

Rick Miller – Isaiah 33 – Jan 29, 2023

We will open up the word to Isaiah 33. Back in the book of Isaiah. We took a little break there during the holidays and the new year, talked about some different things, but we're back into our study through the book of Isaiah.

So let's pray. Lord, we thank you for your word and the consistent messages you communicate to us over and over again. We want to have ears to hear, hearts to respond, and we just thank you for the voice of God that comes through the word of God. And Lord, we thank you that we don't have to just approach this intellectually but we approach it with spiritual hearts, spiritual ears and we pray once again, Lord, we have spiritual ears to hear what the spirit says to each one of us, and we commit this time to you in Jesus name. Amen.

Before the holidays, we finished up, I believe, through verse 16 of chapter 33. Didn't quite finish the chapter. So what I want to do is jump back to verse one and quickly go through and get the context and then finish up the last part of Isaiah 33 today. So let's jump right in. Isaiah 33:1.

“Woe to you who plunder, though you have not been plundered; and you who deal treacherously, though they have not dealt treacherously with you. When you cease plundering, you will be plundered. And when you make an end of dealing treacherously, they will deal treacherously with you. Oh Lord, be gracious to us. We have waited for you, be their arm every morning, our salvation also in the time of trouble.”

So you'd be kind of lost here if you didn't know the context of what's happening. We know that at this time in the history of Judah, the Assyrian empire is conquering kingdom after kingdom nation after nation.

And Judah is next on the list. And so you can imagine the fear that the people felt having this threat hanging over them of the Assyrian empire coming in, basically taking over their country, exiling them to another land and basically living as slaves. We also know from previous chapters that there's been this issue with the way the people in Judea have responded to this threat, not always in a godly way.

There were many in the leadership that wanted to turn to other nations to align themselves as allies to help defeat the Assyrians. They were looking to the nation of Egypt, and God is saying don't do that.

Don't do that. You're to look to me as your salvation. You're to look to me for help. Of course, this is a theme we see through the scripture. You study through the Kings - now we're at the point in history where Hezekiah is king. We're going to get into that in a couple chapters where it gets into a narrative of what happened when King Hezekiah had to confront the leaders of Assyria who were about to attack them.

We know the end of the story - that the Lord came in, sent one angel into the Assyrian army and killed 185,000 in one night as Assyria turned tail and ran. But of course, that's in the future. The people don't know this is going to happen. And of course that was a supernatural work of God.

It never was through the strength of Egypt or the strength of the armies of Judah. It was the Lord. And you'll see with the different kings, if you read through First and Second Samuel, First and Second Kings, First and Second Chronicles, of where the Lord would say, no, this king was a good king because he called upon the Lord.

This king was an evil king and really centers in on a king like David, where God said he was a man after my own heart. Because David would habitually call upon the Lord. He wasn't perfect, but the Lord said, hey, this is a man after my own heart. This is the kind of man who pays attention to what I want. He seeks me. And of course, we see David's heart as we read through the Psalms.

We can see this is a man of God. This is a man who is seeking the Lord, wants the will of the Lord. We see this contrast between a good king and a bad king. A good king who's trusting the Lord, calling upon the Lord, and an evil king who's not doing that.

Now, Hezekiah was a good king, but he definitely struggled with fear and this threat, like we do. We believe in the Lord. We're trying to trust the Lord with our lives, but we have real issues in our life that can bring fear into our life. That's our calling, just as it has always been the people of God's calling to trust the Lord, to seek his will, to not look to the flesh, as it were, for answers.

But we're looking to the Lord to break through into our lives. So we're trusting him with many things right there. We probably all have a whole list of things. We're trusting God for burdens, health issues, financial issues, relational issues. Lord, where are you leading me in my life?

What's my purpose? I'm running this race for you. We're trusting the Lord. The righteous shall live by faith, the Bible says. They go from faith to faith. So even

in these first two verses, we see this contrast between this plunder, which he's speaking of the Assyrians.

Now that's a picture, of course, of the world. They just plow forward with their will and their purpose is not concerned really at all with the purposes and plans of God. They're plundering, they're taking what they want in life. And yet the godly, verse 2 says, oh, Lord, be gracious to us.

"We have waited for you, be their arm every morning, our salvation also in the time of trouble", so that you see this contrast between the world and a person of God. And so as we go through this chapter, we see these contrasts. We see the contrast of being like the nation of Assyria, where you're plundering others. You're not concerned about God's will in your life.

Or you're a person living in Judea at that time, but not responding to the threat like you should as a person of God, and you're living in fear. Then you have this person who's walking by faith and saying, Lord, we've got this threat over us, but we're asking you to be gracious to us. We're waiting for you Lord. Be our strength, be our salvation every morning.

Isn't that just a beautiful prayer? As people of God, that's where we live. We're saying, Lord, we're trusting you with issues in our life. We need your grace because we certainly don't deserve your work in our life, your answers to prayer. But Lord, we're looking to you to be our arm of strength every morning and our salvation in time of trouble.

Now living this life of faith and trusting the Lord and waiting upon the Lord is not easy. We need a lot of encouragement because we have enemies, right? We have our own flesh at enmity against God. The world we live in is at enmity with God, the enemy attacking us. You have circumstances that are so challenging, and yet you're trying to trust the Lord, you're trying to wait upon him in faith.

I just thought about how encouraged I was in our prayer meeting this morning. Somebody was praying how we don't see the Lord, but we know the Lord is working and we're trusting him. And then I thought, yeah we may not see the Lord with our physical eyes, but man, to see God work among his people how I saw him work in our prayer meeting this morning and speaking through the different people.

God certainly makes himself real to those who are open to him and then he encourages us in this life of faith. Keep on trusting, keep on believing me. Like

I said, we have a lot of things coming against us as people of faith. I was thinking about just as Judah had this threat of the Assyrians hanging over them, and the threat to their way of life, their nation. How we're seeing that in our culture today. Aren't we?

One commentator I watch sometimes online introduces his show saying, come along with me and witness the fall of our nation. Basically, in a joking way, but it's not really a joke. We're seeing a lot of things in our nation that are very distressing to us. So we see the Christian values being rejected, becoming more and more hostile toward Christianity, and we can get caught up in that and so fearful and worried and miss the race that God's calling each of us to run.

And the importance for us to trust the Lord with those big impossible issues that we can't change, just like they had to. If they had trusted the Lord, they would've saved themselves a lot of grief and they could have continued on with worshiping the Lord and listening to the Lord, knowing that I don't know how the Lord's going to answer, but he's going to take care of this problem.

And God did in a supernatural way. One angel came in and killed 185,000 soldiers in one night. It's the same in our lives. Whether it's big issues that we see going on in our nation or personal issues we're facing, that's all the same.

Our God is on the throne. We're to trust him with these things, to be prayerful related to these things. And we know that God works in the chaos, right? Some of us, we're shocked that life can be so crazy and disruptive in what's happening in our nation or what's happening in your personal life.

It's always been this way in the world. There are always threats that God allows to come into our lives as people of God,,,,, to purify us. He will use these things to bring us to a point where we're trusting him. We're not trusting Egypt. We're not trusting ourselves.

We're not trusting in our wisdom and our strength. We're trusting the Lord. That's where the Lord is always driving his people to be waiting on him, to be looking for his arm of deliverance. Verse 3 says, *“At the noise of the tumult, the people shall flee. When you lift Yourself up, the nation shall be scattered and Your plunder shall be gathered.*

Like the gathering of the caterpillar; as the running to and fro of locust, He shall run upon them.” That verse might be a little hard to understand. I'm going to read it in the New Living Translation. I think that's helpful.

It says, Verse 3, *“The enemy runs at the sound of your voice. And when you stand up, the nations flee. Just as caterpillars and locusts strip the fields and vines, so the fallen army of Assyria will be stripped.”* So again, this is a person of faith waiting on the Lord. Trusting the Lord that he's going to take care of the threat, he's going to take care of the problem.

So that's what we need to do, as we're trusting God, we need to feed our faith in His word and remember how awesome God is and he's able to take care of every situation. Verse 5 *“The Lord is exalted, for he dwells on high. He has filled Zion with justice and righteousness. Wisdom and knowledge will be the stability of your times and the strength of salvation. The fear of the Lord is His treasure.”*

So our eyes could be on this Assyrian threat. They're gathering their armies outside the city. This is a real threat and yet we're not looking to man for deliverance. We're looking to the Lord. See, it's easy to get our eyes on the strength of the situation, the reality of the situation.

You could almost picture those who were trusting the Lord back then as the Assyrian army gathered around the city. And people would say we have to take action. We have to do something. That's foolish just to wait on God. We need to call upon Egypt.

We need to rise up in our military strength. And the person of God would say, no, we need to wait upon the Lord. For the Lord is exalted. He dwells on high. See, you're looking past that Assyrian army and you're looking up to see with spiritual eyes, he's on the throne. God is mighty. God is powerful.

Verse 6 says, *“wisdom and knowledge will be the stability of your times.”* See, that's wisdom and knowledge to understand God is in control. A carnal Christian or a believer lives in that emotional kind of zone where they're just being moved by what they see, what they hear. But a person of faith who's in the word of God, trusting the Lord, sees beyond what's in the natural, that God's on the throne.

Verse 7 *“Surely their valiant ones shall cry outside. The ambassadors of peace shall weep bitterly. The highways lie waste, the traveling man ceases. He has broken the covenant. He has despised the cities. He regards no man. The earth mourns and languishes. Lebanon is shamed and shriveled. Sharon is like a wilderness, and Bashan and Carmel shake off their fruits.”*

Now let's read that in the New Living. *“But now your brave warriors weep in public. Your ambassadors of peace cry in bitter disappointment. Your roads are deserted. No one travels them anymore. The Assyrians have broken their peace treaty and care nothing for the promises they made before witnesses. They have no respect for anyone.”*

So the person of God is saying, look, we're not going to try to negotiate with the Assyrians and find some sort of natural solution to this. We're trusting the Lord. We don't trust in them and we are looking to the Lord. Verse 10, *“Now I will rise, says the Lord. Now I will be exalted. Now I will lift myself up.”*

So notice again, the person of God, waiting on God, knowing that God is going to act in his time, in his way, and you can live in peace as you're trusting the Lord with every situation. God is going to rise. There are times where we're not seeing the Lord act. We're just waiting on him. We're trusting him with the situation.

But there will come the time when God will rise up and answer. Verse 11, *“You shall conceive chaff, you shall bring forth stubble. Your breath, as fire, shall devour you. And the people shall be like the burning of lime, like thorns cut up. They shall be burned in the fire. Hear, you who are afar off, what I have done, and you who are near, acknowledge my might.”*

So the Lord is saying of the Assyrians, they think they're so strong, they think they're going to conquer and plunder, and God's saying, look they're just like chaff. They're just going to burn up like stubble. I am going to work. Notice verse 13, *“Hear, you who are afar off, what I have done; and you who are near, acknowledge my might.”* We've seen this theme through Isaiah where God is saying, a wicked person doesn't even know what God is doing. They're just oblivious to what God's doing.

But God is working, isn't he? He's working as an answer to our prayers. He's working around us, and so a person of faith understands that they're listening to what the Holy Spirit is saying. They're lifting their life in prayer to the Lord. We've talked about prayer the last few Sundays and just living that life of prayer and faith and giving the Lord one situation after another.

So you're not caught up in fear. You're not caught up in anxiety. You're walking in the spirit. You're aware of what God is doing and you're acknowledging his ability and his might. Verse 14 – *“The sinners in Zion are afraid, fearfulness has seized the hypocrites.”*

So I believe this is a reference to the people in Judah who are supposed to be trusting the Lord. They say they're God's people. But God is saying, look, in Zion, in Jerusalem, my people are supposed to know better. They're supposed to be trusting me. But you're a hypocrite because you call yourself a believer, but you're living in fear. See, isn't that a word for us? We have fear in our life. Can that really coexist with a person of faith who's saying, Lord, I'm struggling with this situation. It's a real situation, but Lord, I'm giving it over to you in prayer. I'm getting along with God and I'm working through this situation because I know God's hearing me and I'm pouring out my heart to him. I'm pouring out the situation to him.

And then that peace that passes understanding comes and guards our hearts and minds. So God's saying fearfulness has seized the hypocrites. So you're fearful over the direction that you see your child going or maybe it's your adult child you're out of communication with, they've kind of cut you off. I've heard that story so often.

And yet are you fearful about that or are you prayerful about that? Are you trusting that God is working and that he is able? And then verse 14, the rest of it says, *“Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?”*

Now this, I believe, is this hypocrite asking this question, this supposed person of God saying, oh no, what are we going to do? You ever hear people that kind of live in this zone? Oh man, the devil's just attacking me. The devil's just destroying me. It's like you talk about the devil more than you talk about the Lord as if he's dominating your life. He's not dominating your life.

Now, the Bible gives us some direction about how to deal with the enemy. We resist the devil and put on our spiritual armor, we are more than conquerors in Christ. We can't have this kind of defeatist mentality. The Lord expects us to recognize he has risen. He is victorious. I am in Christ.

And yeah, I understand it gets hard sometimes, it gets dark sometimes because the more you're serving the Lord, the more you're going to get attacked. But you put that armor on and you're like this joyous soldier who's going into the battle.

We're not fearful of the enemy; we're walking in the victory of Christ. I guess we can see ourselves in this person. *“Who among us shall dwell among the devouring fire.”* The Assyrians are coming. How can we possibly overcome this overwhelming force of these Assyrians? They're thinking, be realistic, they've

defeated one nation after another and they're coming after us next. They're living in that fearful zone.

It's like wait a minute, you don't believe God is on the throne? We just read that. He says I will arise. I will exalt myself. I will manifest myself. I'm on the throne.

But see, we can be that carnal Christian, can't we? Yeah, we believe in Jesus, we're the people of God, but we live in fear. We live in unbelief, and that's not what God wants for us. And so this is great. It says who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?

And now here's the answer, verse 15 - *“He who walks righteously and speaks uprightly, he who despises the gain of oppressions, who gestures with his hand, refusing bribes, who stops his ears from hearing of bloodshed and shuts his eyes from seeing evil. He will dwell on high. His place of defense will be the fortress of rocks. Bread will be given him and his water will be sure.”*

So God is saying, this is the person who will endure this trial. He who's walking with God and trusting God with his life. It's interesting because it's listing some things here that a righteous person doesn't do, which implies well, an unrighteous person does this. Number one, verse 15:

“He walks righteously and he speaks uprightly”. So, for a righteous person, it is important the way we speak. It is important we walk with the Lord consistently uprightly. Now, as believers, I rejoice in this. We're going to be teaching Philippians here pretty soon on Wednesday nights.

But I love in Philippians where it talks about rejoice in the Lord, that's a theme of Philippians. But if you dig down a little deeper into that, it's not just saying, oh, just put on a happy face. The idea there is you have the risen son of God, Jesus Christ right with you, and he wants to live his righteous life through you. That's something to rejoice about.

So the calling to live righteously is really a call of faith in Jesus Christ, and as I feel the pressure of living a righteous life in a wicked world with a wicked flesh, I love to just put it right back on Jesus. Jesus, you're my righteousness. You're my strength, Christ, who is our life.

Christ has become unto me wisdom from God and righteousness and sanctification and redemption. So I'm just interacting with Jesus by faith and saying Lord, you know I'm not righteous so I can't produce it, but I just rejoice

that you've given me your very life to live through me, and I just fellowship with you and your righteousness rubs off on me, as it were.

When you start to learn that as a Christian, it's no longer, oh, the devil's overcoming me and oh, this is so hard. No, there's a rejoicing in Jesus Christ. Oh, thank you Lord. His yolk is easy and his burden is light. It's not supposed to be this heavy burden to live a righteous life.

I could go on with that, but we'll stop there. Verse 15 *“You walk uprightly, you speak uprightly, you despise the gain of oppressions who gestures his hands, refusing bribes”*. In other words, a person of the world or a carnal Christian, you're just trying to make things happen in your life. As we have seen more and more in our government, I don't know how much you follow politics and what not, but you understand there are bribes going on all the time, right? It might not be spoken in those terms, but after your time in office, you go and work for this company that you were able to have influence in whether it's a defense contractor or big pharma, and all that.

And there's all this money exchanging hands. And it's really bribery. I'm not saying everybody's like that in politics. I'm just saying that's the way of the world. In fact, in most of the world, that's just common how the governments work. The United States has been an exception to a degree, but of course we're seeing as our nation declines, you're going to see more and more of this kind of evil thing happening.

But a righteous person, we don't need to do that kind of thing because we're depending on God as our provision. But again, this is what was happening in the government of Judah, where there had been corruption and the Lord is discerning between, okay, this person is a righteous person, they're not taking bribes, they're not trying to make things happen the worldly way, they're trusting me. They're walking uprightly. And yeah, that kind of person will endure the fire and the fear of judgment because they're trusting in me. And then verse 16 – *“And he will dwell on high. His place of defense will be a fortress of rocks. Bread will be given him, his water will be sure.”*

It's just beautiful the promises God gives if you will live a righteous life, if you will live a life of faith. Now, the reward might not come right away. You may have to live in that season of stress and that threat hanging over you, but you're just learning to walk in faith and trusting the Lord.

But the reward is going to come. I was reading Hebrews this morning. We don't have time to get into it, but, Hebrews 11:12 talking about the Hebrews were

under a lot of persecution and pressure in the first century and some were questioning is it even worth it to live this Christian life?

It's so hard. The author of Hebrews was saying, look, you have need of endurance that you will receive the reward. But you have to keep enduring, you have to keep trusting. You have to keep walking in faith. Yes, I know it's hard, but the breakthrough's going to come. The answer to prayer is going to come.

Keep trusting the Lord. Okay, verse 17 – *“Your eyes will see the King in his beauty; they will see the land that is very far off. Your heart will meditate on terror. Where is the scribe? Where is he who weighs? Where is he who counts the towers? You will not see a fierce people, a people of obscure speech, beyond perception, of stammering tongue that you cannot understand.”*

So again, this is encouragement to those in Judah who are trusting the Lord in this time of stress with this threat hanging over them. Just look at promise after promise. God says I'm going to provide for you and you are going to see the king and his beauty. See that's what a person of faith has, you have eyes to see things that the unbeliever can't see, that the carnal Christian can't see. Jesus said, Father, I thank you that you've hidden these things from the wise and intelligent, but revealed them to babes for thus it was fitting in your sight. The experiences we have with the Lord, walking in faith, trusting him with our problems, seeking him. There's beauty that you see of the Lord.

Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God. I believe that's not talking about necessarily heaven, it's just talking about as we're walking with God and we're just living this simple life, just trusting the Lord. It's not that you're perfectly pure. Your life is simple. It's just you and Jesus, just trusting him, seeking him.

I believe in that simplicity. The Lord comes to us and reveals himself and you see the beauty of the Lord. The unbelievers are looking to Egypt. They're fearful of the King of Assyria.

They're trusting in the King of Egypt. And the Lord is saying no, see the king in his beauty and it says they will see the land that is very far off. They were fearful, Oh, our land's going to be taken away. We're going to be taken out of Judah and all of the history we have here, the temple, it's all going to be taken away from us.

God's saying, look, if you'll trust me you're going to see this land and you'll continue to dwell here. And then in verse 18, where he's talking about your

heart will meditate on terror, in other words, he's saying, as a believer, you're going to think back to the threats of fear that were hanging over you and you're just going to say, Hey, where is the scribe?

Where is this person in Assyria, the Assyrian scribes? Those who were the administrators of war and the military leaders, they would count the towers and say, how are we going to defeat this city? And God is saying you're going to look at them and just say they're gone, they're nowhere.

They're nowhere to be seen. And that's the beauty of walking in faith. We're trusting the Lord. We're not looking at things in the natural and we're not fearful of the things in the natural. And in verse 19, he says you're not going to see these fierce people that you feared, these people of obscure speech, a language that you cannot understand, and I love that because you're living a life of faith and you're not living a life of fear.

Verse 20 – *“Look upon Zion, the city of our appointed feasts. Your eyes will see Jerusalem. A quiet home, a tabernacle that will not be taken down. Not one of its stakes will ever be removed, nor will any of its cords be broken.”* So again, it is encouragements to the person of faith. God's saying, look, this is not going to be taken away from you.

This threat is not going to work. He just keeps feeding their faith for the person who's listening. Sometimes we're not listening for those encouragements. I just love when I'm trying to trust the Lord for something and maybe I'm struggling with it and I open the word and the Lord just speaks right into that and says keep on trusting me.

Keep on waiting upon me and you're like, yes, thank you. I needed to hear that. Lord, help me to see you in your beauty, in your exalted state, that you're high above over all, and you're going to take care of this situation.

Verse 21 – *“But there the majestic Lord will be for us a place of broad rivers and streams in which no galley with oars will sail. No majestic ships pass by.”* So it's this idea of, back then a ship was a high tech thing. It was probably your fastest means of transportation. So if you're either out on the ocean or if you had a river, a broad river where an enemy navy could sail into quickly and take over, the Lord is saying you don't need to worry about that. You don't need to fear that. And the majestic Lord will be for us a place of broad rivers and streams. The person of faith has their eyes on the unseen, has the eyes on the things of the Lord.

Verse 22 – *“For the Lord is our judge. The Lord is our lawgiver. The Lord is our king. He will save us.”* So you see the person of God just feeding their faith, focused on I'm not worried about the Assyrians and their power because the Lord is judge. He's the lawgiver. He's my king. He will save us. *“Your tackle is loosed. They could not strengthen their mast. They could not spread the sail.”*

So what the enemy intends with the great technology they have is that they were going to bring in the strength of their technological machine and military machine. The Lord is just saying he's going to break the mast of that great navy that's going to come in and they're not going to be able to spread their sail.

He's going to take the wind out of their sails as it were. So then *“the prey of great plunder is divided. The lame take the prey. And the inhabitant will not say, I am sick. The people who dwell in it will be forgiven their iniquity.”* So, just that beautiful word to the person who's trusting the Lord.

God is promising that this is the way things are going to turn out. You have to trust me. It hasn't happened yet. So you have to trust me. You have to feed your faith with my word. You have to remember that I'm on the throne. I'm the king. I'm the lawgiver. I'm majestic on my throne. All of these ways of thinking about God that we feed our faith with through his word, strengthens our faith, keeps us in that place of faith and trusting the Lord to break through in his way.

So let's pray.

Lord, we thank you for this chapter that has brought encouragement to those of us who are living this life of faith. It's not easy, Lord, you know that the problems are real. You're not telling us to pretend the problem is not there. You're telling us to see you and to acknowledge you.

And to see past the threat of that problem to our God who is on his throne. And Lord, whether it's a financial struggle or a health struggle, or sin struggle, whatever it is, Lord, you want us to call upon you. You don't want us to look to other means because, Lord, when you break through with your answer, you get all the glory.

You get all the worship and you are a God who sits in beauty. As we read, we will see the king in his beauty. You sit on your throne in glorious holiness. The beauty of holiness, Lord, you reign in power. And yes, we live in confusing times, Lord, we're impacted by decisions being made by the government, by inflation and different things that can distress us.

But Lord, we must turn those things over to you Lord. I was thinking about the invasion on the southern border and how distressing that can be where we have open borders and yet Lord, we are to just trust you with those things. Maybe you're going to use that - if we won't go down there, you'll send them to us.

We cannot get distressed about these things. We must pray and trust you. They're out of our control. But Lord, that we could see these things from your perspective. And Lord we are distressed with what's going on in our nation, to see the foolish decisions and the spiraling crime in so many places.

We could go on with the list. We read the news, we see it. But Lord to trust you with those things that you're shaking, everything that can be shaken, and you will bring resolution to these things. You will bring justice in your time. Even in the chaos, Lord, you're doing a work just like you did among the chaos of their times.

You're working in our times and as believers, we can walk in perfect peace in the midst of the chaos because Lord, you're drawing people, you're at work in many lives around us. And Lord, we want to acknowledge your work and be aware of what you're doing and not get caught up with fear and defeatism, but Lord, to see what you're doing and flow along with that.

We just thank you that you give us instruction through your word. Lord, I pray as we have lunch together today and have afterglow that you would speak to us. You would encourage our hearts; encourage those who are trusting you.

Lord, there's some here, maybe they don't even know what it is to trust you with their daily burdens, that they would just look to Jesus and say Lord give me your faith, how You trusted the Father, that I could live in your perfect peace and joy, and so Lord we pray you help each one here to trust you this week with issue after issue.

And then in time Lord you will break through, you will answer, you will arise, and we will glorify you for that. And so we just commit this day to you in Jesus' name.

Amen.