

Isaiah 1:1-2

¹ **The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.**

² **Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth! For the LORD has spoken: " I have nourished and brought up children, And they have rebelled against Me;**

This is our second look at the book of Isaiah.

You and I are more than likely here this morning because we share a belief. We believe that the Creator of this universe does **more than just** display His handiwork in creation. We believe that this mighty God, for reasons that are His own, **chooses to reveal Himself to humans**. He tells us about Himself. And He tells us what He thinks of us.

And the truth is, that is the **only way** we know anything about God other than that which is revealed in creation. We are completely dependent **upon Him** to condescend into the world of mortals if we are to know Him at all. We certainly cannot ascend to where He is in our human state. He must do the communicating.

The Bible teaches us that all world religions besides Christianity and Judaism were either creations of the imaginations of people or the product of demons or both. They are man's attempt to get to God. They do not represent what God says about Himself. As such they are futile, foolish and a very great evil. What could be more evil than to deceive a person about God? Men's religions are designed in a way that robs a man of eternal life, a life that is only offered by the true Creator in a very specific way, One Way.

What we will see this morning is a man who is carrying a message to this world from God. It is a message that people would not know if Isaiah did not carefully deliver it. It is critical information, life saving information. It is a word from God. It is more important than any other information we could receive because it addresses a human being's most important need- existence.

Isaiah was a man who was married and had children. His ministry stretched at least 33 years. This messenger of God was just like us in many ways. He had the same human wiring as we do. He had the tendency toward self protection and self interest. He had the same competing desires against Godliness as we do. He disliked being mistreated and slandered and disassociated and maligned as we do. We need to keep this in mind as we read his story. Here was a real man carrying God's message to an unthankful crowd.

Now there is something in this book that should make us all very uncomfortable. When Isaiah's ministry started there were two truths that were very obvious. The situation this Jewish audience lived in was very good. And the people were living very badly.

Do you remember a time in your childhood when you knowingly did something you were forbidden to do and you were shocked to find out that you could get away with it? You could do this forbidden thing and there seemed to be no consequence. You didn't get caught. Your parents didn't punish you, God didn't knock you dead, and you were free to do it again?

Have you had periods in your later life when you noticed the same thing? You knew you were doing something God forbade, maybe it was hatred or gossip or vengeance or fear or worry or lust or envy or immorality, but there seemed to be no consequences. You woke up every morning and the sun still shone. There was no visible punishment from God. For all intents and purposes it looked like you were getting away with your sin. Things were still good and pleasant in your life. It may have even looked like you were living in a state of blessing by God. You were getting your way.

Maybe that is your state right now. There are things hidden in your life that you think you are getting away with. And frankly, you like it. You like that there appears to be no consequence.

Well, that is the audience that Isaiah first addresses in his ministry as a prophet. They were people who were getting away with sin. And there was nothing happening in their lives to make them change their ways.

Isaiah is a book telling us, among other things, of the danger of thinking you can get away with sin, to think that there will not be a consequence some day.

We simply cannot read the book of Isaiah without being impressed with how big a deal sin is to God. Any idea that God just loves us so much that He will overlook our sin will die a swift death in this book.

Sin has two destinations.

If a person is a believer, sin will lead to **repentance**. It will lead to a specific confession of that sin, an admission of its evil, and then a turning from it.

Here is a poem about that Carla and I read the other day.

**Tis not to cry God Mercy, or to sit and droop, or to confess that thou hast failed.
Tis to bewail the sins thou didst commit- and not commit those sins thou hast
bewailed**

He that bewails, and not forsakes them too Confesses rather what he means to do.

Repentance is a change of mind. It is a reversal in direction. I intend to address the topic of repentance next week. Being sad about our sin and regretting our known sin is not repentance. Intention to stop sinning is not repentance. True repentance results in turning from sin. But true repentance is really changing ones mind in regard to sin. It is a turnabout in our mind that results in a turnabout in our behavior.

We often think that we **do well** to **intend well**. But that is not repentance.

Intending to stop is not repentance. It is a needed first step. But repentance is a change of mind that results in a change of path, not just intention.

Now this change may not happen as swiftly or as cleanly as we would think it should, but that is what will happen with it. And even then, it isn't like there is **no consequence**, even with sins we are forgiven of. It isn't like our evil choices have had **no effect**. We are foolish to think that sin works that way. Scripture says that sin punishes. Even when sin is forgiven, the consequences of those choices are not removed. We need to consider this as we are tempted.

This sin we are tempted with will leave us with the consequence of regret, an aching regret that we should have done better. We should **not have** denied our Lord like we did.

We are left with **thinking patterns** that, due to practice, will now be harder to break. We have **habits** that will now take more time and effort to replace.

We have **memories** that now can come back to haunt us, evidence that our accuser will try to use to convince us we are not truly saved.

We have **wasted time** that we cannot get back. There are things we could have accomplished that now we cannot because of time wasted in sin.

We have the realization that we served as a distraction **from Christ** to others rather than a **light to them** about Christ.

There are lots of consequences, even to sins that have been forgiven. But forgiven sin has **God's death penalty removed** from what we did. He will never remember it against us for judgment. We can praise God for that! And we are to bask in that fact.

When we stand before Christ one day, none of us are going to think- man I am glad I sinned that sin. Man I am glad I lived life my way. I am so pleased of the things I gained through disobedience or rebellion. No. There will only be shame. There will only be tears that need dried. There will only be regret for our disgrace to Christ.

The obvious application to believers here is to live in light of eternity. Live now to enjoy forever more. Forsake sin, even the sin you think you can get away with, keeping the heavenly city in mind. **Sin is not going to offer you anything now that you will want later. And faithfulness will not cost you anything now that you won't be glad you paid later.**

So one destination for sin is repentance. The other destination for sin is **destruction**. Our sensibilities are going to be disturbed by this book. God is going to pronounce judgments upon human beings that we will not be comfortable with. And that is probably true because we are already too comfortable with sin and not nearly enough appalled by it. When we understand just how awful it is to sin against the Almighty God, we will understand that anything goes in its

eradication of sin. Those people who deal with stopping disease epidemics have a little grasp on the topic. Sometimes a disease is so deadly that they will keep all the people who are dying of that disease from any comfort that might be available to them. They will quarantine these people in conditions that are far from ideal. And they inflict such a price on the dying because it is the only thing that will keep others from catching that disease. Sin is like that. It is that big of a deal. Its eradication calls for extreme measures.

Isaiah will teach us that. God's words through Isaiah will drive that point home. God takes sin seriously, even when He appears not to be doing anything about it. We can trust the **HE WILL**.

OK, so Isaiah is going to teach us about how serious God is about sin. But praise be to God that we are going to see God's underlying intent for **salvation from sin**. We would not know this if God did not speak. And think about it. What would God's **primary motivation** be for speaking to us at all? If everyone in **the crowd He is speaking to** and in **the crowd who is reading about the results** are simply to be destroyed, why communicate at all? It would serve no purpose except to tell the damned that they deserve their damnation.

No, the message that is held out from one end of scripture to the other is that God offers salvation. It is a salvation that we have proven we don't deserve. In fact it is a salvation we have proven at times we don't **even want**. But God offers it. That is what the prophet, even when he pronounces a most dreaded judgment, portrays to the world. There is a way out. But one must first be motivated to take it.

Look at these wonderful words that will come later in our chapter.

Isaiah 1:18-19

¹⁸ "Come now, and let us reason together," Says the LORD, "Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool. ¹⁹ If you are willing and obedient, You shall eat the good of the land;

Isn't this just wonderful? Doesn't your soul spring with hope as you read these words? God holds out to us a way of salvation, a way of escape from **who we are** and **what we have done**. Even to these people who are sinning and are glad to be getting away with it.

God is a God of **justice and grace**. We cannot make Him out to be one or the other, or even one **at the expense of** the other. But when I read the Bible I get the distinct idea that **God prefers grace**. Carla and I were talking about this the other day and I said that God likes to show off grace. I remember it because she wrote it down and put it on the fridge. That doesn't happen with everything I say. It is true. God likes to show off His Grace. Maybe that is the most surprising thing about God when we study His attributes. We can see how God is a lot of

amazingly good things. His traits are amazing. But Grace applies those traits to our benefit. Grace is our “in” with God.

Cry alert-

If you are anything like me we are left with this question on our lips. WHY? Is there something that lovable about me? And after a short look at ourselves we know the answer to the question “why?” is simply because it is just like Him. It is just like God to extend His grace.

So while the prophet holds no punches about how much **God hates the sins** that these people are knowingly and continually committing, he holds out to them the words of God that **invite them into His favor**, into His salvation, into His grace.

That is how **we** need to be if we are to accurately represent God.

Now, before we look at our text we need to address a question. Isaiah 6 is one of the most popular texts in Isaiah. It is about Isaiah’s calling. I look forward to dealing with it in depth when we get there. But the question scholars have trouble with is, is it out of chronological order? In other words, did it happen before Isaiah’s first ministry record in Chapter 1? Or did Isaiah actually begin to minister before he experienced this supernatural event?

The answer? It could go either way.

Suppose that Isaiah began his ministry before his dramatic calling in Chapter 6.

Let me ask you. Have you ever attempted to minister for God before you accurately understood either yourself or God? Did you begin before you had an adequate understanding of your own failure or the sufficiency of God’s power? If so, why would it be a big deal if Isaiah was chosen to start working before he really had all the skills, all the tools? I don’t think it would be unlike God to send someone who doesn’t represent Him as well as they should. But they are still willing to go.

Ok, now suppose that Chapter 6 is out of chronological order. What difference does that really make? There are many that say that Isaiah’s call is actually similar to what God was calling **everyone** to. So when Isaiah’s calling is placed in chapter 6 it is almost like God is saying, this is how it is done. This is what repentance looks like.

The truth is we don’t know and we have no way of knowing which is true. And it could happen either way.

OK let’s look at our text.

¹ **The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz,**

Who was Isaiah? There is tradition saying that Isaiah was either of the kingly lineage or the priestly lineage. But no one knows for sure. As far as we know he was just a guy chosen by God for a very important and very unpopular task.

But what the name Isaiah means we do know and it is very important. Isaiah means “The Lord Saves”. There is a quote from a commentary I wanted to read.

This man's very identity announces grace from beyond ourselves. We don't like that. We want to retain control, save face, set our own terms, pay our own way. Every day we treat God as incidental to what really matters to us, and we live by our own strategies of self-salvation. We don't think of our choices that way, but Isaiah can see that our lives are infested with fraudulent idols. Any hope that isn't from God is an idol of our own making.

Preaching the Word - Preaching the Word – Isaiah: God Saves Sinners.

The state of Judea at this time reflected a people who relied upon themselves and even alternative Gods. The gist of the book gives us the feeling that these people did not think they needed saving. They respond like they are good with God because, well, they are good. But that is not Isaiah's message. Isaiah will be true to his name. His message will be that, if the people of Israel hope to be saved at all, they had better repent and call out to God right now. Because if they do not, they are doomed. They are sitting on the precipice of war and destruction and they have no idea. And they have no idea because everything seems to be going well. But just because all seems to be going well does not mean that all will end well.

Verse 1 tells us this is the vision of Isaiah. Now what is a vision?

a revelation by means of a vision, an oracle, a divine communication. The primary essence of this word is not so much the vision or dream itself as the message conveyed. It signifies the direct, specific communication between God and people through the prophetic office or the collection of such messages

Complete Word Study Dictionary, The - The Complete Word Study Dictionary – Old Testament.

Isaiah is a collection of messages from God. They are divine communications. They are messages received by Isaiah for Judea.

Have you ever considered that if God did not choose to communicate, we would all be lost? We would live meaningless existences with no idea what our lives are for. We would have no hope and no significant truth. We would have no way of approaching God. Even if we suspected that He existed, we would only be able to poke and hope at how to approach Him, how to gain His favor.

The revelation of God through human beings and then finally through His incarnate Son is the most important communication in existence. It is worthy of the greatest gratitude.

God went out of His way to communicate to this man Isaiah. He may have been just going about his normal life when God selected him for this task. But God did select him. And we needed him. We need men like this who God has communicated His will through. We are so very blessed to have this communication, this word from God. Hopefully we will all respond as if this is true as we travel through these pages.

which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.

Uzziah died in probably 740 BC, although the actual date is unknown. Hezekiah's rule probably ended around 704 BC. So this is the period of history that Isaiah ministered. We are given this to know that **this happened during real history**. It happened in a period where we know other things that were going on. We have more than the Biblical record for this period of history.

We are given the specifics of Isaiah's focus. It was to the region of Judah and the city of Jerusalem. By this time in history Israel and Judah had been divided for a long time. Israel was having some serious problems of its own. But Judah had been in a sweet spot between two major powers. And they were left out of the conflict up to this point. They thought they were safe. But in reality they were teetering on the edge of overthrow the whole time.

Now let's delve into what Isaiah has to tell us.

Isaiah 1:1-2

² Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth! For the LORD has spoken: " I have nourished and brought up children, And they have rebelled against Me;

Hear for the Lord has spoken.

This is the essence of the prophetic voice. This is the authority of the Christian message. This is where we stand as Christians. We have something to say, not because of **who we are**, but because of **who God is**. He has spoken. He has spoken clearly. And what He has said clearly and profoundly affects our human existence.

When God calls heaven and earth as witnesses, He calls upon that which he created. These will testify truly about His majesty and truth and power. We might lie, but God's creation will not.

Isaiah can stand against every earthly authority, every center of influence, every human expert.

An aside- Tony Kanagy taught me last week what an expert is. An ex is a has-been and a spurt is a little squirt. So an expert is a little squirt who is a has-been. Don't ever call Tony an expert. Call him a professional.

Isaiah is not afraid of any human so-called expert.

He can speak clearly and profoundly. And He can know with certainty that everything he says is absolutely true. How? Because he has heard it from the only ultimate authority. He has heard it from the one who is always right. He has heard it from the one who makes everything happen.

We too have that privilege. We can speak in the same way if what we are saying is what God has already said. We can declare that this world was created by God. We do not need to back down when so called science stands against us. We can declare that Jesus Christ is Lord of all. We don't need to back down when other

religions or world views attempt to silence us. We can declare that this world is headed for the judgment of God. It doesn't matter what another human being says or thinks about it. And we can declare that salvation is only found in the person of Jesus Christ. That is the beauty of hearing a message from God. One never needs to rethink it or back down.

Isaiah can declare his message as if nothing else matters, because nothing else does. When God stands behind what a man does, that man can act in complete freedom and confidence. That was Isaiah and that is every believer. We can declare "Hear for the Lord has spoken."

Now look what Isaiah's first proclamation is.

" I have nourished and brought up children, And they have rebelled against Me;
Another quote from a commentary-

I read this quote from William Kilpatrick-

A colleague at Boston College... once asked members of his philosophy class to write an anonymous essay about a personal struggle over right and wrong, good and evil. Most of the students, however, were unable to complete the assignment. "Why?" he asked. "Well," they said—and apparently this was said without irony—"we haven't done anything wrong." We can see a lot of self-esteem here, but little self-awareness

Preaching the Word - Preaching the Word – Isaiah: God Saves Sinners.

We live in a world that is becoming more and more ignorant of any idea about real sin. Our generation really didn't see how **what we did** mattered to anyone, including God. But as God becomes less and less of a factor in our awareness, sin and evil becomes, pretty much, irrelevant.

I think it is very fitting that we look at Romans here.

Romans 1:18-32

¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, ¹⁹ because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown *it* to them.

²⁰ For since the creation of the world His invisible *attributes* are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, ²¹ because, although they knew God, they did not glorify *Him* as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. ²² Professing to be wise, they became fools, ²³ and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man--and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things. ²⁴ Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, ²⁵ who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. ²⁶ For this reason God gave them up to

vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature.²⁷ Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due.²⁸ And even as they did not like to retain God in *their* knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting;²⁹ being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; *they are* whisperers,³⁰ backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents,³¹ undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful;³² who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.

It is heartbreaking to read what Romans tells us. While Isaiah was dealing with the sins of a Hebrew people, people who still held to the writings of the existing Old Testament, Paul wrote about the Gentile world. And ultimately there is little difference. It is heartbreaking to see how the world lives with no concern about what God has said. People ruin their lives at break neck speed, throwing away anything that God may have said through ignorance or simple lack of concern. And an even greater travesty is the fact that those who name the name of Christ live the same way. Divorce and sexual immorality show themselves at about the same rate inside and outside the so called church. Young people growing up in churches don't seem to get that **God means what He says**. They don't seem to get that **sin is a big deal**.

This message from Isaiah is as true today as the day that he spoke it to Judah and Jerusalem.

" I have nourished and brought up children, And they have rebelled against Me;

The appropriate response from verse 2 is a broken heart. It should break our hearts just how broken our world really is. And worse yet, our lives are often reflecting some of the same traits. We have been nourished. We have been given everything we need for life and godliness. But there are attitudes and actions we prefer over godliness. So we rebel. We disobey. We do what we so strongly feel like doing.

This is the heart of the human problem. And it is encapsulated in the second verse of the book of Isaiah.

We have much to look forward to from this prophet of God. He has conveyed God's assessment of the problem with the first sentence he has said. Our problems come from being children who refused to obey, children who refused to recognize God's right to control every area of our lives.

God has provided for us everything that we need, and we said “I think I will do it my way”.

A large truck passed me on the interstate on Friday. On the back of the truck it said, “As Frank Sinatra said, I did it my way”. A little while later I passed that truck. It was pulled over by the police. And I thought, that is the predictable end of “doing it my way”. A nasty appointment with the authority.

That is where we start in the book of Isaiah.

This would be a good week to examine our hearts and lives. Let’s spare ourselves the harsh rebuke this book will issue to our sin. Let’s repent now of anything we are doing that does not glorify Christ. Isaiah is not going to hold any punches.