*DAILY DEVOTIONAL*

August 7 - 12

“Isaiah”

**Monday, August 7 Isaiah 6:1-8**

*“Whom shall I send?”*

 The first five chapters of Isaiah show how corrupt and rebellious Israel has become. How can such a people, defying God’s teaching, ever become the promised clean, obedient Israel from whom all the nations will learn that teaching? The story of Isaiah’s call will become a model for Israel. Just as he was enabled to bear God’s message to his people, so, by the same process, Israel will be enabled to bear God’s message to the world.

 The narrative begins with a vision of God in which his majesty, transcendence, and holiness are emphasized. There follows Isaiah’s cry of woe in which he recognizes that what separates him from God is moral corruption, and he knows that such corruption cannot coexist with God. But, amazingly, God is not willing for Isaiah to be destroyed. With a blazing coal from the altar Isaiah’s lips are cauterized and he is pronounced clean. Only then is the voice of God heard asking who might be willing to carry a message for him. Isaiah, exulting in the new-found cleanness of his lips, makes himself available to go.

*You have forgiven my sin, Lord, and I am ready to serve you. Amen.*

**Tuesday, August 8 Isaiah 6:9-13**

*“Go and tell this people”*

 God gives Isaiah a shocking commission: speak a message that will further harden the people’s hearts. Isaiah asks how long he is to go on preaching in this way and God responds that he is to preach until the whole nation is in ruins, for only then (while in Babylonian captivity) will they begin to see the consequence of their disobedience. But there is a glimpse of hope: a “holy seed” will remain in the land. The way is being paved for the coming of the Christ.

 Isaiah is called upon to preach a strong message of the sinfulness of the people that, given their already hardened hearts, will only serve to move them farther away from God. A weak message of “we’re all okay and God is pleased with us” would give the people a false sense of security in their relationship with God. They would “see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts” such a message and believe, wrongly, that their relationship with God was healthy. The only way to God is with eyes, ears and hearts of faith that accept the reality of one’s sin and accepts God’s offer of forgiveness.

*I see my sin clearly, Lord, and with humble heart ask your forgiveness. Amen.*

**Wednesday, August 9 Isaiah 40:1-11**

*“Comfort, Comfort my people”*

 The prophetic message of Isaiah 6 was primarily one of judgment for sin. Now, however, the message is to be one of hope. Although the people have withered and fallen like dried grass as a consequence of their sin, God’s word as spoken by his prophet will not fail. Just as God had said that judgment would come, and it had, so he now says restoration will come, and it will! When God’s people are crushed to the ground under the burden of their sins, they will feel sure that all is lost and that all the promises of God have been nullified by their rebellion. But the message to be proclaimed to them is that this is not so. God will come to helpless Israel.

 Nothing can prevent his swift coming to his people’s aid, neither mountains nor valleys. The highway will be level and straight, so that God can come quickly. This is necessary for there is no other hope. There is no permanence in human beings, nor is there anything they can do to help themselves. The Lord will come with power (there is no force on earth that can prevent him) and he will come with tenderness, like a shepherd caring for his flock.

*I give you thanks, Lord, for you have come to save me from my sin. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONAL*

August 7 - 12

“Isaiah”

**Thursday, August 10 Isaiah 40:27-31**

 *“Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength”*

 Isaiah anticipates the attitudes of those who will say that they are either outside God’s vision (“my way is hidden”) or else God has given up on them (“my cause is disregarded”). To this he responds that to think in this way is to have much too low a view of God. He reminds them of who God is, pointing out the Creator’s endless power and wisdom, and his wonderful desire and ability to share that power with the “weak” and the “weary.” Thus, their questioning of God is rather incredulous. How could you say such things about God when you know perfectly well who he is and what he is like?

 God knows your situation perfectly, and he can and will do something about it. The fact is that the most vigorous things in creation (“young men”) cannot keep themselves going. They are not self-generating but are dependent on outside sources for their strength. God is not like that; he is self-generating, and that means he has abundant strength to give away to those who wait in hope for him.

*I wait in confident expectation, Lord, for your action on my behalf. Amen.*

**Friday, August 11 Isaiah 55:1-13**

*“Come!”*

 Here Isaiah presents a beautiful invitation to experience the promised forgiveness of God. Everything has been done, the tables are set, all is in readiness. How tragic it would be if those who are invited fail to come. The invitation is given to all who have no resources in themselves. It begins with physical imagery (“come to the waters,” “come, buy and eat”) and moves onto a more spiritual plane (“that your soul may live”). God’s invitation is not merely to find satisfaction for bodily needs but to satisfy a person’s whole being with true life.

 There is, however, an obstacle to accepting God’s invitation. While having clearly heard the invitation, some remain skeptical and declare that they will not accept it until they fully understand how forgiveness works. God’s challenge to these people is to exercise faith first and let understanding come afterward. God promises that what he says is indeed reliable and that forgiveness and abundance are theirs now and in the future, if they will only seek him sincerely and without reservation.

*You have invited me to come and receive forgiveness, Lord, and I have come. Amen.*

**Saturday, August 12 Isaiah 58:1-14**

*“Is that what you call a fast?”*

 The people have been commanded to do that which is right before God, but they have failed. Instead of their religion making them a blessing to those around them, as God intended, it made them a curse. They have been caught up in what God had not particularly commanded – fasts – and were neglecting what he had specifically commanded – keeping the Sabbath. They are engaging in their religious practices for the very same reasons as the pagans: to manipulate God to act in their favor.

 Only twice in the Old Testament does God command persons to fast. But in hundreds of places he commands his people to treat other people, especially those weaker than they, with respect, justice, and kindness. God calls for behavior that is self-forgetful and outward-looking. Let acts of self-denial (like fasting) be for the sake of others and not for the sake of showing how religious one is. Eat less in order to have to give to the hungry. Wear less-expensive clothes in order to clothe the naked. This is the kind of “fasting” that God has chosen.

*Strengthen me to love my neighbor, Lord, and thereby I will love you. Amen.*