

“Your God Reigns!”

Isaiah 52:1-12

Sunday, March 10th, 2024

- *Do you ever see yourself in the Bible as you're reading it?*
- *Have you ever read a passage of Scripture that God seemed to be making very clear and very specific to you?*
- *Ever experience that?* I have on occasion. It seems like God is speaking ***directly to me***.

Today's passage from the Bible, **Isaiah 52:1-12**, is one of those places that pegs me. (Incidentally, we'll include verses 13-15 next Sunday morning when we study **Isaiah Chapter 53**, Lord willing). If you've ever experienced what I'm describing here, I'd love to hear your story.

Last Sunday, as we studied **Isaiah Chapter 51**, we looked more thoroughly at the third of four Servant Songs in Isaiah's prophecy. Throughout our study in Isaiah, when we've seen Isaiah speaking about the Messiah, we've learned that refers to Jesus Christ. The same is true of the identity of the Servant in the 4 Servant Songs - He is Jesus.

Isaiah 52:1-12:

'52 - Awake, awake!

Put on your strength, O Zion;
put on your beautiful garments,
O Jerusalem, the holy city!
For the uncircumcised and the unclean
shall no longer come to you.

2 - Shake yourself from the dust, arise;
sit down, O Jerusalem!
Loose yourself from the bonds of your neck,
O captive daughter of Zion!

3 For thus says the LORD:
“You have sold yourselves for nothing,
and you shall be redeemed without money.”

4 For thus says the Lord GOD:
“My people went down at first
into Egypt to dwell there;
then the Assyrian oppressed them without cause.

5 - “Now therefore, what have I here,” says the LORD,
“That My people are taken away for nothing?
Those who rule over them
make them wail,” says the LORD,
“and My name *is* blasphemed continually every day.

6 - Therefore My people shall know My name;
therefore *they shall know* in that day
that I *am* He who speaks:
'Behold, *it is I.*' "

7 - How beautiful upon the mountains
are the feet of him who brings good news,
who proclaims peace,
who brings glad tidings of good *things*,
who proclaims salvation,
who says to Zion,
"Your God reigns!"

8 - Your watchmen shall lift up *their* voices,
with their voices they shall sing together;
for they shall see eye to eye
when the LORD brings back Zion.

9 - Break forth into joy, sing together,
you waste places of Jerusalem!
For the LORD has comforted His people,
He has redeemed Jerusalem.

10 - The LORD has made bare His holy arm
in the eyes of all the nations;
and all the ends of the earth shall see
the salvation of our God.

11 - Depart! Depart! Go out from there,
touch no unclean *thing*;
go out from the midst of her,
be clean,
you who bear the vessels of the LORD.

12 - For you shall not go out with haste,
nor go by flight;
for the LORD will go before you,
and the God of Israel *will be* your rear guard."

Beginning with verse 1, I'm going to touch on a few verses in this chapter that have use for us as God's people - I'll call them 'nuggets.'

The first nugget is found in verse 1. Notice first of all, that Isaiah begins with a couplet that first appeared with the text we examined last Sunday in **Isaiah Chapter 51**.

- "Awake! Awake!" - used at the beginning of verses **9 and 17 of Chapter 51**, had the aim of God's people snapping out of their spiritual stupor. The same couplet is now used again in the first verse of Chapter 52 - "Awake! Awake!"

- We see another couplet at the beginning of verse 11 - "Depart, depart! Go out from there." Isaiah instructs Judah the time of their departure from Babylon is near. The Lord will go before them and He will be their rear guard!

Verse 1 also contains a second nugget. It points out to us that there are two kinds of people in this world - those who belong to God's people and those who do not. "Put on your beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city! For the uncircumcised and the unclean shall no longer come to you." When verse 1 of **Isaiah 52** refers to "uncircumcised," it is not speaking of the physical act of cutting the male reproductive organ; it refers to the heart. If you are a believer in Jesus Christ, it's because God has circumcised your heart; you've received the "circumcision made without hands" (**Colossians 2:11**). If you're not a believer in Jesus, you have not yet been circumcised in your heart.

- **Genesis Chapter 3** describes the two peoples as two seeds - those who are the *Seed of the Woman* and those who are of the *seed of the serpent*;
- People are either "born again," or not "born again" (**John 3:1-8**);
- People are either "children of God" or "children of the devil" (**1 John 3:10**);
- Everyone is either "of the Spirit" or "of the flesh" (**Romans 8:5-9**);
- You are either the "spiritual man" or the "natural man" (**1 Cor 2:14-16**);
- We are either "believers" or "unbelievers" in Jesus Christ (**John 3:18**);
- We are "found and saved" or we are "lost" (**Luke Chapter 15**).

Which describe you? It is not likely in a gathering like this of about 125 people that everyone is a Christian. There may be several who are not. *Do you know whether or not you are a Christian?*

- *Do you love Jesus? Really and truly love Him? Do you love His people?*
- *Do you spend time with His people especially on Sundays?*
- *Do you read your Bible (God's Word) regularly? Do you pray to God often?*
- *Do you want to get better? Are you a forgiving, loving person?*

The answers to these questions will help you determine whether you are among God's people or not. Don't waste anymore time trying to determine that. Take the dive! Make the break! Trust in Jesus!

Verse 3 contains a third nugget and reveals the cost of salvation from sin. "You have sold yourselves for nothing, and you shall be redeemed without money." **Chapter 55** begins with these words - "Ho! Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price."

Should we charge those who are receiving our gospel ministry efforts? Do we sell tickets for people to watch a movie in our sanctuary on a Friday night? What about having an ice cream social and charging people \$5 per piece of pie? Or a fellowship meal and expecting people to pay something for their meal.

We should not expect those who are unbelievers in Jesus to fund the work of God's Church. If we are going to have an ice cream social, pie sale, movie viewing or fellowship meal, we would not charge people outside of the church to attend those

things. **It is up to the Lord's people to fund the work of His church!** We work hard, we save, and we set aside as the firstfruits what we will freely and cheerfully give to our Church. Each one of you holding membership in this congregation, vowed that you would "support the church in its worship and work to the best of your ability." That means you should be systematically and sacrificially contributing to the ministries of your church financially. We have no biblical warrant to charge people to trust in Jesus for salvation!

Look at it this way - Salvation may be free, but it is not cheap. Becoming a believer in Jesus Christ is absolutely free - there are no strings attached or fingers crossed. But, having said that - salvation is free to us because it was costly to God. He gave His one and only begotten Son to be delivered up for our salvation - Jesus died for us. He became sin for us. **2 Corinthians 5:21** teaches us the "*He (God) made Him (Jesus) Who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*"

What might it look like that Jesus became sin for us?

Michael Horton give us a glance in his book, *We Believe*, when he writes, "He who was truth would become the world's most inveterate liar. He who was too pure to look upon a woman to lust would become history's most promiscuous adulterer. The only man who ever loved with pure selflessness would become the most despised villain in God's universe. He would become a racist, a murderer, a gossip, slanderer, thief and tyrant. He would become all of this not in Himself, but as the sin-bearing substitute for us." (*We Believe*, 101)

Jump to verse 7 with me where we find a 4th nugget. "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who proclaims peace, who brings glad tidings of good *things*, who proclaims salvation, who says to Zion, "Your God reigns!"

In his letter to the church at Rome (which we call Romans), the Apostle Paul quoted **Isaiah 52:7**. This is that quote - **Romans 10:15** - "...how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things!"

This is where I find myself in this passage. In a long line of godly men, I find myself to be one who brings glad tidings of good things to God's people. In Isaiah's day, messengers ran from the scene of battle across the hills to Zion with the good news that God reigns!

- **Exodus 15:18** - This verse concludes the Song of Moses, "The LORD shall reign forever and ever."
- 4 psalms include the phrase "The Lord Reigns." They describe God's rule of the entire earth and universe.
 - **Psalms 93:1** - "The LORD reigns, He is clothed with majesty; He has girded Himself with strength."
 - **Psalms 96:10** - "Say among the nations, "The LORD reigns!"
 - **Psalms 97:1** - "The LORD reigns; let the earth rejoice;"
 - **Psalms 99:1** - "The LORD reigns; let the peoples tremble! He dwells *between* the cherubim; let the earth be moved!"

- **Revelation 19:6** - “And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, “Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!” This verse was the inspiration for George Frideric Handel’s “Hallelujah Chorus” in *Messiah*.

Verse 7 highlights a fifth nugget in referring to those who proclaim peace and who bring glad tidings of good things. *Does this description fit you?* You do not need to be a pastor or graduate of a seminary in order to proclaim the gospel to others. This means you share the gospel (good news) with others in your life. It also includes sharing words of peace and encouragement to your family, friends, neighbors, and coworkers. Many people in our world long to hear a word of good tidings—pray that God will show you an opportunity to be a witness of the hope found in Him.

Let’s summarize the the nuggets we looked at:

- **Nugget 1, verse 1** - “Awake! Awake!” and “Depart! Depart!” The time for Judah’s departure from Babylon was at hand. This mirrors the exodus of God’s people from Egypt so very long ago. Depart! Depart!
- **Nugget 2, verse 1** - There are two kinds of people in the world - those who belong to Jesus, and those who belong to Satan.
- **Nugget 3 - verse 3** - *What does salvation cost? What’s the price tag on redemption?* Salvation is free! God puts no price tag on the Gift of gifts—it’s absolutely free!
- **Nugget 4 - verse 7** - “The Lord reigns!”
- **Nugget 5 - verse 7** - Salvation is a proclamation! It is a verbal exchange of sacred Scripture and changed lives. *Are you saved from your sins, friend?* If not, or you don’t know, then let’s talk. Shoot me a text, give me a call - let’s walk and talk.

Have you ever heard the name Josiah Henson? He was born into slavery in the state of Maryland in the year 1789. After suffering horrific abuse from the hands of slave masters, Josiah took his family and escaped to Canada and freedom. Since Josiah grew up as a slave, he could barely read and couldn’t write even his alphabet, but he became one of the most powerful speakers, ministers, and businessmen of his day.

Josiah founded a community of Africans in Canada that provided homes and livelihoods for thousands of former slaves. Education was very important to Josiah. He wanted others to have the opportunity that he missed out on. He helped establish a school that educated generations. Josiah made 2 fund-raising campaigns to Great Britain, where he was invited to a personal audience with Queen Victoria. He also preached for the Prince of Preachers, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, while in England.

Perhaps the most notable thing was that Josiah served as the inspiration for Harriet Beecher Stowe’s book *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, a novel which unmasked the horrors of slavery in the Old South and played a decisive role in the Civil War. Josiah Henson was a man who was faithful to proclaim the good news of God’s grace even though he couldn’t read or write!

