

Sermon 5: Isaiah's Enduring Ministry: Isaiah 6:8-13

Text: Isaiah 6:8-13 "I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me. And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; And see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, And make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; Lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, And understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed. Then said I, Lord, how long? And he answered, Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, And the houses without man, And the land be utterly desolate, And the Lord have removed men far away, And there be a great forsaking in the midst of the land. But yet in it shall be a tenth, and it shall return, and shall be eaten: As a teil tree, and as an oak, whose substance is in them, when they cast their leaves: So the holy seed shall be the substance thereof..."

Summary: God describes the difficult nature of Isaiah's ministry to prepare him to faithfully endure.

Proposition: We must accept the complex nature of ministry when we embrace His call.

Interrogative: How can we do this?

Truth 1: Understand God's call: 6:8 "I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?"

- **This was a difficult transitional period in Judah's history: 6:1**
"In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up..."
- **There were few faithful believers:**
 - **1:4** "Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward..."
 - **1:6** "From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it..."
 - **1:9** "Except the LORD of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah..."
 - **1:18-20** "Let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured..."
- **God raised up a servant to do His work:**
 - Isaiah received an objective call.

- As a prophet, he would receive direct revelation from God in an objective way.
- **He still raises people to do His work, yet His call is communicated in a less objective way:**
 - He plants desires in our hearts, but those desires must be tested.
 - He calls all believers to commit to growth and demands that those who step into ministry roles be people of integrity and spiritual maturity.
 - He equips people with unique abilities for specific areas of service and develops those abilities as they use them.
 - He providentially opens doors, closes doors, and redirects people as they run their race.
- **Those who step into these roles embrace a sobering responsibility: 6:8** "Who will go for us?"

Truth 2: Commit to His invitation: 6:8 "Then said I, Here am I; send me..."

- **Isaiah volunteered: 6:8** "Here am I; send me..."
- **His commitment started with a limited, yet overwhelming view of God: 6:5** "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts..."
 - He was gripped by God's holiness.
 - He was humbled by his own brokenness.
 - He was gripped by his nation's brokenness.
 - He was willing to embrace whatever he was called to do.
- **Every believer with a correct view of God should have a similar experience:**
 - We should be gripped by His holiness.
 - We should be humbled by our brokenness.
 - We should be gripped by our nation's brokenness.
 - We should be willing to embrace whatever He has called us to do.

Truth 3: Prepare for conflict: 6:9-13 "Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; And see ye indeed, but perceive not..."

- **His simple commission:** Faithfully call the people to embrace the truth: **6:9** "Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed...and see ye indeed..."
 - This is a brutal yet honest assessment of Isaiah's ministry.
 - It was meant to prepare Isaiah for the difficulties he would face.
- **The negative:**
 - **His ministry will lead to complacency:**

- "But understand not...but perceive not..."
- "Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes..."
- **Do it as long as there are people in the land: 6:11** "Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, And the houses without man, And the land be utterly desolate..."
 - Rather than repentance and revival, your message will be rejected.
 - Your ministry will be a testimony against those who rebel.
 - No one will be able to say that they were ignorant.
 - Their exposure to truth will harden them.
- **The Positive: Through the same ministry God will preserve His people: 6:13** "But yet in it shall be a tenth..."
 - There will be a remnant preserved because they embrace the truth rather than harden themselves to it.
 - There will be a future restoration because they embrace the truth rather than harden themselves to it.
 - The ministry will have the same effect of a tree cut down to the ground that grows back out of the stump.
- **Implication:**
 - The same message that will harden the proud, will preserve and soften the humble.
 - While it is difficult to remain faithful under these circumstances, it is necessary, and God will use it.
 - A faithful ministry can outlive one's life and immediate generation.

Truth 4: Take comfort in the enduring nature of faithful ministry:
John 12:32-43 "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me...Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light...But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him: That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them. These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him. Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God..."

- **John 12 is parallel to Isaiah 6 in many ways:**
 - In both passages, the nation was in a hardened state.
 - In both passages, there was an invitation with a limited window of opportunity.
 - If they rejected the light given, light would be taken away.
 - If they would not believe when the light was available, it would become impossible for them to believe when the light was taken away.
 - In both passages, there was a silent remnant that believed the message.
 - In both passages, the same message had differing effects based on the attitude of those who heard the message.
- **The distinct difference:**
 - In Isaiah, God sent a man to speak for Him.
 - In John, God took on flesh and spoke for Himself.
 - In John, Isaiah's message was fulfilled, because Christ went to the cross and made salvation possible through His sacrifice.
- **Conclusion:** God used Isaiah's faithfulness over 700 years before to speak as an enduring witness pointing to redemption.
 - His witness stood for 700 years, hardening many and leading to judgment.
 - It also stood for 700 years as the object of faith for a believing remnant.
 - It has continued to do the same for the last 2,000 years.
 - Isaiah spoke for Christ and pointed to Him.
 - Christ came in the flesh and experienced the same mixed result as Isaiah foretold.

Application:

- We need a vivid view of God as He is.
- When we get this view, we will see our own unworthiness and brokenness.
- We will also see the desperate need of our own times.
- He has a place where He has planted us to serve Him, but we must be willing to embrace that purpose.
- When we embrace His calling, we must be prepared for the difficulty of ministering God's word.
- We should rest in the truth that a faithful ministry will bless people long after we are gone.