

Perfect Peace

Isaiah 26

Greetings = To all who have gathered **in person or online** as we gather in the name of Jesus, who “came from heaven to earth to show the way; from the earth to the cross my debt to pay; from the cross to the grave, from the grave to the sky, Lord I life your name on High.”

This is our 45th sermon in Isaiah, a preacher/pastor who believed in “**God’s Unfolding Plan**” in history.

*For over a year, we have journeyed through 6 themes, including “**The Arrival of Messiah.**”

*More than any other prophet, Isaiah wrote of the **Christmas story: a Savior, a Righteous Ruler, Immanuel, a great light in the darkness, one who would declare Good News.**

*We are now **in the heart** of one of the most glorious themes in Isaiah: “**The Coming Kingdom.**”

*Just as a heart has **4 chambers**, Isaiah 24-27 reveals **4 key aspects** of the Coming Kingdom.

*The **Chapter Titles in your Bible** show these **4 chambers**:

- Isaiah 24: “**Judgment on the Whole Earth**” (*God will repay the wicked and grant us relief*)
- Isaiah 25: “**God will Swallow up Death Forever**” (*God is ‘conqueror of the world conqueror*)
- Isaiah 26: “**You Keep Him in Perfect Peace**” (*The dead shall live and earth will sing for joy*)
- Isaiah 27: “**The Redemption of Israel**” (*God will slay the serpent & gather His people*)

*What are you **most looking forward to about the coming Kingdom?** One NH man wrote this note:

*“God's fingerprints ARE all over my history; from the darkest, most terrifying to overwhelming moments of true joy. I just want to look into His eyes and hear His voice say: “Well done, good and faithful servant.” He is what I am **MOST looking forward** to in the Coming Kingdom of God!”*

*Open to Isaiah 26, where our Lord promises **one of the best gifts in that day: Perfect Peace!**

1. The King offers peace, (v.1-6)

*“In that day **this song will be sung** in the land of Judah: “We have **a strong city**; he sets up salvation as walls and bulwarks. **2 Open the gates**, that the righteous nation that keeps faith may enter in.*

*The people of God rejoice on that day as they enter salvation, described as **a strong city.**

-On one hand, **the city has strong walls (a fortress)** that protect the people from harm.

-On the other hand, **the gate of the city is opened**, allowing people to enter in by faith.

***Strong Walls! Open Gates!** What a picture of salvation! A **fortress that is safe & available.**

*Do you realize: **even now you may enter salvation through the “Open Gate” of Christ?**

***A friend in the P.D. invited a fellow officer to enter the Gate last week:**

*“I had the opportunity to share the Gospel with [a fellow officer], that probably **seemed farthest from God...**This man has shown no interest and **I've felt a wall**, but I had to ride with him for three nights. While doing a report at the Police Department, he asked ‘what I thought of*

tattoos,' probably wanting to see if I would judge him. When I didn't...**it opened the door** to share the Gospel. As I took him through the Law, **he confessed** he'd lied, stolen, had anger in his heart, and blasphemed the name of God...When I asked '**would he be going to heaven or hell,**' he said 'he'd be going to hell.' I asked if that concerned him and he said, "yes." I was then able to **share the Good News**. Talking to an officer about justice and the need for the law to be fulfilled is an easy illustration and then how the law can only be satisfied if someone pays for it completely. When I described Jesus' great suffering for him and His resurrection and his need to repent and believe...**he looked at me and said, "I believe."**... He said he wants to start going to church. I'm going to get him a Bible. Would you say a prayer for him?"

*My friends, one day the **people of God** will enter the **city of God** and sing **glory to God**.

*But it begins by entering the **Gate** by faith; **repenting of sin & trusting Christ**.

*It begins with simple words: "**I repent. I believe.**"

*And once you've entered the gate, one of the first **actions as a believer: Baptism (Next Week!)**

***Back to Isaiah. ON THAT DAY...**we will finally **open a gift** that's long been missing from this world:

**"3 You keep him in PERFECT PEACE whose mind is stayed [FIXED] on you, because he trusts in you.
4 Trust in the Lord forever, for the Lord God is an everlasting rock."**

*One of the **BEST, most gorgeous verses** in the Bible. Worthy to remember, memorize & recite.

"Perfect Peace" "Shalom Shalom" emphasizes perfection; like **"Freaky Fast"; "Pizza Pizza"**

***Perfect Peace** is available; **offered** by the One Isaiah calls **"Prince of Peace"**; Peace on earth.

*Perfect Peace is **experienced** by those who know **WHO God is** and **WHAT God has done**.

*It is a type of **internal peace & contentment** that is **undisturbed by circumstances. Wow!**

***We don't always live with PERFECT PEACE, do we?** In fact, how quickly we lose peace!

*One **lousy driver** can make us lose our patience.

*One **mean word** at home can ruin a perfectly good evening.

*One **neighborhood squabble** can unsettle an entire week.

*One **troubling news report** can cause many a sleepless nights.

*And yet the King offers **Perfect Peace**. How do we keep our peace? V.3 says:

*ESV: "**You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed [FIXED] on you.**"

*GWT "**You will protect those whose minds cannot be changed, because they trust you.**"

*IOW: Perfect Peace **does not come from kids behaving; or cars working; or senate majorities.**

*Perfect Peace comes when we **keep our mind fixed** on **what is true**, even when things go **terribly wrong**.

*Picture it like this: An infant resting...sleeping...contently...upon God's Word.

*Winter of 2006, we were travelling with our 4 young kids on remote country roads in Illinois.

*Roads were icy; an oncoming semi pushed us into a ditch and drove off; STUCK!

*I instantly lost my peace: Fear; anxiety; worry: "how do I get us out of this jam?"

*As I lost my peace, my 4 kids are in the backseat. Some are sleeping; some are playing; some are smiling; perfectly at peace: "Dad's got this."

*That's Peace. Fixing our mind on what's true, even when things go wrong: God's got this.

2. ...but we choose our path, (v.7-18)

*Perfect Peace **will be ours someday** in the Kingdom. But do you know, the choices we make today play a key role in whether we live with peace now?

*Isaiah describes **3 paths**: One is **THE BEST**. One is **THE WORST**. One is the **MOST COMMON**.

• **The Level Path** (v.7-9)

*7 The **path of the righteous** is level; you make level the way of the righteous. 8 In the path of your judgments, O Lord, we wait for you; your name and remembrance are **the desire of our soul**. 9 My soul yearns for you in the night; my spirit within me earnestly seeks you.*

*This is the **best path**. It's level; it's straight; it's the smoothest path of life.

*This path describes those who hunger & thirst for righteousness, **morning & evening**.

*It describes those who seek the Lord & do what's right b/c He is **their highest desire**.

*"your name...the **desire of our soul**"*

*"My soul **yearns for you** in the night"*

*"My spirit within me **earnestly seeks you**."*

*Notice = **more than intellectual agreement of facts; but emotional engagement**

*IOW: It describes **true worship**. No matter what goes wrong or what gets taken away, the **TOP Desire** of the soul is to know the Lord and live for Him. Do you do that?

*It has been a **year of loss** where many things we love **have been taken away**: **Freedoms; Travel; Eating; Activities; Fun; Gatherings; Music; etc...**

*I wonder: Is **the Lord allowing loss...that we in the world may learn something?**

*v.9: For when your judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world **learn righteousness**.*

*Listen, don't miss the **fingerprints of God**: He invites us to walk the level path. A path where we seek Him; long for Him; a path that can never be taken from us.

• **The Crooked Path** (v.10-15)

10 If favor is shown to the wicked, **he does not learn** righteousness; in the land of uprightness he **deals corruptly and does not see the majesty of the Lord.** 11 O Lord, your hand is lifted up, but **they do not see it...**"

*This is the **Worst Path**: the path of those who "**do not learn**" and "**do not see**" the Lord.

*It describes the path of culture that **pulls at the hems of our garments, begs us to join them, and applauds when we disobey.** We live in **T.C.: Twisted & Crooked.**

***Do you realize how difficult it is for teens to walk the Level Path when all seems Crooked?**

*Kori and I are **excited to shepherd our High School teens for the next 5 months.** Our prayer:

*"that you may be pure and blameless, **children of God without blemish in a twisted and crooked generation** in which you shine like stars..." (Phil. 2:15)*

*Last week, we asked for people to "**adopt-a-teen**" in prayer: **(48,000 hrs of prayer in the next 2 months...as we pray they radiate a love for Jesus in a T.C. culture.)**

- **The "Pregnant with Pain" Path (v.16-18)**

*"16 O Lord, **in distress they sought you**; they poured out a whispered prayer when your **discipline was upon them.** 17 **Like a pregnant woman** who writhes and cries out in her pangs when she is near to giving birth, **so were we** because of you, O Lord; 18 **we were pregnant...**"*

*This is the **MOST COMMON PATH.** It's a path of **birth & growth...through tears and pain.**

***The metaphor: "Like a pregnant woman"** describes people who walk this path.

*They **do seek the Lord.** They **do pray.** They **do grow.** But it's because of pain:

*"...**in distress they sought you.**"*

*"...they poured out a whispered prayer when your **discipline was upon them.**"*

*IOW: **Babies are born** on this path, but they come through **labor pains of bad decisions.**

*My son recently read a quote by **Will Rogers** that makes a lot of sense:

*"There are **three kinds of men**: The ones that learn **by reading**; the few who learn **by observation**; the rest of them have to **pee on the electric fence** for themselves."*

*It's true, isn't it? Looking back on life, how many times have we **cried out to God for help** because we have made **poor decisions with the electric fence?**

*And God, in His mercy, hears our **whispered prayers.**

3. **...and the end is clear.** (v.19-21)

***Isaiah brings us to the end of the path. The Final Destination.** And the end is clear: Joy or Pain.

- **Resurrection Joy** (v.19-20)

*19 Your **dead shall live**; their **bodies shall rise.** You who dwell in the dust, **awake and sing for joy!***

*It's the **clearest verse in the OT that promises a bodily resurrection of the dead.**

*It assures us of resurrection hope: **"Dead shall live. Bodies shall rise."**

*It is our **final destination**; the **undoing of the grave**; the **reversal of decay**; the **defeat of death**; the **dead will "awake and sing for joy!"**

*There is coming a day when the Lord will issue a command to His people, dead & alive:

*"20 Come, my people, **enter your chambers**, and shut your doors behind you; **hide yourselves for a little while until the fury has passed by.**"*

*The chapter ends where it began: God gathering His people in the **gates of the city.**

*The King **calls His people into the safety of His chambers** so that we are protected from the fury that is to be poured on the world.

***Like Noah and his family being sheltered in the ark**, so there is coming a day when God will protect His people from the judgment to be poured on the world.

*Listen, **our world will continue to face hard times**, and things will get very hard for believers.

*But no matter what, we can have **PERFECT PEACE (like infants resting in His Word)** because we have the promise of **resurrection hope.**

*But there is another destination:

- **Or Eternal Pain. (v.21)**

*21 For behold, the Lord is coming out from his place **to punish the inhabitants** of the earth for their iniquity, and the earth will disclose the blood shed on it, and will no more cover its slain.*

***Whoa.** What a way for the chapter to end. It offers a clear picture of judgment that will come.

*And the choice for us is clear: **Perfect Peace** for those who walk **Level Path** with God as Savior.

*Or **Certain Pain** for those who walk the **Crooked Path.**

Action Steps:

Choose your Path.

*"See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse: **the blessing, if you obey** the commandments of the Lord...and **the curse, if you do not obey** the commandments..." (Deut 11:26-28)*

*The choice that Moses put before Israel still applies to believers today.

*Choose your path. It's a choice we have to make...Every hour. Every day. Of every week.

***Level Path.** It's the best path. A path of passion & desire & hunger for God.

***Crooked Path.** It's the worst path. The path of T.C.: Twisted & Crooked.

***Pregnant with pain Path.** It's a path where we grow, but through much labor & pain.

Beware Electric Fences.

*I guarantee each of us will come face-to-face with electric fences this week.

*They will come in the form of **peer pressure, media temptation, worldly desires.**

*When you come to the fence, I pray you will hear my voice: ***“Don’t do it! It hurts.”***

*Walk around the fence. Find the gate. Walk on the level path that God offers.

Fix your Mind: “God’s Got This!”

*Isaiah 26 shows us that we can live with **perfect peace** right now, knowing victory is secure.

*It reveals that **perfect peace is available now...and can be experienced** even as we deal with disappointments and delays and discouragements.

*It’s a peace that comes when we **fix our minds on what is true**, even when things go bad.

*It’s a peace that comes when we **abide and trust** in the Lord, who is the ***“everlasting Rock.”***

*It’s a peace that comes from resting in the promise that our Lord will **raise the dead and say to His people: *“Come up here; enter your chambers.”***

*With such a **secure future**, we trust Him with today. We cast our cares and our burdens to Him

*Like the infant sleeping on the Bible, we are at peace knowing He is in charge

*On that day, **we will enter the gates of the strong city** and sing for joy b/c God has saved us.