of her sins. A voice calling in the wilderness, saying, prepare the way of the Lord. Make straight in the desert a highway for your God, for every valley shall be raised up, every mountain hill will be made low, the rough ground will become level, and rugged places a plane." Martin Luther King, Jr. used to love that particular scripture.

Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the creator of the ends of the earth. God will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding, no one can fathom. And that's why we call on the name of the Lord. He repeats over and over and over again, I will never leave you. I will never desert you. I am always with you. Sometimes we forget that. Sometimes it's all about us. We could just reach out to God. Then he says this, you are my servant. God's speaking. You are my servant. I have chosen you. I have not rejected you. Don't fear. I'm with you. Don't be dismayed. I'm your God. I will strengthen you. And if God says he's going to strengthen us, he's going to strengthen us. And he will help you. I will uphold you with my righteous hand. Who takes hold of your right hand? Don't be afraid, because I have promised I will help you.

And through life, we go through difficult times. Sometimes we could wish that we could just forget certain things. And then he says, forget the former things. Don't dwell on the past. See, I am doing something new for you. I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland. It is me. It is I, even I, who blots out your sins and transgressions. And I remember your sins, God says, no more. Maybe when we see God, we'll go to him and say, God, I'm so sorry about doing that, saying that. God says, I don't remember that. I don't remember any of that. God has forgotten

about that. And I think also when we get to see God, it will be gone. Those memories will be gone. And the beautiful promises of God we will see.

He says this, is it too small a thing for you to be my servant, to restore the tribes of Jacob, bring back those of Israel I have kept? I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, for everyone, that my salvation may reach the ends of the earth. He says this some 800 years before Jesus comes into the world. It's precious what God is giving us, renewal, revival, restoration, we're part of it all.

Sometimes we read the Bible and say, well, that was back then. But it's also right here and now. And then he reminds us of what Jesus had to do for us, the penalty of our sins. But he did it for us. Surely he took up our pain. Surely he bore our suffering. We were considered stricken by him and afflicted. But he was pierced, talking about Jesus on the cross. But he was pierced for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities. The punishment that brought us peace was on him. And then listen to these words. And by his wounds, we are healed. And if God says, we are healed in our mind, in our heart, then we're healed. It's this inside dilemma, this battle sometimes between Satan and Jesus. And Jesus wins out when we give ourselves to him. So he says this. After Jesus suffered, he saw the light of life. And he was satisfied, for he bore the sin of many. And he made intercession for the transgressions.

So I'll finish up. Then he says this. The year of the Lord's favor. The spirit of the sovereign Lord is on me. To proclaim the good news to the poor, he has sent me to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim freedom from the captives, to release from the darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of God's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all of us who mourn and provide for those who grieve. Instead of mourning, there will be a garment of praise. Instead of a spirit of despair, they will call the mighty yokes planted by God for the display of splendor.

And then he finishes up with this. What about a new heaven? What about a new earth? Revelation talks of that. John talks of that. Peter talks about that. And here in Isaiah, he says this. See, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they ever come to your mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I will create. And I will create Jerusalem to be a delight and its people a joy and take delight of my people. The sound of weeping and crying will be heard no more, no more. Look at this beautiful scripture. It's profound so many thousands of years ago for what we are receiving today through Jesus Christ. Isn't God so incredibly wonderful for what he does for us?

So let me conclude as Isaiah concludes. As the new heavens and the new earth that I will make will endure before me, declares the Lord, so will your name and descendants endure forever. What an amazing book, Isaiah.

Closing

I thank Don for his message and Amy for her talk in the table and others who participated. I have three verses and then a prayer. A favorite, First John and I commend it; the whole book 105 verses easy read but some powerful thinking. It relates to what Don has said. Chapter 4 verses 9 to 12: This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only son into the world that we may live through him. This is love, not that we love God, but that he loved us. He sent his son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends since God so loved us, we also ought to love one

another. No one has ever seen God, but if we love one another God lives in us and His love is made complete in us. Let's pray.

Father our senses are alive with gratitude for your presence in all creation We're overwhelmed We're in awe of the gift of life for your spirit That lives in us for your love provided to us Allow us to be Emissaries of your love your mercy and your grace to others We humbly ask That we may praise you always and forever through Christ. Amen

Contact & Copyright

Thanks for watching or listening. The Beamsville Church of Christ meets at 4900 John Street, Beamsville, Ontario. Scripture quotations marked NIV taken from the Holy Bible New International Version. NIV. Copyright 2011 by Biblica Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide. You can find out more about the congregation on our Facebook page or at www.beamsvillechurchofchrist.ca