

Good morning, church. So glad to see all of you here. We have had a busy summer already. June was chock full of things. So I wanted to just give you a brief missions update. The soccer watch party kits that we received, we had ordered 10.

We received 50, and we have 6 left. So there are a lot of gospel opportunities that we're praying over. So this is the opportunity for gathering people together, neighboring, and building those relationships. So also on the heels of this, we have Mission Week coming up in a week.

just a week. So if you've not signed up yet, please join me at the welcome desk after worship, and we'll get you signed up at an opportunity that's right for you. Also, you've heard a lot in the news about Venezuela, and Southern Baptist Send Relief is active in sending people. Samaritan's Purse also, of course, is sending, so please be in prayer about those things.

City Union Mission, you guys have really shown up. You've seen the overflow there in the foyer. We have even more in D109. So that is really exciting that we're helping to meet needs in the community. We've had a really long history with City Union Mission. And I'm just briefly going to read you some names. Some of you will remember who has served on the board at City Union Mission. Lloyd Clark, Dee Clark,

Julie Thompson, currently David Langford. So we've had some strong ties to the mission for a long time. I want to welcome Timothy Shouten. He is with Church Relations with City Union Mission. He's going to give you an update and he's going to speak to us with a message from the Lord.

All right. Well, it's my privilege to be here with you all. I've been a part of the mission for seven years now and just about three months in the church engagement coordinator position. And so I get to help churches know how to help the poor better. And it's just a passion of mine since I've been on the front lines with the program participants. I just know where their heart is and know what they've gone through and what's going on in their lives. And so we'll get to share a story later.

But first, I want to be able to bring the message from God's word to you. That is the most important thing today is that you can dive into God's word and so that you yourself can experience the message from God, from his word. Okay. All right. We're going to be in Isaiah chapter 58. Isaiah chapter 58. Okay. All right.

All right, before I begin, let's go ahead and pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you for the opportunity to speak from your word today. I pray the words I say are yours from your word and that I would be able to just honor you with them. And I pray that the hearts would be open to hear and to respond. In Jesus name I pray, amen. Okay.

in Kansas, there is something called an ALICE report, okay? It stands for ALICE Limited, Asset Limited, Income Constrained Employed. So this is just a report talking about the poverty that's in Kansas. It says, combining ALICE households plus those living in poverty, an estimated 36% of households in Kansas were below the ALICE threshold in 2024.

What does that mean? they don't have enough income to afford their basic needs. They're forced to make impossible choices, like deciding whether to pay for utilities or a tank of gas, whether to

buy food or fill a prescription, whether to live close to work and pay more for housing or opt for a longer, more costly commute. And they are less likely to have the resources to cover the unexpected household expenses, like an unforeseen car repair or a costly medical bill, or to recover from crisis,

both natural disasters or personal crisis. That relates to my own story. Growing up, I grew up in a family where at 10 years old, my parents are separated, and money wasn't used very well growing up. And so my dad would have a paycheck one week, we would be good on food, but then the next week we were really struggling. And oftentimes my dad would have to figure out, okay, what am I paying for this week? What utility do I have to call and say, hey, I need help?

And so that's a personal story for me. And I especially remember when I was in high school, I was working as a janitor at my church and trying to make some income for the family. And during the holiday seasons, it's always tough. It's always tough. Like we weren't going to go out and spend a lot of money on presents, right? It's just reality. And so whenever the church saw our need, they were so good at showing compassion and love. And we're like, hey, does your family need food?

It's this season. Does your family feel like, oh yes, we definitely need food. And so they would help us. My dad didn't go to church with us. It's me and my brothers. And so oftentimes when I was in high school, I'd drive my brothers to church. And they just loved on us so much. And just that love is something that you guys also will experience as you help others. There's people in your own church that are going through struggling, hard times and struggling. But the joy is we get to work together as a community

and being able to show that love and encourage one another, right? Okay, well that leads us to Isaiah 58. And so we're going to read through verses 1 through 11. Okay. Oh, the core message. There we go. I skipped over the core message.

The core message today is God wants us to participate in spiritual activities in order to prepare us with his powerful presence to rescue people in bondage to sin and physical oppression. And that seems kind of long. I'll give a little shorter takeaway in a minute here. But it says God wants us to participate in spiritual activities in order to prepare us with his powerful presence to rescue people in bondage to sin and physical oppression. To put shortly,

To put shortly, God wants to give us strength and wisdom to rescue people from the darkness. God wants to give us strength and wisdom to rescue people from the darkness. Okay, all right. Isaiah chapter 58, verses 1 through 11. Cry out loud, do not hold back. Lift up your voice like a trumpet. Declare to my people their transgression to the house of Jacob their sins.

Yet they seek me daily and delight to know my ways as if they were a nation that did righteousness and did not forsake the judgment of their God. They ask of me righteous judgments. They delight to draw near to God. And this is their response. This is the people's response to God. Why have we fasted and you see it not? Why have we humbled ourselves and you take no knowledge of it? Behold in the day.

And then here's God's response to that. Behold, in the day of your fast, you seek your own pleasure and oppress all your workers. Behold, you fast only to quarrel and to fight and to hit with a wicked

fist. Fasting like yours this day will not make your voice to be heard on high. Is such the fast that I choose a day for a person to humble himself? Is it to bow down his head like a reed and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him?

Will you call this a fast, a day acceptable to the Lord? Is this not the fast that I choose, to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the straps of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house, when you see the naked to cover him and not to hide yourself from your own flesh?

Then shall your light break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up speedily. Your righteousness shall go before you. The glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard. Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer. You shall cry, and He will say, Here I am, if you take away the yoke from your midst, the pointing of the finger, and the speaking of wickedness. If you pour yourself out for the hungry, and satisfy the desire of the afflicted, then your light shall rise in the darkness, and your gloom be as a noonday.

And the Lord will guide you continually and satisfy your desire in the scorched places and make your bones strong. And you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water whose waters do not fail. So where are we at in Isaiah? This is Isaiah chapter 58, and as many of you have read Isaiah before, Isaiah is a long book prophecy to read, right? So we're all the way at the end.

And so this next slide, I just have a picture of Isaiah just proclaiming the message to the people. Now during the first part of his ministry, both the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Israel were intact. They were going about their daily business, everything was good, but then the Assyrian army started coming.

And a part of the prophecy of Isaiah was that he wanted the people to turn to the Lord. So God spoke through Isaiah the prophet to tell the people a message to turn to the Lord before something bad happens. Now the northern kingdom did not listen. The northern kingdom did not listen at all. And so what happened in 720 BC and about three different times, the Assyrians came and slowly took away the people.

killed, murdered, took away the people. And the Northern Kingdom ended up not being there anymore. Now you would imagine if your neighbor up north, you say we're down here, if we're up in Iowa, just imagine just that distance further up in Iowa, all of a sudden all the people got wiped out. You would hear it on the news pretty quickly. Obviously back then they didn't

have TV and all that.

But you would hear the news about what's happening.

Man, your neighbor just got wiped away by a huge military army.

That would really send chills up your spine.

That would scare you to death.

What's going to happen to our plates?

Are they going to come out and get down and get us?

So Isaiah is very urgent in his message to the southern kingdom.

Hey, you need to turn back to the Lord.

We don't want that to happen to you.

We want you to be filled with blessing from God.

Just repent and turn back to the Lord and follow Him.

But you think they changed their ways?

No, they didn't.

But there isn't always an opportunity.

There was always a remnant.

There were people there in the southern kingdom that did follow the Lord.

And that is a blessing to hear.

Now in 701 BC, the Assyrians came down to Judah, the southern kingdom, and they were going to take it over.

Now at first they didn't do it because they wanted to get money from the people in Jerusalem.

They wanted to pay a tax.

But eventually they came down and they were going to take it over.

So Hezekiah, the king of that time, he humbled himself before God and just pleaded with the Lord that he would help, right?

He would help.

And the Lord did help.

When King Sennacherib attempted to capture the city the night before, an angel of the Lord came and wiped out 185,000 soldiers of the Assyrians.

And so the Assyrians are like, wow, all our people are dead.

This is weird.

How'd this even happen?

There's no sign of disease.

It just happened.

And so they had to go back home.

And God, there was a miracle and God saved them in that moment.

And so

Even though Isaiah's been proclaiming this message to repent, there's moments, there's always an opportunity to turn back to the Lord, always, until you have life no more.

So while you're alive, you always have an opportunity.

Okay, so the next slide there, is it very clear?

Okay, cool, it works.

It looks clear.

All right, so in 701 BC, you'll see the Assyrian invasion.

And Isaiah 36 through 38, you actually get to look at that passage and see how God had rescued the people during that time.

Okay.

All right.

On the next slide, it's God calls out his people for their sin.

So in this first part of the passage, God calls out his people for their sin.

It says, cry out loud, do not hold back, lift up your voice like a trumpet, declare to my people their transgression to the house of Jacob their sins.

Now, as a believer of Jesus Christ, we have the privilege as fellow believers, brothers and sisters in Christ, to hold each other accountable.

And that is an awesome thing because we get to hold each other accountable, stay on track in what Jesus wants us to do, right?

And so when you have a fellow brother come to you in the right way, obviously not in front of everyone or to shame or put down, but when a brother or sister comes to you privately and says, hey, this seems like you're going off the wrong track here, you need to come back.

You need to come back to the ways of the Lord or fix this and what's going on.

And it comes out of love and compassion, right?

So God really loves the people and he doesn't want disaster to come on their land.

And so he's saying, cry out loud.

Don't hold it back.

Tell them what's going on.

Tell them their sin so they know how to change.

I don't know if you, growing up, if you had a parent or relative who would say, well, just stop doing that.

It doesn't work very well, does it?

But God actually tells them how to stop and what to do.

And so we'll get to see in this passage how he does that.

All right, verse 2, it says, yet they seek me daily and delight to know my ways, as if they were a nation that did righteousness and did not forsake the judgment of their God.

Now, you know, coming to worship is an awesome thing.

It's such a privilege to be able to come and worship and pray together and honor the Lord.

But we can actually have the wrong motives when we do come to worship, right?

So that's what these people were doing.

They had the wrong motives when they came.

And so they were acting like, well, you know, the Judah, our kingdom, our neighborhood, our places, we're following the Lord.

We're doing what he wants us to do.

They even says they delight to draw near to God.

They really want to draw near to God.

But the problem was they had the wrong motivation.

So we see in verse 3, it says, why have we fasted and you see it not?

Why have we humbled ourselves and you take no knowledge of it?

Okay, so they're going so far as to fast.

I know in our American culture, we're not used to fasting as much, but it is such an honor to be able to fast because the point of fasting is to draw near to God, to abide with Him and to depend upon Him as we don't eat for a meal or a day or however long God wants you to fast.

And so they're saying, well, I'm doing what I'm supposed to be doing.

I'm fasting.

I'm doing the righteous thing.

But you're not taking notice.

Well, here's the reason why.

Here's what God says.

Behold, in the day of your fast, you seek your own pleasure and oppress all your workers.

Behold, you fast only to quarrel and to fight and to hit with a wicked fist.

Fasting like yours this day will not make your voice to be heard on high.

So what was happening, they were honestly coming to draw near to the Lord, but they were doing it to get pleasure in their own righteousness.

Hey, if I do this, then God will bless me with money, God will bless me with promotion, God will bless me with all these things, and that's the extent of it.

That's the purpose of doing it.

But God's like, wait a minute, after you get done fasting, the real purpose is so that your life would be changed.

And it's not being changed.

It's staying the same.

Okay, so what are they doing wrong?

Number one, they are fasting with wrong intentions.

Number 2, they're seeking their own pleasure.

Number 3, they're oppressing all their workers.

Number 4, they were fighting with others, and then they were doing wicked deeds.

All right, the next slide.

I see a picture of a guy very pleased with the righteous deed of fasting because they were doing it as a community, but yet you notice that right behind him there are people in need that he's not taken care of, right?

And so the outworking of his faith wasn't there.

All right, the next slide, you'll see that this guy is oppressing the workers.

These guys are working for him, but yet they're making him work long hours of the day and overburdening them.

And so as a compassionate God, he loves that we work and we serve, but when we are taskmasters and just hurting the people that we're leading, that's not the way God wanted it.

He wants to free people from the oppression

of work and oppression of wickedness.

He wants to give us life.

So as a Christian community, we are honest workers, but then we also take care of the people that are working for us.

So it's really God's heart.

All right, and next slide, verse 5, is such the fast that I choose a day for a person to humble himself?

Is it to bow down his head like a reed and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him?

Will you call this a fast and a day acceptable to the Lord?

Meaning,

Is this all that fascinating is about?

Is it just about being humble?

No, there's something else that follows it.

The next slide, it says, Isaiah is letting the people know that they are just checking off a religious box in order to get physical blessing and not truly seeking to do God's will.

Okay?

Now next, we see that God reveals the true outcome of the spiritual activities.

God reveals the true outcome of spiritual activities.

Verse 6 says, is this

the fast that I choose, to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the straps of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free and to break every yoke.

Is it not to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house, when you see the naked to cover him and to not hide yourself from your own flesh?

So from this, we see that drawing near to God in prayer, reading His word, worshiping, fasting is not about religious duty, but about truly hearing God's will for your life and then going to live it out, right?

So the spiritual activities is a place of this really special moment that you're with God.

And in that moment, you're connecting with Him.

And He is healing you, He is strengthening you, and He's giving you wisdom in that moment.

but you don't just keep it to yourself.

Then you turn it around and you go and serve God with that wisdom and strength that He's given you, that time you spent with God.

Now you get to use that energy for His glory.

So what are the outcomes of drawing near to God?

number one, you set free those under the bondage of wickedness.

And I'm sure many of you guys have done that over the years, right?

You have people that are saved, they come to the church, and then you disciple them.

And so you guys are helping set free those who are under the bondage of wickedness.

And then you share your bread if you're hungry, which is, I am so excited to hear from Joanna and just what you guys are doing and how much you've raised.

That is so awesome.

And I get to give that report back to the mission and just be encouraged by that.

It's just such an honor to know that a church is working together as one to be able to provide.

And then give shelter to the homeless.

and then give clothes to those in need.

And so as a result of this time with the Lord, these are the things that come out of it, right, as we impact our community.

Okay, so the next slide is a picture of a family going out and giving food to the poor.

And over the years, many of you have been in our shelters, you've been in other types of ministries in the community where you've helped out.

And so what an honor or privilege that is, to be able to live out your faith in the community.

Okay, next we have the last part of this passage.

It says, God reveals the transformation of the people's lives when they do his will.

God reveals the transformation of people's lives when they do his will.

Okay, so what's the result of following him?

Okay, verse 8 says, then show your light break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up speedily.

Your righteousness shall go before you.

The glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard.

So one of my favorite movies is Two Towers, Lord of the Rings.

And one of my favorite parts of that movie is near the end where Helm's Deep was under attack by the orcs.

And the darkness is just all surrounding.

And the king and his men, they're caught in the mountain.

All the families are back in the mountain.

There's no way out.

There's no way out from this.

And so the king says, hey, let's ride out together and face them head on.

And so they ride out together to face the darkness.

It's going to be doom.

They're not going to be saved.

There's no one there to help them.

But then, in a moment, over the hill at sunrise, Gandalf comes over the hill, and at first you just see Gandalf.

Like, what can one person do, right?

He's coming over the hill to help.

But then thousands of soldiers on horses leap over the hill, and they come down the hill, and they bust through the darkness and break apart the darkness that is there.

It's kind of like this image, right?

It's then your light shall break forth like the dawn.

When you are coming and helping out the community, you are literally bringing the light of Jesus Christ to those that are in the community and you're becoming a light of hope to them, right?

Verse 9, then you shall call and the Lord will answer.

You shall cry and he will say, here I am.

If you take away the yoke from your midst, the pointing of the finger and speaking wickedness, if you pour yourself out for the hungry,

and satisfy the desire of the afflicted, then your light will rise in the darkness and gloom will be as noonday.

And the Lord will guide you continually and satisfy your desire in the scorched places and make your bones strong and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water whose waters do not fail.

Okay, now what did God promise the people of Israel?

Okay, what did God promise people of Israel as what we just read?

Now I want to make a comment here about the Old Testament versus the New Testament, the Old Covenant versus the New Covenant.

Because during the time of Isaiah, the people were under the Old Covenant.

And under the Old Covenant, God had said that if you follow me, you will get blessings.

If you don't follow me, you get cursing, right?

And so

In this passage, when it talks about being blessed or having strong bones or being healed, like physically, or the land being healed, it's talking, that promise is to the Israelites.

Whereas today, in a new covenant, we don't get promised a land to be protected.

And so under the new covenant, we are promised eternal life through Jesus Christ, right?

That is a sure promise to us.

And the principles, though, that are from the Old Testament still remain, right?

When you help others, like it says in Proverbs, you will be blessed spiritually, for sure, right?

But you're not promised a physical blessing, right?

And so I just want to make that clarification.

I don't want to read into the text a meaning that's not there, right?

Or say that it's for us today when it's not for us today.

Okay, so God promised that number one, their minds and bodies would be healed and made strong.

So Israel, if they followed God, they wouldn't have sicknesses in their land.

They would have plenty of food.

Their children would be healthy and strong.

They would be protected from their enemies all around.

Okay?

And #2, it says others would see their love and compassion.

So others would see their love and compassion.

And so as we serve, it's inevitable people are going to start noticing, right?

When you're out, when people even come to this church and they start noticing these barrels being filled with stuff to be given to the poor, like, wow, what's happening here?

What's going on?

And then that starts a fire and encouragement to other people, right?

People notice.

What does it say in John chapter 13?

They shall know that you're my disciples by the love you have for one another.

And at #3, the Lord will hear their prayers and answer them and help.

When we're living out God's will for our life to help others, he's going to give us the strength and wisdom that he needs.

And so our prayers are focused on fulfilling his will to help others, right?

So those are the promises that he made to the Israelites.

Okay, now what about the New Testament?

What about with Jesus?

Okay, so

The next thing it says, Jesus told us to draw near to him so that we could produce much fruit.

Jesus told us to draw near to him so that we could produce much fruit.

It says in John 15, 5, I am the vine, you are the branches.

Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit.

For apart from me, you can do nothing.

You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and

that your fruit should we abide.

so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give to you.

see the correlation there is that we as believers of Jesus Christ, when we abide in him, fasting, prayer, worship, spending time with him, the result is now he gives us strength and wisdom to bear fruit.

And he's actually chosen to do that for us.

And so at the end of verse 16, when it says,

Your fruit should abide so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.

So God is like ready, he's willing, he wants to answer your prayers when you are wanting to produce fruit, right?

When you're trying to make a difference, when you're trying to serve the Lord.

Okay, so

Okay, what is the purpose of our spiritual activities?

What is the purpose of our spiritual activities?

Now, we did see in the Old Testament, I just want to make it clear in the New Testament, in the New Covenant, our relationship with Jesus, what are those things?

Well, spiritual activities do not earn us our relationship with God.

In Ephesians 2a,

It says, for by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing.

It is a gift of God.

So if you have struggled with shame and guilt because you're like, well, I just haven't prayed enough, I haven't been in God's Word enough, or I haven't been doing this enough, you can finally be at peace.

Because in your relationship with God, it's not about earning your salvation.

It's about trusting in Him that He has done that for you.

Ephesians in verse 9, it says, not a result of works so that no one may boast.

So that no one may boast.

He doesn't make it about doing good works in your relationship with God.

He makes it about trusting him and having faith in him.

Okay, #2 is

It starts with the relationship with Him.

It starts with the relationship with Him.

So your spiritual activities when you're praying, when you're fasting, when you're coming to church, it's about, it starts at the moment that you believe in Him, right?

So when you were praying before you were saved, you're really not making a whole lot of difference because you're not able to serve Him without having Him with you, right?

So it starts with the relationship with Him.

And #3, it reminds us the compassion and love God shows us.

It reminds us the compassion and love God shows us.

So when we are praying and worshiping and fasting, we're being reminded from his scriptures of what he's done for us.

So in Ephesians 2, 1-4 it says, and you were dead in trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience.

among whom you all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses and sins, made us alive together with Christ.

And so as we're reading God's word, as we're praying, every day we're reminded of what God has already done for us.

He sent Jesus Christ to die on the cross for our sins.

He took the penalty that we deserved on himself.

And after three days, he rose up again alive, proving that he had power over death.

He had power over sin.

And that all we have to do is believe in Him in order to be saved.

I like to say the ABCs of deciding to follow Jesus.

A, you admit that you're a sinner.

B, you believe that Jesus Christ died on the cross and rose again and that He has power to save you.

And then C, you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and commit to follow Him the rest of your life.

We often need to be reminded that every day.

And we need to remind others about that.

And #4,

Our spiritual activities empower us to do good works.

In Ephesians 2.10, it says, for we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

Okay.

All right, so God's heart has not changed from the old covenant to the new covenant.

Jesus wants us to help the poor.

Now what do I do or what do we do in response to the message?

Okay.

All right.

The first thing is that we share the gospel message with yourself.

You share the gospel message with yourself and others often, like I've already said.

Number 2, remind yourself of scripture encouraging you to help the poor.

So the focus of today is this aspect of serving the Lord is helping the poor, right?

So if you don't, aren't reminding yourself of what God wants you to do, are you going to go do it?

I forget what I ate yesterday.

I forget what I did last week.

It's very difficult to remember what God tells me to do, and so every day I have to get into his word.

I have to remind myself, remind myself of the gospel, that I'm saved, remind myself of what he wants me to do today.

So we need to remind ourselves.

Number 3, participate in church or community activities centered around helping the poor or homeless, which you guys are doing, and that's awesome.

So we praise the Lord.

Lord for that.

And if you haven't gotten involved, definitely, I encourage you to do that.

Because as you serve and as you get involved, you're going to see what God's going to do in your own heart as he helps you have compassion towards others.

All right, well, to close off the message, we're going to read from Matthew chapter 25, verse 31.

It says, when the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne.

Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another, as a shepherd separates his sheep from the goats.

And he will place his sheep on his right, but the goats on the left.

Then the king will say to those on his right, come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you.

from the foundation of the world, for I was hungry, and you gave me food.

I was thirsty, you gave me a drink.

I was a stranger, and you welcomed me.

I was naked, and you clothed me.

I was sick, and you visited me.

I was in prison, and you came to me.

Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, we thank you for the message that you brought today through Isaiah 58.

Lord, we praise you and glorify you, Lord, that those in this church have given towards the poor and have works that you have provided.

You've made a way for them to actually live out their faith and have works for you.

So thank you for that, Lord.

Lord, I pray that any person in here who's just hesitant about wanting to serve you, hesitant about helping, that they would start doing that.

And there's many places in your church, Lord, where they can help, no matter their skills and abilities, Lord, draw them to do that.

In Jesus' name I pray, amen.