11-17-19

Isaiah 55:6-13 (2)

We began considering this Scripture last Sunday. It is a message of hope to a people who are facing the judgement of God. They are going to undergo some very difficult times, but once the time is up, God will restore them and be their God. The time of judgement they face will be a terrible time for them. The Bible tells us that they had to deal with siege, starvation, death by the sword, and deportation to the distant land of Babylon. But God will restore them because He is always faithful and He had made a covenant with Abraham that Israel would be His people.

We looked at how near God is to us now and that He can be found, He wants to be found and even calls to us. But a time is coming when this will no longer be the case. A time will come for each of us and in future history when time is up and wrath will fall. Now is the time to be saved. God wants for us to come to Him; He will accept us with open arms if we come to Him through Jesus Christ. He will not condemn us, but make us His children. He will pardon all our sins and keep us safe for all eternity.

We are free to simply place our trust in God. We can rest assured that we can place the hope of our eternity in His hands. The reason is that God is so far above us. If God were like us in His thoughts and character, we would have plenty of reason to worry; but He is not. His ways and thoughts are far above ours. He is not subject to the foolishness or failures that we are. He is good and perfect. It is our comfort that He will take care of us if we just put our faith in Jesus for salvation.

John 3:16 is ample testimony to how powerful God is and what lengths He will go to for our good.

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

In Jesus, our sins were punished so that God’s justice was satisfied. Now, by accepting Christ, we can receive God’s mercy. God, in His Son, took our punishment upon Himself. That shows how far above us He is; we were actually God’s enemies, we rebelled against Him, under the dark influence of sin we hated God. Yet He made a way for us and actually desires that we take it. He is far above us; we must resist the temptation to bring Him down to our level.

In verse 10, God gives an example of something that takes place in nature, in His creation, that helps us to understand His word.

For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven,  
And do not return there without watering the earth  
And making it bear and sprout,  
And furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater

Notice that the Bible here describes the process of evaporation, a concept that the people of that time didn’t have. One more small evidence of the Bible’s divine origin. Now the people were very aware that both rain and snow were necessary to water the ground. If the rain and snow didn’t fall, the ground would become hard and dry. But with that moisture came good effects. Plants and crops would grow out of the ground. No water, no crops.

But the water came from heaven and it caused crops to sprout from its seed and to grow into a fruitful plant. Because of the rain, there would be an abundance of fruit which would provide seed to plant again next year, with an abundance left over to eat. Thus, there was food for now and seed to produce more food for later. A continuous cycle of life. The water that fell from heaven always did its job and didn’t go back into heaven until it had done so.

Through Isaiah, God tells us this to help us understand His next statement; that His word goes out from heaven and does what He wants it to. His word is more powerful than the rain and snow; His word created the rain and the snow. He says:

So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth;  
It will not return to Me empty,  
Without accomplishing what I desire,  
And without succeeding *in the matter* for which I sent it.

God’s words have actual power; and they are directed by God so that they will accomplish what He wants them to do. Let’s be careful because there is a false teaching about our own words having power. There is a glimmer of truth there because a sincere complement can brighten someone’s day. A hurtful nasty comment can ruin a person’s day. But our words are very limited and they don’t always have the effect that we want them to.

The false teachings are along the lines of “positive thinking” and “positive verbal affirmation”. The idea is that our thoughts and words have power to change things. That if we stay positive and say the right things over and over, they will come true. Now we can argue that our thoughts and words can have an effect on ourselves and others; but the false teachings give them a godlike power to radically change the future. Our words do not have that kind of power; God’s words do.

Consider God’s words in creation; He spoke and it came to be. By the power of God’s words, physical actual creation took place out of nothing. He spoke and it existed; be it light, stars, plants or animals, what He said came into being. Even more, it came into being in the way He wanted it. Everything God created, He saw was good. There were no mistakes, there was nothing that turned out just a little off from what God wanted. All His creative words accomplished what He desired.

Next, we can consider God’s word: The Bible. The Bible contains, from cover to cover, the words that God Himself either spoke or directed to have written down under the direction of the Holy Spirit. Everything we read in this book is true and is word that came forth from God. Because it is God’s word, it has power and it will accomplish what He desires.

The words of the Bible actually have the power to change lives. The Holy Spirit takes these words of God and can actually change a person’s heart. He can make a drastic change in the way a person lives and thinks and looks at things. Notice that a person doesn’t read these words and change themselves; that won’t work. It is all God who brings about the change through His word.

Once His word changes us, then it teaches us, and strengthens us, and gives us wisdom, and all the good things that God has for us. It is important to see that it changes us first; we can’t be taught or strengthened until we are changed.

Contained within the Bible is the Gospel. The Gospel is, of course, the good news of Jesus Christ offering Himself in our place for the punishment of sin. The Gospel is the word of God and it accomplishes what He desires. We who are saved often think of the Gospel as how we have salvation. But the work of the Gospel will actually divide people.

This is what we see in Matthew 16:19.

I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.

Jesus said this to Peter right after he proclaimed Him to be the Christ. The keys to the kingdom of heaven were given to Peter and the other disciples and also to we who are Christian. How does a person get into the kingdom of heaven? They believe on Jesus Christ and the work He did on the cross for the forgiveness of their sins; by faith they accept this gift He offers. This is the Gospel. In other words, the keys to the kingdom of heaven is the Gospel.

Now, keys do two things. They either unlock a door to let someone in or they lock a door to keep someone out. This is exactly what the Gospel does. This is where the division occurs. When we share the Gospel with someone, they might accept it. If they do, the keys unlock the door and they gain entrance to the kingdom of heaven. They might reject it. If they do, the keys lock the door and they are left in the outer darkness.

Again, God’s word does what He sends it out to do. It separates the sheep from the goats. By the Gospel, those who want to spend eternity with God can do so; those who don’t want to be around Him will have their desire also. God wants to spend eternity with folks who want to be around Him.

How about when Jesus spoke? That was the word of God. Each time Jesus spoke, the words accomplished what they were sent out to do. If He told a demon or devil to leave, it did. If He told a blind person to see, he did. Any sickness or lameness or deformity spoken to by Jesus obeyed. The words of His teaching had their effect also. It drew those to Him who would have eternal life and pushed those away from Him who chose to live in rebellion against God, and so, in eternal death. The words of Jesus caused division, just as the words of the Gospel; and this is according to the desire of God.

There is one more way in which God’s word was sent forth and succeeded in the matter for which He sent it: In His Word manifested as Jesus Christ. Thinking back to John 3:16, we know that God sent His Son Jesus into this world as a man. Jesus was fully obedient to His Father.

Philippians 3:8

Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

In doing this, Jesus, the Word of God, did what God had sent Him for:

1 John 4:10

In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins.

Once Jesus accomplished what He came for, He returned to the Father.

Ephesians 1:20

He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly *places*

Jesus, as the Word of God, has fulfilled Isaiah 55:11. He went forth from God and He did not return to Him empty. Jesus accomplished what God desired, and succeeded in what God sent Him for.

The first part of verse 12 was a promise that was partially fulfilled when the Israelite exiles to Babylon were released from captivity by the Persian king Cyrus. The Israelites who returned were joyful to be going back home to Jerusalem. That was their homeland and they yearned for it in their hearts. Their trip back to Judah was a peaceful one. It was twice that large groups took the long and dangerous journey from Babylon to Judah without being attacked. They were certainly divinely protected.

However, once at Jerusalem, they were harassed by their neighbors. There were no mountains shouting or trees clapping their hands. Their gardens still had thorn bushes. The fulness of verses 12 and 13 is yet to come. The reference to thorns and nettles is a reference to the curse on the earth clear back at the fall. From Genesis 3 verses 17 and 18:

Cursed is the ground because of you;  
In toil you will eat of it  
All the days of your life.  
Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you

But we are assured in 2 Peter 3:13 that this curse will be removed.

But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.

And then in Revelation 21:1 John tells us “Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer *any* sea.” These last two verses of Isaiah 55 show us a beautiful promise that God has for His people. The curse will be gone and creation will praise its creator. We, the people of God, will know nothing but joy and peace. Every tear will be wiped away.

These few verses in Isaiah encourage us. Israel still exists after experiencing many severe judgements handed down by God. We who are Christians experience persecution and evil in this life; this is a broken and cursed world. But we serve an all-powerful God who has everything just the way He wants it. When we turn to Him whole-heartedly, we are safe. We can ride out the tempest of life knowing that our eternity will be worth everything we go through now.

Prayer

Lord God, thank You for the prophets You sent. They give us ample warning but they also give us a wonderful glimpse of what the future holds for those who trust in You. Thank You for Jesus. We proclaim Him as the one and only way to You. He is the narrow gate, but He is open to any who will submit to that way.

In Your new creation, how beautiful it will be when all Your new creation will reflect Your glory. And Your glory itself will shine out through everything such that we will not need the sun. We will remember You always and so, always be able to worship You. This will be everlasting, Your glory will never be cut off.

Now LORD, we desperately beg Your help. Strengthen us by Your word and Holy Spirit so that we do not fail in times of trouble. Keep our focus on our Lord and Saviour Jesus. He is our King, and by Your strength, we will remain loyal to Him, even unto death.

We praise You in Jesus’ name

Amen