

Isaiah was God's instrument to warn the nation of Judah of the consequences of their spiritual depravity. Twice so far, interspersed in those warnings, were predictions of the coming kingdom of God. His message is that they have fallen so far that captivity is the only thing that will prepare them for the coming Messiah and His kingdom. They need to lose all that they have and depend on so that they will repent and be washed clean.

Two weeks ago we considered the beauty of the Branch, the coming Messiah, and how we should be praising Him for His goodness right now (Isaiah 4:2-4), which is what Judah refused to do. In our passage today, Isaiah describes the bitter grapes in the vineyard song. The passage consists of seven woes and their consequences. In the middle of these, there is a declaration of the central truth of the passage. The Lord of hosts is exalted in judgment!

⁸ Woe to those who join house to house, who add field to field, until there is no more room, and you are made to dwell alone in the midst of the land. ⁹ The LORD of hosts has sworn in my hearing: "Surely many houses shall be desolate, large and beautiful houses, without inhabitant. Isaiah 5:8-9 Woe! It is an interjection used 50 times in Scripture. It is usually used as a cry of warning of impending judgment. Six times it is used in mourning the dead (1Kings 13:30).

The idea in these verses is of the affluence of Jerusalem and the unconcern for the poor. We can see that in the use of the same word in both verses. The person that has nowhere to dwell is the same word in verse nine as the inhabitant that no longer lives in his or her beautiful home. The poor had no place to build because the wealthy bought up all the available land in cities for wall to wall housing. They bought up the country land and turned it all into cultivated fields. But when God's judgments would fall, the inhabitant that had no concern for the poor not having a place to dwell would be forced to leave their own beautiful home. As we saw in chapter three, support and supply would be taken from them along with bread and water. (Isaiah 3:1) It is not that investments and agriculture are somehow sinful. They were ignoring the Jubilee Laws that returned land to its original owner (Luke 12:48; also see Leviticus 25) and were unconcerned about the poor.

It is difficult in our culture to relate to this because we are so blessed. Those who have their hand out are often those who refuse to work or who have addictions. But we are beginning to see more and more genuine poverty that comes with the decline of a nation. **Where we see genuine hardship, we should show the love of God by providing assistance** (1 John 3:17).

Mariko had a person who was obviously a meth addict ask her for money last week. Mariko offered her a meal. The person turned and walked away. We see the cycle of professional beggars hit the heavy traffic hours at the freeway off ramps in Flagstaff. But we also know some single parent moms who are struggling to feed their kids and doing all they can to make ends meet. Be generous, but be discerning.

Commented [PW1]: Isaiah 4:2-4 (NIV)

² In that day the Branch of the LORD will be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the land will be the pride and glory of the survivors in Israel.

³ Those who are left in Zion, who remain in Jerusalem, will be called holy, all who are recorded among the living in Jerusalem.

⁴ The Lord will wash away the filth of the women of Zion; he will cleanse the bloodstains from Jerusalem by a spirit of judgment and a spirit of fire.

Commented [PW2]: 1 Kings 13:30 (ESV)

³⁰ And he laid the body in his own grave. And they mourned over him, saying, "Alas, my brother!"

Commented [PW3]: Isaiah 3:1 (ESV)

¹ For behold, the Lord GOD of hosts is taking away from Jerusalem and from Judah support and supply, all support of bread, and all support of water;

Commented [PW4]: Luke 12:48 (ESV)

⁴⁸ But the one who did not know, and did what deserved a beating, will receive a light beating. Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more.

Commented [PW5]: 1 John 3:17 (ESV)

¹⁷ But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?

¹⁰ *For ten acres of vineyard shall yield but one bath, and a homer of seed shall yield but an ephah.* Isaiah 5:10 The Spirit of God has come upon Isaiah and he is hearing the voice of God swear these things will happen. The abundance of blessing upon Judah is over! This verse literally means that what ten yoke of oxen can plow in a day won't produce enough in a year to feed those oxen for that day. The people will reap a tenth of what they sow. It is over! The time of prosperity should have resulted in their helping the poor and giving praise to God. The goodness of God should have drawn them to repentance (Romans 2:4). Instead, the people hardened their hearts and lived for their greed and selfish pleasures.

¹¹ *Woe to those who rise early in the morning, that they may run after strong drink, who tarry late into the evening as wine inflames them!* ¹² *They have lyre and harp, tambourine and flute and wine at their feasts, but they do not regard the deeds of the LORD, or see the work of his hands.* Isaiah 5:11-12 Lots of entertainment, but no regard for God. Amusement means away from thinking. If the god of this world can just keep us absorbed with mind numbing games, depraved TV shows, and violent movies that have no value, we don't have to think about eternity and whether or not we are living out the purpose for which we were created. They lived to party.

Preoccupation with manmade pleasures keeps us from seeing the work of the LORD, praising Him for our gorgeous sunsets, seeing Him work in our neighbor's life, watching how He directs our steps, and so much more. Enjoy a glass of wine if you are in control of it. Flee from it if it dominates or consumes you (1 Corinthians 6:12). Enjoy music, especially praise music, but don't let the message of worldly music indoctrinate your mind. When the rhythm of a song with an ungodly message comes into my mind, I enjoy changing the words to the opposite message. Try it. It's a good exercise. Instead of drowning out the voice of conscience, let music exercise our conscience to express spiritual truth.

I find that the more spiritually mature people are, the more they recognize and give thanks for the deeds of the LORD in the world around them and in their own lives. That is a factor in how joyful they are. They are always thanking God. Like the seraphim in the next chapter (Isaiah 6:3), they see the whole earth filled with the glory of God.

Now we come to the consequences that sprout from the spiritual condition God has described. ¹³ *Therefore my people go into exile for lack of knowledge; their honored men go hungry, and their multitude is parched with thirst.* ¹⁴ *Therefore Sheol has enlarged its appetite and opened its mouth beyond measure, and the nobility of Jerusalem and her multitude will go down, her revelers and he who exults in her.* Isaiah 5:13-14 The knowledge they lack is the knowledge of the LORD and His Word (Hosea 4:6; Isaiah 1:3). They don't honor those who are truly honorable. In fact, they reject them. The people are dying of spiritual thirst (Amos 8:11), and that will become their physical condition as well.

That is why exile and the death of so many must take place to change the nation. Sheol is the grave. The nobility, the common man, the partiers that thought tomorrow would be like today, were about to answer to their Maker (Isaiah 56:12). The One who had given

Commented [PW6]: Romans 2:4 (ESV)

⁴ Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?

Commented [PW7]: 1 Corinthians 6:12 (ESV)

¹² "All things are lawful for me," but not all things are helpful. "All things are lawful for me," but I will not be dominated by anything.

Commented [PW8]: Isaiah 6:3 (ESV)

³ And one called to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!"

Commented [PW9]: Hosea 4:6 (ESV)

⁶ My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge; because you have rejected knowledge, I reject you from being a priest to me. And since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children.

Commented [PW10]: Isaiah 1:3 (ESV)

³ The ox knows its owner, and the donkey its master's crib, but Israel does not know, my people do not understand."

Commented [PW11]: Amos 8:11 (ESV)

¹¹ "Behold, the days are coming," declares the Lord GOD, "when I will send a famine on the land—not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD.

Commented [PW12]: Isaiah 56:12 (ESV)

¹² "Come," they say, "let me get wine; let us fill ourselves with strong drink; and tomorrow will be like this day, great beyond measure."

them so much, who invited them to be His priests to the world (Exodus 19:6), who warned them with miraculous deliverances from enemies and by the vivid example of northern Israel, would ask them why they refused His grace.

15 Man is humbled, and each one is brought low, and the eyes of the haughty are brought low. 16 But the LORD of hosts is exalted in justice, and the Holy God shows himself holy in righteousness. 17 Then shall the lambs graze as in their pasture, and nomads shall eat among the ruins of the rich. Isaiah 5:15-17 Isaiah described the haughty men in chapter two and the haughty women in chapter three (Isaiah 2:11; 3:16). Pride is the ugliest of all attitudes in the eyes of God (Proverbs 8:13). Pride declares its independence from the very One that gave him or her life, breath, strength, health, and all things. Everything we have is a gift from God (1 Corinthians 4:7), but we not only declare our independence, we pretend we are a product of chance and time. The arrogance of man looks at the marvel of creation and declares it to be a cosmic accident. That is haughtiness in the extreme.

If we think we can rob God of His glory, we are sadly mistaken. He will be exalted in justice! His justice upon our pride will show just how righteous He is. Righteousness demands that justice be met. His holiness is seen in His righteous justice. If He were not a holy God, He might let us continue in arrogant pride. But He is holy! There is a day when justice must be met on the cross or in hell. To some extent, there are times when we can see it in this life. Those beautiful homes that left no space for the poor would be pasture land and a place for nomads to dine.

Now for the second set of actions and consequences. You'll see some of the themes overlap but with a different emphasis. *18 Woe to those who draw iniquity with cords of falsehood, who draw sin as with cart ropes, 19 who say: "Let him be quick, let him speed his work that we may see it; let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw near, and let it come, that we may know it!"* Isaiah 5:18-19 This time the woes are to the ones that draw the heavy load of sin to themselves with their lies. Instead of fleeing from sin, they laboriously draw it to themselves. The lies are the deception that sin will somehow satisfy the emptiness within and that there won't be consequences (Proverbs 5:22). The lie is that God won't judge us for ignoring His just commands (Psalm 10:11).

The most repulsive act of all those condemned is the one in verse 19. They mockingly say, *19 who say: "Let him be quick, let him speed his work that we may see it; let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw near, and let it come, that we may know it!"* Allow me to paraphrase. "Let God hurry up and judge us. We want to see God act. If God wants to speak, bring it on. We are all ears." These are the mocking taunts that Isaiah had to put up with. We hear them today. Rarely are they this bold, but it is quickly approaching that state. We would hear it more if the church was bold enough to proclaim that we as a nation will be judged if we do not turn to God in repentance (Psalm 9:17).

20 Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter! Isaiah 5:20 The reversal of God's standards are a sign of nation's decline. When we justify sin and call it a good thing, we have put light for darkness. When false religions are lauded, idolatry encouraged,

Commented [PW13]: Exodus 19:6 (ESV)

⁶ and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel."

Commented [PW14]: Isaiah 2:11 (ESV)

¹¹ The haughty looks of man shall be brought low, and the lofty pride of men shall be humbled, and the LORD alone will be exalted in that day.

Commented [PW15]: Isaiah 3:16 (ESV)

¹⁶ The LORD said: Because the daughters of Zion are haughty and walk with outstretched necks, glancing wantonly with their eyes, mincing along as they go, tinkling with their feet,

Commented [PW16]: Proverbs 8:13 (ESV)

¹³ The fear of the LORD is hatred of evil. Pride and arrogance and the way of evil and perverted speech I hate.

Commented [PW17]: 1 Corinthians 4:7 (ESV)

⁷ For who sees anything different in you? What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it?

Commented [PW18]: Proverbs 5:22 (ESV)

²² The iniquities of the wicked ensnare him, and he is held fast in the cords of his sin.

Commented [PW19]: Psalm 10:11 (ESV)

¹¹ He says in his heart, "God has forgotten, he has hidden his face, he will never see it."

Commented [PW20]: Psalm 9:17 (ESV)

¹⁷ The wicked shall return to Sheol, all the nations that forget God.

promiscuity called a necessity, divorce labeled as inevitable, and selfishness is called healthy, we have lost our way. When the Bible is called bigotry and Christianity is referred to as the cause of much of the wrong in the world, we have forgotten our roots and what made our nation great.

Individually it means that each person who practices and promotes those things reaps the fruit of them. Most people don't even take the time to consider the outcome of the lives they admire. We can be blinded by our own passions and desire to be accepted so that we can't see the consequences right before us. In declaring that it is up to us as individuals to decide what is right or wrong for us, we have declared ourselves to be our own god.

²¹ Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, and shrewd in their own sight! Isaiah 5:21 Pride at its worst. "I know better than the prophet of God. I know better than the Word of God." Or it may be, "I know how to do as I please and still be acceptable to God." Basically it is saying, "I can escape the justice of God (Proverbs 3:7)." That is not possible. Each of us will give an account of himself to God (Romans 14:12)! This kind of pride can hear nothing but their own opinion.

²² Woe to those who are heroes at drinking wine, and valiant men in mixing strong drink, ²³ who acquit the guilty for a bribe, and deprive the innocent of his right! Isaiah 5:22-23 Once again we see the glory in excessive alcohol consumption. There is condemnation of the people's praise for the overindulgent and against the injustice in the judicial system. While bribery may be more rare here than in third world countries, it is still a factor. A more common problem is the wealth to hire an attorney that can spin the facts so the jury is dazzled into a wrong decision.

The innocent being deprived of their rights is increasingly common. As our nation adopts corrupted standards, judges are making decisions based on the current temperature of the nation's popular opinion (Deuteronomy 16:20). Back in the 70s my family had our own experience of coming before a judge to try to force a corrupt developer to honor the building codes. We didn't even get a chance to present our case. Grades were steeper than allowed, sewer and water lines were put in the same trench, our well was surrounded with changes in elevation that caused it to flood. Many of you have your own story. Injustice is evil because God is just (Deuteronomy 32:4).

Now for the consequences of drawing evil to themselves, mocking God, perverting what is good, distorting right and wrong, being prideful, indulgent, honoring the abuse of chemicals, and being unjust. *²⁴ Therefore, as the tongue of fire devours the stubble, and as dry grass sinks down in the flame, so their root will be as rottenness, and their blossom go up like dust; for they have rejected the law of the LORD of hosts, and have despised the word of the Holy One of Israel.* Isaiah 5:24 Their root is their source of support and supply that God already declared would be taken away. When the root is dead, the tree is dead. Their blossom is all the outward manifestations of success. Like dust in the wind, it is gone (James 4:14).

The root of the Christian should be their faith in Jesus. What is the root of our nation? We may have once said it was our faith in God, but now it is more likely to be faith in

Commented [PW21]: Proverbs 3:7 (ESV)

⁷ Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD, and turn away from evil.

Commented [PW22]: Romans 14:12 (ESV)

¹² So then each of us will give an account of himself to God.

Commented [PW23]: Deuteronomy 16:20 (ESV)

²⁰ Justice, and only justice, you shall follow, that you may live and inherit the land that the LORD your God is giving you.

Commented [PW24]: Deuteronomy 32:4 (ESV)

⁴ "The Rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and upright is he.

Commented [PW25]: James 4:14 (ESV)

¹⁴ yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes.

ourselves, our military, our technology, our education, etc. And what is our blossom? Is it our wealth and status in the world? It should be, and to some extent still is, our assistance to those who face tyranny and injustice, but we are beginning to need it at home as much as it is needed abroad (Matthew 3:10). When people are unfairly targeted for their political affiliation, or for voting for moral principles, injustice abounds.

The reason justice must fall on them is stated in the previous verses, but now it summed up in another way. ... *they have rejected the law of the LORD of hosts, and have despised the word of the Holy One of Israel.* That is the source of the injustice, pride and distorting right and wrong. Our nation at large is rejecting the Word of God, and despising the Holy One of Israel. My daughter told me she was experiencing something I had warned her about. She bought our car that has "bible-sermons.org" on the back. Many drivers treat you quite differently when they see it, even giving you gestures. I've even had my tire punctured. There is an increased despising of the things of God in our nation. Ravi has said, "Immorality is always preceded by impiety." First we lose our respect and reverence of God and His Word, and the result is increasing immorality (Nehemiah 9:29).

²⁵ Therefore the anger of the LORD was kindled against his people, and he stretched out his hand against them and struck them, and the mountains quaked; and their corpses were as refuse in the midst of the streets. For all this his anger has not turned away, and his hand is stretched out still. Isaiah 5:25 After all God had done and the glorious future He intended for them, they despised Him. Now it was time for justice. Assyria defeated all but Jerusalem, which God miraculously spared. But God was not done. If they had then turned, their future may have been different, but even in the face of such a miraculous rescue, they would not fully turn back to God.

(See 2 Kings 19) The Assyrians laid siege to Jerusalem. The people were sure they would be defeated or die of starvation. The king asked the LORD to save them. Isaiah predicted the leader of the Assyrians would hear a rumor, return to his own land, and be killed. Soon after, an angel of God slew 185,000 Assyrians. Isaiah's prophecy came to pass, but the people still did not turn to the Lord with all their heart. The very next king was one of the wickedest in Israel's history (2 Kings 21:9).

²⁶ He will raise a signal for nations far away, and whistle for them from the ends of the earth; and behold, quickly, speedily they come! ²⁷ None is weary, none stumbles, none slumbers or sleeps, not a waistband is loose, not a sandal strap broken; ²⁸ their arrows are sharp, all their bows bent, their horses' hoofs seem like flint, and their wheels like the whirlwind. ²⁹ Their roaring is like a lion, like young lions they roar; they growl and seize their prey; they carry it off, and none can rescue. ³⁰ They will growl over it on that day, like the growling of the sea. And if one looks to the land, behold, darkness and distress; and the light is darkened by its clouds. Isaiah 5:26-30 The next invasion would be anointed by God to utterly defeat Judah. They would go into captivity. The survivors would once again honor God by repenting and seeking to follow the laws He had given them. What does it take to turn a nation whose hearts despise God? If hardship does not turn them, defeat may.

Commented [PW26]: Matthew 3:10 (ESV)

¹⁰ Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

Commented [PW27]: Nehemiah 9:29 (ESV)

²⁹ And you warned them in order to turn them back to your law. Yet they acted presumptuously and did not obey your commandments, but sinned against your rules, which if a person does them, he shall live by them, and they turned a stubborn shoulder and stiffened their neck and would not obey.

Commented [PW28]: 2 Kings 21:9 (ESV)

⁹ But they did not listen, and Manasseh led them astray to do more evil than the nations had done whom the LORD destroyed before the people of Israel.

God is loving enough to do whatever it takes. He is exalted in justice. He even went to the extent of sending His own Son to take the just penalty for our sins. The cross is the greatest meeting place of love and justice. In it, God is highly exalted in justice. Only in Christ, the true vine, can we bear the fruit that God is seeking. Without Him we end up just like the people of Judah. If we are in Him, we will bear much fruit, but without Him, like the nation of Judah, we can do nothing (John 15:5). Only in Jesus do we produce the fruit God is seeking.

Commented [PW29]: John 15:5 (ESV)

⁵ I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

Questions

- 1 What is God's message so far in Isaiah?
- 2 What are verses 8 and 9 about?
- 3 What occupied the people's time?
- 4 How is God exalted in judgment? How does it show Him to be holy?
- 5 Why is pride so abhorrent to God?
- 6 Do we hear things like verse 19 today?
- 7 What are some common distortions of truth today? Have we fallen for any?
- 8 What is the root of all their sins?
- 9 Why does God hate injustice?
- 10 What must God do to Judah? Why?