

June 7th, 2020
Finding Courage to Serve
Isaiah 1, 6, 52, 53

Sermon Summary

This message begins by looking at the situation surrounding the Hebrew people during the time the prophet Isaiah lived. It then examines the call of Isaiah to be a spokesman for God as a prophet and his response. Isaiah then turns his attention to the suffering servant in chapter 52 and 53. The remainder of the message looks at Jesus being the fulfillment of this prophecy and the example Jesus set in living a selfless life for the sake of others!

Full Sermon Notes

“Show me who you are and fill me with your heart, and lead me in your love to those around me!” Powerful lyrics and what we so desperately need today. We need to know who Jesus really is and we need Him to fill our hearts with His heart which will lead us to love those around us, regardless of their race! Amen? Amen! We’re going to be talking today about finding courage to serve and we are to serve God first and foremost, but when we do that we will naturally serve our fellowman! If you will, have a seat. I wanted to share with you something our church posted on our Facebook page this week. It’s something I feel God placed on my heart to share.

For followers of Jesus Christ, we are told very plainly by Jesus in Jn 3:16 these words...

"For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life."

When it comes to racism, this verse could not be clearer: God loves everyone in the world! Not everyone accepts His love, but His love is there nonetheless! We are all precious in His sight! Northshore Church is comprised of people from various ethnic backgrounds and we are so thankful for the unique perspectives, valuable insights, and love of Christ they bring to our family and fellowship! We also have a number of first responders, both fire and law enforcement, and we are thankful for their commitment to serve and protect all people regardless of their race. Those I have spoken to have shared with me they too are saddened and broken-hearted over what happened to George Floyd.

We are blessed in our community and especially in our church, to have such a strong level of togetherness, unity, and concern for one another. Let’s all join together in prayer for our nation! Let’s pray for the family of George Floyd! Let’s pray for all those who felt this pain on a much more personal level. And let’s not forget to pray for the majority of first responders who truly live to serve and protect all people! We need to stand together and pray together now more than ever. With God’s grace and strength, we will move forward to a brighter future where people realize there’s never been a person born that God didn’t love and that Jesus didn’t die for! None of us deserve that level of love, because we’re all sinners, but God has made a way for us to be

forgiven and redeemed. That elevates the value of every human life to the highest level and our actions should reflect that every day of our lives. God have mercy on us and help us in this time of national crisis! We may not be able to join hands this morning, but we can certainly join hearts! Let's pray!

"Father God, I pray with everything within my being that You will give us the honor of Your presence by way of Your Holy Spirit today. I cry out for You to teach us to lead us, to anoint us with Your presence and to give us the courage to serve You and our fellow man and by doing so to help us bring a divided nation together. Father God I pray you will be with George Floyd's family. I pray You will be with those who are hurting deeply and are struggling with how best to express that pain. I pray You will be with those first responders who truly seek to serve and protect everyone in their community regardless of race! We are truly blessed in our community to have amazing men and women who are truly public servants and who serve in such an honorable way. I pray that those who are using this difficult time as an opportunity to push other, unrelated agendas, and who are dishonoring George Floyd's memory, will be convicted in their hearts by Your Holy Spirit, and if they don't know You as their Savior that they would allow You to change their hearts! Now, please fill me with Your Holy Spirit and hide me behind the Cross as we hear a message from Your Word that truly has great application to our current situation. Be with those who may be in the path of this storm and protect our first responders as they will be called on to help! Thank You for hearing this prayer! I love you and trust You Jesus, and it's in Your Name I pray! Amen!

Thank you! Let's look at our text for today because it has great application to our present situation and to our lives personally! There are several main characters in our story: God The Father, the Hebrew people, Isaiah, Jesus Christ and you! Let's begin by looking at...

The Situation (The Hebrew People)

For this we're going to look at Chapter 1 of Isaiah. It's not in your reading, but I feel it is important to set up the background for our message and our other text today. In these verses that give us insight into the background we see a powerful message from God to the people through His prophet. God is once again calling out to His people.

A Call to Repentance!

Isa 1:16 wash and make yourselves clean. Take your evil deeds out of my sight! Stop doing wrong,

A Call to Live Righteously

Isa 1:17a learn to do right! Seek justice, encourage the oppressed...

A Call to Serve

Isa 1:17b Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow.

A Call to Prayer and Communion with God

Isa 1:18a "Come now, let us reason together," says the LORD.

A Call With a Promise

Isa 1:18b "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool.

Isa 1:19 If you are willing and obedient, you will eat the best from the land;

A Call With a Warning

Isa 1:20 but if you resist and rebel, you will be devoured by the sword." For the mouth of the LORD has spoken.

What a message! Isaiah is known as the evangelist of the Old Testament! God had given him a vision of the situation in both the Northern and Southern Kingdoms during the reigns of several kings. Isaiah was born during the reign of Uzziah the King of Judah and King Jeroboam II King of Israel. The two nations began to work together and became quite prosperous. Instead of using their blessings to honor God, they became conceited and self-serving. The once oppressed people of God began to be the oppressors. Amos, one of Isaiah's contemporaries, also warned the people of God that these kinds of things were unacceptable! But they refused to listen to the prophets of God. Remember we discovered last week with Jonah that the Hebrew people had been called by God to be a holy nation and a kingdom of priests to be a witness to the world of God's love and His desire to have a personal relationship with people, and we see again in this passage they were refusing to live their mission and calling from God. Isn't it amazing how many times when people have prosperity they seem to forget where they come from and where their blessings come from? How quickly people can fall into moral and spiritual complacency! The Hebrew people were under this idea that because they were God's chosen people of the covenant that they were indestructible! They thought as long as they followed certain religious rituals it didn't really matter how they lived. In other words, as long as they went to church on the Sabbath and made a sacrifice they had the green light to live however they wanted to live the other 6 days of the week. They thought God would never let the holy city of Jerusalem be destroyed, and they thought the great day of the Lord the prophets sometimes spoke of would be the day Israel and Judah would once again triumph over their enemies and become mighty world powers! But the problem was they forgot that a covenant is a two way agreement, and they had broken their promises to God and no longer desired to hear or heed the voice of God! Folks this just could have some application to America today, maybe? Has God not called us to repentance? To live righteous and just lives? To serve others rather than ourselves? To pray and commune with Him? Has He not promised to hear our prayers and

cleanse us of our sins and bless us in powerful ways if we will turn from our wickedness and seek His forgiveness and seek His face? Has He not given us fair warnings about the consequences of sin? Let me remind you of this truth...

When God gives warnings it's not threats, it's warnings.

He warned Adam and Eve of the consequences of sin and disobedience! He sent His prophets to warn his people. And we are told this in the New Testament...

Rom 6:19 I put this in human terms because you are weak in your natural selves. Just as you used to offer the parts of your body in slavery to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer them in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness.

Rom 6:20 When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness.

Rom 6:21 What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death!

Rom 6:22 But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life.

Rom 6:23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

For the remainder of our time today we're going to focus on one point of Isaiah's message...

The Call to Serve!

Isa 6:1 In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple.

Isa 6:2 Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying.

Isa 6:3 And they were calling to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory."

Isa 6:4 At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke.

Isa 6:5 "Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty."

Isa 6:6 Then one of the seraphs flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar.

Isa 6:7 With it he touched my mouth and said, "See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for."

Isa 6:8 Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I. Send me!"

Isaiah was obviously praying and communing with God when He had this amazing spiritual experience and vision from God! He saw amazing things, things of God, Holy things,

unexplainable things in human terms, but he understood the message God was trying to get him to see! And let me say this:

When a human being stands in the very presence of God Almighty there's no way to be unchanged by that! You will either be drawn closer to Him in a desire to be right with Him and to grow your relationship with Him or you will be repelled because of the hardness and coldness of your heart! When a sinful man stands in the presence of God the Holy otherness of God stands out! When a sinful man stands in the presence of God the sin of the man shows up like a mighty stain! Isaiah's reaction was one of dread and fear...

Isa 6:5 "Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty."

Isaiah thought he was doomed because of his sin and the fact that he had seen the holiness of God! He was probably thinking, "Well here comes the lightning bolt! Brace for impact!" But instead Isaiah gets a glimpse, not only of God's holiness but also His heart!

Isa 6:6 Then one of the seraphs flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar.

Isa 6:7 With it he touched my mouth and said, "See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for."

Some of you here today have totally listened to the lies of Satan and he has duped you into believing because of your sin God wants nothing to do with you. Satan wants you to think there's no hope for you and that you've committed the unpardonable sin! Satan wants you to think that God is disgusted with you and has no desire to have anything to do with you. Let me tell you this:

You are where you are today because you've listened to those lies and used those lies as an excuse to delve even deeper into your wickedness and bondage. And yes I said bondage. Because people may think they are doing their own thing when they sin, but they are really slaves to their sin! If you think I'm lying, try overcoming your sin on your own without the power of Almighty God and good brothers and sisters in the Lord to encourage you. You'll find you really do need God's help! And here's a couple of beautiful truths...

God desires to touch you with His love and to call you into His service!

He has a plan and a purpose for your life that goes beyond just living to get through the day, but to live each and every day with meaning and purpose through serving!

Finding the courage to serve begins with repentance.

We'll talk more about that next week, but let me explain something to you about this passage of Scripture. It says...

Isa 6:6 Then one of the seraphs flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar.

Isa 6:7 With it he touched my mouth and said, "See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for."

Wow! That seems really painful! A live coal from a fire touching Isaiah's lips. I mean the creature, the seraph, picked up the coal with a tong! Folks one of the reasons God hates sin so much is it hurts and removing sin is a painful experience, but so necessary! It's kind of like spiritual surgery. But when we allow God to be our spiritual surgeon, we can begin the process of healing and can then follow our calling to serve. And this is exactly what happens with Isaiah...

Isa 6:8 Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I. Send me!"

Isaiah realizes that the greatest joy in life he could find would be in service to the God who loved him enough to call him and then to provide for his forgiveness and salvation. Isaiah knew that self-serving is not rewarding. It may seem so for the moment and for the momentary pleasure you receive, but the deepest, most rewarding things in life come from serving God and serving others! In serving others we will discover that we have also served ourselves in a good way, because God blesses those who serve Him and others. Now your motive to serve needs to be with no strings attached. Even if God didn't bless you for your service, you need to find joy in serving because it's the right thing to do and you will find joy in seeing the joy in the person you've helped! And knowing that by serving others you have brought joy to God should excite your heart!

Heb 13:16 And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.

The Greatest Servant Who Ever Lived

Now someone might ask me why I would want to serve God? Why serve anyone? It just seems antithetical to find joy in serving God or someone else besides yourself! But here's the reason why a person should want to serve God! It has to do with the pain of removing sin. God took the pain of removing our sin when He took on human flesh and became what is known as the suffering servant in Isaiah's writings. God knew that we could not atone for our own sin, get rid of it on our own, defeat its power, wash away the stain, or overcome its consequences! So He had a plan. We had a need and He would become a servant to serve our need for a Savior! What? That just sounds unbelievable, incredible, unthinkable, almost inconceivable that the

thrice holy God, creator of the universe would do such a thing! Become a servant? But that's exactly what was going to happen. While Israel had chosen not to serve God by serving others, God was going to do the unthinkable and show them what a true servant looks like. And the service God was going to perform would require a level of suffering we can scarcely imagine. Listen to Isaiah's prophecy concerning the suffering servant. And remember this was written around 700 years before Jesus was born!

Isa 52:13 See, my servant will act wisely ; he will be raised and lifted up and highly exalted.

Isa 52:14 Just as there were many who were appalled at him -- his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any man and his form marred beyond human likeness--

Isa 52:15 so will he sprinkle many nations, and kings will shut their mouths because of him. For what they were not told, they will see, and what they have not heard, they will understand.

Isa 53:1 Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?

Isa 53:2 He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.

Isa 53:3 He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

Isa 53:4 Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted.

Isa 53:5 But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.

Isa 53:6 We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Isa 53:7 He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.

Isa 53:8 By oppression and judgment he was taken away. And who can speak of his descendants? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was stricken.

Isa 53:9 He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth.

Isa 53:10 Yet it was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the LORD makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand.

Isa 53:11 After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light of life and be satisfied ; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities.

Isa 53:12 Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

Jesus said this...

Mat 20:25 Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them.

Mat 20:26 Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant,

Mat 20:27 and whoever wants to be first must be your slave--

Mat 20:28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Finding the courage to serve comes when we see the courage Jesus had to serve us by giving His life for us! Jesus served me by giving His life for me on an old rugged cross, I'll serve him by living my life for Him and carrying His cross as a reminder of His sacrifice!

You might still wonder why Jesus would leave the safety of heaven and be willing to suffer as a servant on a cross. We find the answer to that question and find our courage to serve in this verse of Scripture...

Heb 12:1 Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.

Heb 12:2 Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Heb 12:3 Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

Okay, Pastor Larry, but how does a person literally serve the Lord?

Matt 25:44 "They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?'

Matt 25:44 "He will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.'

Let's pray!