

Munificent Mercy

Isaiah 65:1-16

Halifax: 26 June 2011

Introduction:

Last week,

- We looked at Isaiah's prayer that began in Isaiah 63:15 and ran through the end of chapter 64.
 - It was a wonderful example of a prayer that comes to God as the merciful God that He truly is.
 - It is a prayer to Him as "Our Father which art in heaven."
 - As the God who is tender toward us like a Father and at the same time reigns in heaven, full of sovereign power to help us in our need.
 - Isaiah seems to see Him as a God who is so reluctant to judge His people that He can hardly keep His mercy back from them...
 - Their sins have demanded it, but all the while He yearns to pour mercy out all over them and has purposes to go to extreme lengths to do so.
- I exhorted you that you ought to look at God in this way, even when the church is under severe judgement!
 - That was the condition of the people of God when Isaiah prayed this prayer.
 - They were destined for the captivity and the sword.
 - The temple, where God revealed His salvation and presence to them, was soon to be destroyed.
 - Yet, in these circumstances, Isaiah knew that as soon as His people turn to Him, the Lord would have mercy on them—if only they would turn...
 - And He knew that even if not, the Lord would still find ways to pour out His mercy.
 - He knew that it would be impossible for Him to restrain Himself.
 - If you look at the end of the prayer in Isaiah 64:12,
 - You see that the prophet asks the LORD how long He will restrain Himself from showing mercy!
 - He knows that the Lord cannot do it forever...
 - Isaiah has been prophesying all along about the coming mercy of God in Christ and He knows that the LORD will do all that He has promised.
 - So his question is:
 - **Isa 64:12: "Will You restrain Yourself because of these *things*, O LORD? Will You hold Your peace, and afflict us very severely?"**

- In other words,
 - Will you keep on holding your mercy back?
 - Will you continue to sit by while the enemies you sent destroy us?

And in chapter 65 and 66, the Lord gives His answer to this question.

- In these last two chapters, it is the LORD Himself who speaks to us.
- We are going to look at the first part of His answer in Isaiah 65:1-16.
 - Here we see that the LORD confirms what Isaiah affirmed in His prayer:
 - He shows Himself to be the God of Munificent Mercy!
 - He shows Himself to be the God who delights in mercy and who will indeed show total mercy—but not to empirical Israel—
 - only to the elect within Israel and surprisingly to the nations who never knew Him.

I. The LORD begins with the declaration that He will indeed show mercy to a people who never sought Him!

- This He declares in verse 1 where He says:
 - **Isaiah 65:1: “I was sought by *those who did not ask for Me*; I was found by *those who did not seek Me*. I said, ‘Here I am, here I am,’ To a nation *that was not called by My name.*”**

A. It is certain that our gracious LORD speaks here of the gathering in of the nations (the Gentiles) to Himself in place of the Jews.

- This was a very bold and shocking thing for Isaiah to say!
 - The kingdom of God was going to be taken from Israel and given to a nation that would bring forth the fruits of it!

1. It is certain that this is Lord’s meaning because He refers to them as **“a nation that was not called by My name.”**

- a. That cannot be a reference to Israel.
 - They had always been called by God’s name since they had become a nation.
 - It was their great distinctive among all the nations that they were known to be the people of the LORD. They were...
 - the people that He had redeemed out of Egypt to be His own.
 - the people to whom He gave His law and ordinances of worship.
 - the people He protected and preserved in the earth.
 - the people among whom He dwelt in the temple at Jerusalem.
- b. But the people He speaks of here are a people who were never called by His name.

- They had not known Him, but the verse goes on to tell us that He came to introduce Himself to them...
 - He came to them and said,
 - **“Here I am, Here I am,”**
 - or we could translate it,
 - **“Behold Me! Behold Me!”**
 - He made Himself known to these people who had not formerly known Him.
 - They are the nations of the earth, the gentiles who were strangers to God until Jesus came in.
 - That is time when God went into the world and said,
 - **“Here I am, Here I am”** to the nations of the world.
 - After He rose from the dead, Jesus commanded His servants to preach the good news of sins forgiven through His blood to every nation!
 - To make it known that whosoever believes in Him will be saved.
2. We know for certain that this interpretation is correct because the Apostle Paul interprets this verse for us in this way in Romans 10:19-21.
- a. He explains it in terms of Israel’s rejection of the LORD,
 - explaining that even though Israel refused the LORD, the LORD will not be prevented from pouring out His mercy.
 - Though Israel will not have it, He will gather the nations to Himself and have mercy on them instead.
 - b. After explaining how the gospel has gone out into all the world, the apostle says:
 - and I am quoting from Romans 10:19-21:
 - **Rom 10:19-21: But I say, did Israel not know? First Moses says: “I will provoke you to jealousy by *those who are* not a nation, I will move you to anger by a foolish nation.” But Isaiah is very bold and says: “I was found by those who did not seek Me; I was made manifest to those who did not ask for Me.” But to Israel he says: “All day long I have stretched out My hands To a disobedient and contrary people.”**
 - You see?
 - God makes Himself known to the nations and Israel is rejected.

B. My brothers and sisters, consider how great God’s mercy is!

1. Even though Israel, the people He first came to, obstinately rejected Him (more about that in a moment),
 - He would not be kept from showing His mercy!
 - Surely if those He had chosen to introduce His grace into this fallen world rejected Him, what use did He have for the rest of the world?
 - They were the world's representatives and spurned His grace—why should He bother with the rest of us?
 - He knows that in our selves, we are no different than Israel.
 - If we were different, we would have been seeking Him all along.
 - Did He not make the world from one blood and determine our preappointed times and that boundaries of our dwelling so that we should seek the Lord, in the hope that we might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from any of us?
 - Why should He come to us when we made no effort to come to Him for all these years?
 - But you see that He is a God who so delights in mercy that He cannot restrain Himself from showing mercy!
 - So He came to us,
 - a people who should have been seeking Him all along but who did not—
 - a people who in darkness and did not seek the LORD.
 - He comes to us and He says,
 - **“Here I am! Here I am!”**
2. And that declaration, **“Here I am! Here I am!”** is so gracious and so earnest and so complete!
 - a. It is the declaration that He has come in the person of His only Son into the world to bear the iniquity of His sinful people!
 - That the eternal curse that we taste the edges of in the troubles of this world has been laid upon His Son!
 - That He laid it upon Him in order that those who belong to Him might be completely freed from it—forever—with the full pardon of sin!
 - That He might be just and the justifier of the ungodly.
 - b. And it is the declaration that He has also poured out the Holy Spirit from heaven upon Jesus,
 - And that as the One who was anointed with the Spirit, Jesus has the authority to give the Spirit to all who are appointed to salvation.
 - And that when the Spirit comes upon us, we are made new in Jesus.

- We are given a heart that receives the grace of God and are made to delight in God's commandments and are given strength to obey them.
 - We actually start to follow Jesus and to love as He loved and to walk as He walked!
- c. And He promises to all those who believe and come to Him for this salvation that they will live forever...
- That He will gather them into His house and that they will be raised from the dead at the last day even as Jesus has already been raised.
 - And that there will be a new heaven and a new earth where righteousness dwells and where there is no more curse...
 - And that we will live in eternal joyful communion with the Father Son and Holy Spirit forever!

TRANS> "Here I am! Here I am!" indeed!

- Truly He has come to us even though we would not come to Him.
 - And what a gracious coming it is!
3. How glad we ought to be to have the God of heaven come to us like this!
- a. For so long, we were without God in the world—with nothing but foolish idols to serve!
- What if we had been left without Him.
 - Just think where we would be.
 - Like our fathers before us, we would have died in our sins, without hope, without mercy—exactly as we deserve for our sins!
- b. How glad we ought to be that though we did not seek Him for all those centuries,
- Yet, now He has come to us so that it can be said that.
 - "We who did not seek Him now seek Him"...
 - And that "We who did not seek Him have now found Him!"
 - God has truly shown Himself to a foolish nation that was not called by His name!
 - He is the God of munificent mercy!
 - He will not be without a people to whom He shows mercy.
 - Though Israel forsake Him, He will gather others.

TRANS> But someone might ask a question here...

- If it is true that God has received the Gentiles in the place of His people Israel,
- what can be said of His mercy to Israel?

- Can God reject the nation that He had formerly chosen and whose are the fathers to whom He made His promises?
 - How can He, who is so full of mercy, withdraw His mercy from them?
 - He answers that question in the verses that follow.

II. He makes it clear that He only withdraws His mercy from Israel because of extreme provocation.

A. In verses 2-7, He explains to what great lengths they have gone to provoke Him!

1. He begins by showing to what great lengths He has gone to keep them!
 - In verse 2, He says,
 - **Isa 65:2: “I have stretched out My hands all day long to a rebellious people, Who walk in a way *that is not good*, According to their own thoughts;”**
 - a. You see what He is like with His people!
 - 1) All day long He stretches out His hands to them!
 - He makes Himself the suppliant when they ought to be the ones who are pleading with Him!
 - He sends out His servants, the prophets to plead with them, to entreat them, to beg them to repent and return to Him.
 - He gives them His precious promises and at the least indication of repentance, He quickly withdraws His chastening hand.
 - 2) And He does this “all day long.”
 - He kept extending His hands to them, century after century!
 - Sending one servant after another to them in their rebellion...
 - 3) But at last, He sent His only Son to them...
 - And He went about in all their cities working miracles and declaring to them the kingdom of God.
 - They saw the glory of the begotten of the Father and they spurned Him and rejected Him and nailed Him to a cross.
 - And even after all that, He raised Him from the dead and continued to plead with them to repent,
 - promising the forgiveness of sins to all and granting it to all who came.
 - b. In now way can He be charged as having any reluctance to show mercy!
 - He went to great lengths with them to have mercy on them, and despite all of that, they continued to rebel against Him.
 - They continued to walk, as He says in verse 2, in a way that is not good.

2. He now describes **the way that is not good** in which they walked, showing how they provoked Him so that He had no choice but to withdraw His mercy.
 - a. First, He says that they walked according to their own thoughts!
 - They, of all nations, had received the very oracles of God—God had spoken to them and not to any other nation!
 - He had given them promises.
 - He had revealed His glory to them.
 - He had given them His statutes, ordinances, and commandments to show them how to live before Him.
 - And instead of warmly embracing all of these, as they ought to have done...
 - Instead of delighting to walk in the truth...
 - They had sought out their own ways—ways that were contrary to Him!
 - The very thing that sets God’s people apart from all others is that they have His Word—
 - but they rejected the Word and imagined God to be what they wanted Him to be...
 - and chose to follow the dictates of their own hearts as a law unto themselves!
 - This is the very first principle of rebellion—
 - that you cast away God’s precious Word and start living according to your own way...
 - all the while thinking yourself to be very savvy and very smart.
 - God has good reason to withdraw mercy from such people!
 - By forsaking His Word, they forsake His mercy.
 - b. He says that they provoke Him to anger continually before His face!
 - 1) Before His face!
 - You see, He was dwelling among them, and He had told them how to live in His presence.
 - He was there in the glory cloud, in the tabernacle, in the temple!
 - They were *Coram Deo*, before the face of God!
 - The most privileged place a people could ever be!

TRANS> But it was as if they *wanted* to provoke Him.

- 2) They gave themselves to the very things He had forbidden—continually—right before His face.
 - Did they want to drive Him away?
 - a) He had told them not to offer sacrifices except at the central sanctuary, but there they were sacrificing in the gardens...
 - b) He had told them only to burn incense at the golden altar in the appointed place, but there they were burning incense on an altar of bricks.
 - c) He had told them not to seek revelation from the dead, but there they were among the tombs, seeking revelation that was not from Him.
 - d) He had separated them from certain foods, but there they are eating swine's flesh with unclean morsels in their vessels before His face!

- 3) And what made it all the worse, they became full of pride about what they were doing!
 - a) They actually became so proud that they ordered the LORD Himself to stay away from them!
 - That's what it says in verse 5! God says that they are those:
 - **Isa 65:5: Who say, 'Keep to yourself, Do not come near me, For I am holier than you!'**
 - They were so smug about the worship that they had devised and all their little rituals and things that they were too holy for God Himself!
 - This was literally fulfilled when Jesus Christ came into the world!
 - They rejected Him because He did not measure up to their standards of holiness
 - He did not perform all the washings that had invented in their traditions,
 - And He did not follow all their man made traditions about the keeping the Sabbath.
 - b) This is what always happens to those who begin to worship God according to their own wisdom.
 - They become very pleased with themselves...
 - with their holy days and their holy water
 - with their incense and their bells
 - with their praise bands and their slide shows
 - with their symbols and inflections
 - with their images and their special clothing

- with their man made rules and customs.
- with their lists of forbidden things
- And they look with contempt upon those who do not have all these things.
 - In effect, they look with contempt on the LORD who did not command all of these things for His worship.
 - There is a real danger when we take it upon ourselves to add to His worship that we will start to move in this direction.
 - We begin to destroy the unity of the church because of our traditions.
- He told them not to worship Him the way the nations had worshipped their gods—in the high places and under every green tree...
 - The pagans thought that they would be more visible to their god on a high hill—
 - and that God must be more near in a place where things were growing.
 - Israel was not content with what God has appointed
 - They thought they could improve upon what He had given them.

B. All of this wretched behaviour demands a response from the LORD.

1. Vengeance belongs to Him and He will repay.

a. In verse 6, He says:

- **Isaiah 65:6: Behold, it is written before Me: I will not keep silence, but will repay—Even repay into their bosom—**
- What they have done has been duly noted—written before Him—
 - And it must be addressed.
 - What could be worse than to spurn the grace of God like this!
 - To reject His word and
 - To deliberately provoke Him even while living before His face!
- God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked.
 - But their deeds are crying out for justice and they have utterly spurned His provision through the blood of the covenant.
 - What is left but judgement?
 - He will not keep silent—He will repay.

- To repay to their own bosom means that He will judge each one according to his or her own deeds.
 - None will escape—judgement will be measured out to each person.
 - None will be lost in the crowd.
- b. In verse 7, He adds that even those who have gone before (in previous generations) will not escape His judgement either.
- The sins of their fathers will be measured out to them individually as well.
 - **Isa 65:7: “Your iniquities and the iniquities of your fathers together,” says the LORD, “Who have burned incense on the mountains and blasphemed Me on the hills; Therefore I will measure their former work into their bosom.”**
 - The sins of their fathers who started all this rebellion is mentioned lest anyone think that their fathers who did these things escaped from judgement because they are now gone.
 - Many times, the present generation takes comfort that what they are doing is only what their fathers did in past generations...
 - And they seemed to get along okay.
 - Perhaps they did get along fine for as long as they lived in this world...
 - But at the last day they will be brought to judgement and God will measure their former work into their bosom...
 - No one will escape from judgement if he has done such atrocities as departing from the living God!
 - There will be no hiding place.
2. No doubt, the Lord says all of this to His people in order to awaken them to repentance!
- a. He is very reluctant to withdraw His mercy.
- If will only return to Him—what a warm welcome they will receive!
 - Remember the words of Jesus when He looked upon Jerusalem and thought of the judgement that was soon to fall upon them?
 - He said:
 - **Matthew 23:34-38: "Therefore, indeed, I send you prophets, wise men, and scribes: some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from city to city, that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. Assuredly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather**

**your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings,
but you were not willing! See! Your house is left to you desolate;**

- b. Be warned, but take comfort my brothers and sisters!
 - It is very hard to provoke our LORD to withdraw His mercy from His people.
 - He is so patient with us—
 - so eager to continue His grace to us for a thousand generations
 - so ready to welcome the prodigal son who returns to Him.
 - The problem is not with a hesitation on His part to show mercy, but the problem is that His people—over the generations—provoke Him to wrath...
 - They choose their own way and end up rejecting the very gospel itself.
 - They come to despise the very mercy and grace that saves them.
 - The Epistle to the Hebrews warns us under the New Covenant:
 - See that there is not in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God.
 - Do not harden your heart as Israel did in the wilderness.
 - Many of our forefathers have done this.
 - Do you now have parents and grandparents who are Christian only in name, but who are hardened to the gospel of grace?
 - See that you do not follow them!
 - Instead, join with those who seek the LORD—
 - the Lord who delights to show mercy.
 - The LORD who is reluctant to withdraw His mercy.
- His reluctance to withdraw His mercy from His covenant people is demonstrated yet further as the passage progresses.

III. He makes it clear that He never utterly withdraws His mercy from the people He has known.

- He always preserves a remnant according to election.
- A. In verses 8-10, He promises that He will bring forth descendents from Jacob!
1. In verse 8, He gives this wonderful illustration about finding a cluster of good grapes among all the bad in a worthless vineyard!
 - a. The cluster is rescued from the destruction that is about to be brought upon the vineyard!

- He takes delight in these good grapes and finds them to be a blessing so that He spares them from the destruction.
 - Verse 8 says:
 - **Thus says the LORD: "As the new wine is found in the cluster, And one says, 'Do not destroy it, For a blessing is in it,' So will I do for My servants' sake, That I may not destroy them all.**
- b. This refers to those Jews who did receive Jesus even though so many others rejected Him.
- There is godly Anna and Simeon who rejoiced at His birth.
 - There is Peter, James and John,
 - There is Paul and there is Barnabas.
 - There is Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Jesus.
 - There are the 500 who followed Jesus and saw Him raised from the dead.
 - There are the many priests who became obedient to the faith.
 - There are the myriads at Jerusalem who believed!
- c. This is the remnant that is rescued through the mercy of God...
- God will never utterly forsake the people whom He foreknew.
2. He states expressly that these are rescued by electing grace in verse 9-10:
- They come to Him because they are brought forth by Him.
 - As we saw last week, He is the potter and He forms them into a people for Himself. Look at what He says in verse 9-10:
 - **Isaiah 65:9-10: I will bring forth descendants from Jacob, And from Judah an heir of My mountains; My elect shall inherit it, And My servants shall dwell there. Sharon shall be a fold of flocks, And the Valley of Achor a place for herds to lie down, For My people who have sought Me.**
 - As we saw last week,
 - It God did not reserve a people for Himself, none would be saved at all!
 - It is because of His grace that these emerge from the apostate nation to serve Him.
 - It is because of God's grace that they are said to have sought Him.
 - All the glory goes to God if you are among those who seek Him.
 - Don't you see—most of the baptised in our nation have corrupted their way and been cut off from the gospel.
 - They have provoked the LORD continually before His face.

- They have put aside His word and they walk according their own imaginations, making up their own ordinances, ways of worship, commandments, and notions of God
 - They are full of pride and believe themselves to be righteous by their own works.
 - But if you are not with them...
 - If you are among those few who do believe God's word, who delight in His commandments, and who believe the gospel—
 - who believe that salvation is only in Jesus who was crucified for sinners and that the only righteousness that saves is His righteousness...
 - If you are among those who believe that,
 - It is only because God has kept you for Himself!
 - He is elected you in His grace and chosen you for His salvation.
 - If He hadn't, you would have departed with the rest.
3. Verse 11-12 remind us that the great part are not elect.
- a. As a whole, Israel has forsaken the LORD.
- He says:
 - **Isa 65:11: "But you are those who forsake the LORD, Who forget My holy mountain, Who prepare a table for Gad, And who furnish a drink offering for Meni.**
 - To forsake the LORD and forget His holy mountain is to turn from the salvation that He revealed on Mount Zion...
 - In the Old Testament, it was the salvation revealed at the altar in Jerusalem where blood was shed to atone for sin.
 - Now that Jesus has come, it is to forget Jesus, the Lamb of God who was crucified for us.
 - All Christians will speak about this just as all Jews spoke about the temple and its ordinances...
 - But most do not come to what God has provided to be reconciled with God...
 - Instead, they look to Gad (fortune) and Meni (destiny).
 - They do not see themselves as lost sinners without hope except in the mercy of God through Christ crucified.
 - They hope that God will accept them because of his general benevolence—
 - Or that He will accept them because they try to be good people.

- It is all a great insult to the God who spared not His only Son because forgiveness could only come through His blood!
 - The Jews despised this because they wanted to have their own righteousness by works!
 - And today, apostate Christians despise the cross for the same reason...they want to have righteousness by their own works!
 - It is a stench in God's nostrils!
 - He burns with indignation and wrath that we should dismiss His Son who went to the cross for us!

b. The message is clear.

- Do not for a moment presume that you are right with God simply because you are Canadian, or because you are baptised.
 - You can no more presume that than Israel could presume that they were righteous just because they were Jews.
 - You must believe in the Lord Jesus Christ to be saved.
- In verse 12, the LORD says what He will do with those who do not seek Him in the way that He has appointed—that is, in Christ.
 - **Isaiah 65:12: Therefore I will number you for the sword, And you shall all bow down to the slaughter; Because, when I called, you did not answer; When I spoke, you did not hear, But did evil before My eyes, And chose that in which I do not delight."**
 - Instead of listening to God and choosing His way—the way of Christ,
 - they rejected His call and went in their own ways.
 - Therefore He has numbered them—each one has been individually counted—for the sword.
 - They will not escape who have spurned His mercy and provoked Him to wrath.
 - What a terrible thing to be “numbered for slaughter.” when you might have had God's wonderful mercy—
 - when His word was so near to you.

B. Indeed, what a tremendous contrast there is between those who seek the LORD and those who forsake Him!

- The LORD sets His true servants in contrast with those who are false sons of the covenant in verses 13-16.
1. First, He shows that His servants will eat, drink, and be merry in the kingdom of God—but not the false sons.
 - In verse 13, the Sovereign LORD (Adonai Yahweh) says:

- **Isa 65:13: Therefore thus says the Lord GOD:**
 - **Behold, My servants shall eat, But you shall be hungry;**
 - **Behold, My servants shall drink, But you shall be thirsty;**
 - **Behold, My servants shall rejoice, But you shall be ashamed;**
 - Of course this speaks of what the true sons of God have in Jesus Christ!
- a. He is the bread that comes down from heaven to give life to the world...
 - not the bread that Moses gave that they ate and then died—
 - but the bread that gives eternal life, even the forgiveness of sins through His sacrifice on the cross.
 - This is what God's servants feed upon in His kingdom so that they will never hunger!
 - b. He is also the One who gives us the living water—
 - not water you draw from a well—
 - You thirst again from that water, but if you drink this water, you will never thirst again.
 - It is the water of life, even the Holy Spirit, that causes us to bear fruit for God—fruit that pleases God—marvellous fruit—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, self-control...
 - This is the water that God's servants drink in His kingdom.
 - c. And finally, He is the one who cause them to rejoice in the Holy Spirit.
 - The Holy Spirit unites us to Jesus and bears witness with our spirits that we are God's sons.
 - He is the Spirit of sonship, and there is no greater joy than to have the God of heaven as our Father!
 - Now we stand in the same relation to the Father that Jesus does!
 - We are heirs of His house, heirs of His matchless kingdom!
 - This is our joy and rejoicing!
2. And because we have this blessed diet, our future as God's servants is radically different than the future of the false sons in the kingdom.
 - a. Verse 14 contrasts the dreadful wailing of Hell with the singing of heaven!
 - **Isa 65:14: Behold, My servants shall sing for joy of heart, But you shall cry for sorrow of heart, And wail for grief of spirit.**
 - This is the ultimate destinies of those who seek the LORD in Christ and those who follow their own way.
 - Just imagine the horror of being in the place of weeping and gnashing of teeth for all eternity, only because you spurned the grace of God...
 - But what rapturous joy will break forth from within for those who enter the joy the LORD who is eternally glorious and lovely.
 - Truly our joys will be unspeakable!

b. Verse 15 & 16 express the contrast between God's servants and His false sons in terms of blessing and the cursing.

- In the end, those who seek the Lord are blessed and those who go their own way are cursed.

1) The LORD says this about the false sons:

- Verse 15: **You shall leave your name as a curse to My chosen; For the Lord GOD will slay you, And call His servants by another name;**
- At present, they have the name that they are God's people, even His Israel...
 - But as they are false sons who reject His salvation,
 - their name will become a curse—what anyone would wish upon His worst enemies...
 - God Himself will slay them.
- Already, this has been somewhat fulfilled with the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD.
 - Such horrible destruction as had not been seen fell upon them and they became a byword and a curse.
 - But this will have an even greater fulfillment when God's curse falls upon all His false sons at the last day;
 - when they are cast into the Lake of Fire with the Devil and His angels to be tormented forever and ever.
 - This will become the standard of what it means to be cursed.

2) But what a contrast the Lord speaks of for His true servants!

- Verse 16 says that the Lord GOD will call His servants by another name and will bless them with a marvellous completeness:
 - **Isa 65:16: So that he who blesses himself in the earth Shall bless himself in the God of truth; And he who swears in the earth Shall swear by the God of truth; Because the former troubles are forgotten, And because they are hidden from My eyes.**
- When it is once seen how good God is to His servants—
 - Everyone will understand that the quintessence of blessing is simply to have God as your God!
 - It will be understood without doubt that whoever has His favour has everything—all happiness—all perfection!
- Do you see the idea here?
 - If you want to put a blessing on yourself, all you will have to say is that you might be blessed of the God of truth.

- If you have that, you will lack nothing that is good—you will have everything!
 - The “God of truth” by which you will bless yourself is the God of the Amen...
 - *Amen* is the Hebrew word that is translated *truth* here.
 - In 2 Cor 1:20: Paul tells us that in Christ, all the promises of God are yea and Amen.
 - **2 Co 1:20: For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us.**
 - In other words, every thing, every blessing that God has for His people, comes through the mediation of Jesus Christ.
 - If we are trusting in Him, we have all of God’s promised blessings.
 - As verse 16 goes on to say,
 - **The former troubles are forgotten...**
 - Our sin that we laboured under is gone
 - Death is abolished—swallowed up with life...
 - Sorrow and sighing will flee away...
 - The curse is banished...
 - The LORD says, (at the end of verse 16) that these former troubles
 - **“are hidden from My eyes.”**
 - That means that they are as gone as they possibly can be!
 - If they are hidden from His eyes, they do not exist at all!
 - God sees all things, and if He does not see these former troubles, they are no where to be found!
 - Praise be to His name—that is your future in Christ.
3. The LORD has made the contrast between the covenant people who seek Him and those who do not as sharp as He possibly can...
- To show the Israelites that there was no advantage to being named Israel unless you are His true servants who seek Him.
 - And to show us Christians that there is no advantage in being named Christian unless we are true partakers of Jesus Christ.
 - Simply being in the Covenant is not enough.
 - We must be those who feed upon the bread of life, who drink the living water, and who joy in the Holy Spirit.
 - If we are, we will be as blessed as we possibly can be...
 - If not, we will be as cursed as we possibly can be.

- By why does the LORD show us this contrast?
 - No doubt, it is that we might be alerted to seek His provision of mercy in Jesus Christ!
 - That we might not presume that all is well for us when we are yet outside of Christ—just because we are outwardly numbered with His people.
 - The LORD yearns to give you this salvation!
 - See that you do not resist Him.
 - See that you are among those who diligently seek Him.
 - And if you are,
 - Give Him the glory for it because it is not that you have chosen Him—He has chosen you!
 - How great is His mercy!
 - Truly, He is the God of Munificent Mercy.