

Enduring Spirit & Purpose

(preached 12/26/21)

Please turn to *Isaiah 49*.

Christmas is over. Chances are your tree is still up, unwrapped gifts are lying on the living room floor (especially if you have kids), there's some stale cookies still lying around needing to be eaten or thrown out, and it's time to bring everything to a close and move on.

TIME TO MOVE ON? Move on to what? Same old same old? Going back to work? One of the frustrating things about this world as it currently exists is that nothing good seems to endure for long and then "the world" seems to reinsert itself into our lives.

FAITH IN WHAT ENDURES. Even though I love Christmas including most of the traditions surrounding it, God has given both you and I a faith in something else:

God endures and so does everything He creates.

- Holidays & vacations are temporary and the world will reinsert itself.
- Youth and the health & energy that come with it eventually get old and fade away.
- Where we live, who we're with, and what we do for a living will also change one way or another.

Everything in this world, both the good and bad, are temporary...and it's meant to be that way.

DAY AFTER.... The day after Christmas or a vacation can seem like a let down...we got all pumped up beforehand buying, wrapping, packing, planning, cooking, baking, decorating, then BAM! It's all done and eaten in one day.

MEANT TO BE. The world and the things of this world are meant to be both temporary and to give—at best—only short term satisfaction. We're supposed to get older and not find the same pleasure in the desires of the flesh and the world as we did when younger.

THAT WHICH DOESN'T ENDURE OR SATISFY IS SUPPOSED TO DRIVE US TOWARD THAT WHICH DOES.

WE'RE DRAWN TO SOMETHING BY FISHING AND DRIVEN TOWARD SOMETHING BY HUNTING.

FISHING: *a lure or bait that looks and sounds “appetizing” is dangled before us and we swim to it, whether it good or evil.* Over and over in the OT, God warns Israel not to be “drawn away” by other gods and what they offer...in other words, not to take the bait. In the NT the Apostles warn us not to be led by our fleshly desires.

DEER PLOTS. People spend time and money to lay out deer plots with bait, where they lie in wait in some blind or stand to shoot them.

HUNTING: *a hunter drives deer toward something* and the hunter comes in many forms such as bad circumstances, people, and the devil.

WHERE DO WE RUN? When we’re being hunted—and we always are—we decide where to be driven to. Does the hunter have a place he wants us to run? Of course! Hunting parties normally station men with shotguns to shoot the deer when they arrive at the hoped for trap.

- The medical issue we’re dealing with wants to drive us to depression.
- The devil hunting us wants us to run to the field of hopelessness.
- The financial worries we’re having are pushing us toward anxiety.
- The person giving us a hard time...they’re driving us crazy!

FAITH IN THE ENDURING. Yet for those who believe in Someone Who endures forever, and all the eternal rewards He offers, we’re not driven to those places so easily.

If we’re following the Psalm 23 Good Shepherd, we’re not lured or driven from doing so as quickly as others.

The only thing that endures is the eternal and only God is eternal.

His plan endures because He created it and His passion for us will accomplish it. The Lord cannot be baited or hunted. His plan cannot be lured nor driven anywhere. Let’s begin our reading of Isaiah 49 where Isaiah is speaking in the first person, admitting his own doubts, unbelief, and insecurity:

Isaiah 49:1-4 (ESV)

¹ Listen to me, O coastlands, and give attention, you peoples from afar. The LORD called me from the womb, from the body of my mother he named my name.

² He made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of his hand he hid me; he made me a polished arrow; in his quiver he hid me away.

³ And he said to me, “You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified.”

⁴ But I said, “I have labored in vain; I have spent my strength for nothing and vanity; yet surely my right is with the LORD, and my recompense with my God.”

Verse 1: before he ever took a vacation, celebrated a feast, went back to work, was persecuted, got sick or injured, gave in to a desire, the Lord called him.

The calling of God endures through and beyond whatever is hunting or fishing for us. It was created by God before the world or circumstances.

Verse 2: He equipped Isaiah for his calling. The equipping of God endures through and beyond whatever is trying to lure or drive us.

Verse 4: Isaiah is frustrated, depressed, and hopeless. He believes he’s wasted his life pursuing the bait the world set out for him, and being driven to bad places by whatever hunted him. In other words, Isaiah believes that the world has inserted itself too deeply into his life, nullifying the calling and plans of God.

Let’s read on to see God’s response:

Isaiah 49:5-6 (ESV)

⁵ And now the LORD says, he who formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob back to him; and that Israel might be gathered to him— for I am honored in the eyes of the LORD, and my God has become my strength—

⁶ he says: “It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.”

Verse 5: *if God chose you He honors you.* He wasn’t disappointed in the way Isaiah had wasted his life thus far. He didn’t call Isaiah a loser and didn’t discard him. Isaiah took the bait the world set for him and it led to emptiness. Isaiah was driven to the bad places where all his personal strength was gone. Yet here and now, he chooses to be driven to God who will become his strength.

Verse 6: the Lord says His plan isn’t “light” as is light weight or small. **The plan of God isn’t weaker than the world.** The purpose for which God has called us isn’t below the desires of our flesh or where our bad circumstances are driving us too.

Isaiah 49:7 (ESV)

⁷ Thus says the LORD, the Redeemer of Israel and his Holy One, to one deeply despised, abhorred by the nation, the servant of rulers: “Kings shall see and arise; princes, and they shall

prostrate themselves; because of the LORD, who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you.”

REJECTED & DESPISED? Do you feel despised by society and the world? Abhorred by others? A slave to people in power? Yet look at the end of God’s plan: everything and everyone will bend the knee to Christ. Both the evil hunters and fishers, whoever or whatever they are, will submit to Jesus completely and be under His feet. That’s the plan.

Now look at the last 9 words of this verse: God has chosen you.

PART OF HIS PLAN. For what? Not just Salvation but to be part of His enduring plan.

- The same plan that will endure through all the darkness and evil of this world.
- The same purpose that will overcome the intents of the most powerful politicians and rulers of this world.
- The same plan that will foil even Lucifer himself who pulls the puppet strings on this planet.

And God has chosen us. Yep, we’ll still endure persecution, hatred, pain, and suffering...but when our hope and belief are in God and His plan, we will endure to the end.

MATTHEW 24. In Matthew 24 Jesus names all the terrible things that will happen in the End of Days and, for anyone still here during that time, He states “He who endures to the end shall be Saved.”

We were NOT born to endure.

We were born again to endure.

The Spirit—Who is eternal and unshakable God—has chosen to make us His house. We are chosen. We are equipped. God wrote the plan of our lives while we were still a baby in our mom’s belly. Before we ever had ups and down or were baited or hunted.

Isaiah 49:8-10 (ESV)

⁸ Thus says the LORD: “In a time of favor I have answered you; in a day of salvation I have helped you; I will keep you and give you as a covenant to the people, to establish the land, to apportion the desolate heritages,

⁹ saying to the prisoners, ‘Come out,’ to those who are in darkness, ‘Appear.’ They shall feed along the ways; on all bare heights shall be their pasture;

¹⁰ they shall not hunger or thirst, neither scorching wind nor sun shall strike them, for he who has pity on them will lead them, and by springs of water will guide them.

Verse 8: the formation of the NC is our “time of favor.” God has answered us by giving us Jesus and giving us to Jesus. We have the covenant mentioned in this verse...we’re already “there.”

Verse 9: telling others about Christ frees prisoners and inspires people to come out of darkness and into His marvelous Light. To go as sheep to pasture to feed, as Psalm 23 states.

Isaiah 49:11-13 (ESV)

- ¹¹ And I will make all my mountains a road, and my highways shall be raised up.
¹² Behold, these shall come from afar, and behold, these from the north and from the west, and these from the land of Syene.”
¹³ Sing for joy, O heavens, and exult, O earth; break forth, O mountains, into singing! For the LORD has comforted his people and will have compassion on his afflicted.

BOWS TO JESUS. In the coming Kingdom this is what things will be like. The whole world will bow to Jesus. Everyone whose alive during this time will come from all over the world to worship Christ. The only government to exist will be His. He will be the Ruler over all. He is a compassionate King!

Isaiah 49:14-18 (ESV)

- ¹⁴ But Zion said, “The LORD has forsaken me; my Lord has forgotten me.”
¹⁵ “Can a woman forget her nursing child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you.
¹⁶ Behold, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands; your walls are continually before me.
¹⁷ Your builders make haste; your destroyers and those who laid you waste go out from you.
¹⁸ Lift up your eyes around and see; they all gather, they come to you. As I live, declares the LORD, you shall put them all on as an ornament; you shall bind them on as a bride does.

Verse 14: we’ve waited a long time for Jesus to come back. When I was a young Christian I thought it would happen in the next 10 years and it didn’t.

- So much darkness and lawlessness in the world...has the Lord forgotten about us?
- Is this His wrath and judgment for sin?
- Has He stopped talking to us and left us to be on our own? It may feel that way, but look at verse 15.

Verse 15: God says it’s possible for a woman to neglect/forget her baby...***but it’s not possible for God to forget or forsake.*** He hasn’t forgotten about the church or you individually.

Verse 16: what does it mean that He's "engraved us on the palm of His hand"? Many people get tattoos as a way of remembering a loved one and tattoos are permanent on our bodies. God's body isn't just permanent it's eternal. Our names are forever tattooed on His palm so He can easily see it and remember us.

WALLS. The walls God sees are one's that He's built—the house of God where we live together. In other words, God is saying that we're still living together...in the same place. He hasn't gone anywhere. He hasn't abandoned us.

Isaiah 49:19-21 (ESV)

¹⁹ "Surely your waste and your desolate places and your devastated land— surely now you will be too narrow for your inhabitants, and those who swallowed you up will be far away.

²⁰ The children of your bereavement will yet say in your ears: 'The place is too narrow for me; make room for me to dwell in.'

²¹ Then you will say in your heart: 'Who has borne me these? I was bereaved and barren, exiled and put away, but who has brought up these? Behold, I was left alone; from where have these come?'"

We feel like our lives are empty because we've been baited and hunted. Yet....

Isaiah 49:22-23 (ESV)

²² Thus says the Lord GOD: "Behold, I will lift up my hand to the nations, and raise my signal to the peoples; and they shall bring your sons in their arms, and your daughters shall be carried on their shoulders.

²³ Kings shall be your foster fathers, and their queens your nursing mothers. With their faces to the ground they shall bow down to you, and lick the dust of your feet. Then you will know that I am the LORD; those who wait for me shall not be put to shame."

RESURRECTION. This speaks to the closing of God's Plan: our resurrection. We are already eternal beings in our spirit, and the Resurrection will make the rest of us the same. This is when His Kingdom fully comes and spreads to every corner of this planet.

ENEMIES UNDER OUR FEET. Not only will our former enemies bow at the feet of Christ, but He will make them do the same to us. This isn't new preaching or doctrine because you hear it in Psalm 23 all the time: "He prepares a table for me in the presence of my enemies, He anointeth my head with oil, and my cup runneth over."

This is a King sharing and giving His victory and authority with someone else, and places the enemies under the feet of that person.

The plan is to give us complete victory over everything and everyone hunting or fishing for us (in an evil way).

Christmas is over and so is the “high” that comes with it. Yet what we have is something that endures: God and His plan.

- Christ the Son was given to us and He is with us.
- We were given to Him and are with Him. He has wrote a plan for us before we ever experienced a holiday or vacation being over.
- He designed a purpose for us before we ever knew hardship, bad circumstances, enemies, and things that baited or hunted us.