

I. Intro

A. Text: **Is. 58:6-11**

⁶ “Is this not the fast that I have chosen: To loose the bonds of wickedness, To undo the heavy burdens, To let the oppressed go free, And that you break every yoke? ⁷ Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, And that you bring to your house the poor who are cast out; When you see the naked, that you cover him, And not hide yourself from your own flesh? ⁸ Then your light shall break forth like the morning, Your healing shall spring forth speedily, And your righteousness shall go before you; The glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard. 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, ¹⁰ If you extend your soul to the hungry and satisfy the afflicted soul, Then your light shall dawn in the darkness, And your darkness shall be as the noonday. ¹¹ The LORD will guide you continually, And satisfy your soul in drought, And strengthen your bones; You shall be like a watered garden, And like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail. (Is. 58:6-11)

B. Series Overview

II. Body

A. Dilemma: Israel (Northern and Southern Kingdoms) had proven to be a people who were enjoying a time of prosperity and success.

1. Specifically in the Southern Kingdom (under the leadership of Uzziah, Jotham, and Hezekiah) Israel seemed to establish a level of piety toward the Lord.
 - a. But... injustice filled the land.
2. This people seemed to be consistent in their personal devotion to the Lord...
 - a. Sought the Lord daily. (v. 2)

Yet they seek Me daily, And delight to know My ways, As a nation that did righteousness, And did not forsake the ordinance of their God. They ask of Me the ordinances of justice; They take delight in approaching God. (Is. 58:2)

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- i. Delighted to know the ways of God.
 - ii. They were concerned with their personal standing before God & personal righteousness (**v. 2a**).
 - iii. They asked for justice in their own lives (**v.2b**).
 3. But they weren't experiencing the manifest Presence of God.

'Why have we fasted,' they say, 'and You have not seen? Why have we afflicted our souls, and You take no notice?' (**Is. 58:3a**)

- a. God has not responded as we expected.
- b. Our devotion, allegiance and rightness before God seems to be doing nothing for our experiencing God among us.

B. Indictment Against a so-called Personal Justice That Ignores Social Righteousness

1. Sent (Isaiah) the Prophetic Voice To Uncover Sin
"Cry aloud, spare not; Lift up your voice like a trumpet; Tell My people their transgression, And the house of Jacob their sins. (Is. 58:1)

- a. Lift up your voice and howl. Cry the undignified cry (**v. 1.**)

2. Do righteousness and embrace justice before God (doing right by God), but deny justice on a comprehensive level.
 - a. Specifically referring to fasting in this text, but the principal is a broad one.
 - b. You're doing religious stuff before me, but...

"In fact, in the day of your fast you find pleasure, And exploit all your laborers.

⁴ Indeed you fast for strife and debate, And to strike with the fist of wickedness.

You will not fast as you do this day, To make your voice heard on high. (Is. 58:3b-4)

- c. My people fast, but limit their fast to focus on their personal desires and personal gratification. (**v.5**)

⁵ *Is it a fast that I have chosen, A day for a man to afflict his soul? Is it to bow down his head like a bulrush, And to spread out sackcloth and ashes? Would you call this a fast, And an acceptable day to the LORD? (Is. 58:5)*

- i. They afflict their soul.
 - ii. They put on sackcloth and ashes.
 - iii. They bow and mourn.
- d. Note: Fasting is always married to the idea of mourning.
- i. Refusal to accept things as they are.
 - ii. Refusal to stand by idly and accept anything but rightness and justness (not just theoretically, but experientially).

C. Paradigm Shift

⁶ *“Is this not the fast that I have chosen: To loose the bonds of wickedness, To undo the heavy burdens, To let the oppressed go free, And that you break every yoke? ⁷ Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, And that you bring to your house the poor who are cast out; When you see the naked, that you cover him, And not hide yourself from your own flesh? ⁸ Then your light shall break forth like the morning, Your healing shall spring forth speedily, And your righteousness shall go before you; The glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard. (Is. 58:6-8)*

1. Combine a quest for righteousness and justice (on a personal level) with an unquenchable thirst for righteousness and justice in the entire earth.
 - a. **Righteousness (tsedeq)**: the quality of being/doing what’s right, just, normal; rightness, justness, of weights and measures.
 - i. Relational/ covenant term (to do right by the other party in the covenant).
 - b. **Justice (mishpat)**: The act of deciding a case (in court, or at the seat of judgment).
 - i. Involves Retribution (payback) and Restoration
 - ii. Making the wrong things right.

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- iii. Seeking out the vulnerable to restore them, empower them, liberate them.
- 2. Discern Righteousness/Justice on Social Levels
 - a. Righteousness
 - i. **Personal Righteousness**: Doing right by God.
 - ii. **Social Righteousness**: A people, a nation, etc. doing right by God and others.
 - b. Justice
 - i. **Personal Justice**: Being restored to right standing with God.
 - ii. **Social Justice**: Bringing a people to restored relationship with God and/or others.
- 3. Consider that the Consequences of Righteousness/ Sin are far-reaching.
 - a. **Personal rightness** before God impacts right doing to those around us.
 - i. Social rightness before God leads to a society that does right to its constituents.
 - b. **Personal sin** before God has social consequences for those around us.
 - i. **Oppression**: Personal sin that forces others to suffer the consequences for that sin.
 - ii. **Institutional Oppression**: Sin/ inequity that is woven into the fabric of a community. Does not need the intention of an individual to have consequences on others.
- 4. Human tendency is to limit righteousness and justice to the private (spiritual) realm (to neglect the social realm).
 - a. Do the same thing with the concept of salvation.
 - i. **Salvation (supposed)**: *The personal restoration and deliverance from sin.*
 - b. We have a spiritually engaging gospel that is socially irrelevant to everyone outside the church.

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- i. **Salvation (actually):** complete deliverance, complete rescuing, complete victory over sin and all the negative effects of sin (implies health, wealth, wholeness, well-being).
 - c. We enjoy being right with God (without doing righteousness and justice in the earth).

5. Jesus stood in direct opposition to those who limited righteousness and justice to the personal level.

²³ “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others. ²⁴ You blind guides, straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel! (**Matt. 23:23-24**)

- a. The Pharisees felt that godliness was limited to a personal thing without regard to its social implications (restoring others).
- b. Jesus promised to eternally condemn a personal justice that doesn’t do anything about the social injustice around it isn’t justice at all.

³⁴ Then the King will say to those on His right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: ³⁵ for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; ³⁶ I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.’ ³⁷ “Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? ³⁸ When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? ³⁹ Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?’ ⁴⁰ And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.’ (**Matt. 25:34-40**)

- i. Poor (hungry, thirsty).
- ii. Immigrant (stranger, naked)
- iii. Outcast (sick, imprisoned)

III. Conclusion

A. The Legacy of Father Abraham: Justified by faith

1. Act of Grace
 - a. Descendants received justice by grace
 - i. Given the responsibility to forever consider that they were once poor, immigrants, etc.
 - ii. Were once oppressed and outcast.
 - b. Became Advocates for Justice in all the earth

B. The Church's Assignment: Justified To Cry Out for Justice (Is. 58:8-11)

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1. God is waiting to break in with righteousness that shines like the sun in the morning. (v.8)
 - a. Healing for the injustice of sickness.
 - b. Righteousness shall go before you.
2. You will call and God Himself will show up. (v. 9)
 - a. You will cry and the Lord will say, "Here I am"
 - b. If you extend a portion of your strength (soul) to satisfy the afflicted, God will cause your light to shine like the noon day. (v.10)
 - c. The Lord Himself will satisfy your soul. (v.11)