

Sermon: Walking in the Light of Hope

Text: Isaiah 1-5

Introduction:

We have the great privilege these upcoming few months to study and put into practice the teaching and Words of Isaiah the prophet. Isaiah is often referred to as the most theologically significant book in the Old Testament, and is quoted directly in the New Testament over 65 times—far more than any other Old Testament prophet. It is the longest of all of the books of prophecy, and has been placed first in the collection of prophetic books in Scripture. And yet—it is my impression that many people avoid reading and studying Isaiah because they find it a bit lofty and difficult to understand. My goal in this sermon series is to open our eyes to the clarity and majesty of this great book—and then to put the Truth of Isaiah’s message into practice in our lives.

Isaiah’s name literally means “Yahweh (God!) is salvation.” He began his ministry in Judah (specifically Jerusalem) in the year 740 BC, which was the year that king Uzziah died” (6:1). We don’t know for certain, but he was probably about 20 years old. Isaiah ministered during the final years of Israel’s (the northern kingdom) spiritual decline and the utter disaster that followed. God called Isaiah to warn the tiny nation of Judah and its capital, Jerusalem, about a similar outcome.

When called by God to prophesy in the year of King Uzziah’s death, Isaiah responded with a cheerful readiness—though he knew from the beginning that his ministry would be extremely difficult (few ultimately listened). On the surface, the situation in Judah seemed calm and peaceful. During Uzziah’s prosperous 50+ year reign (ca. 790-740BC), Judah developed into a strong commercial and military state with a port for commerce on the Red Sea and the construction of walls, towers, and fortifications. However—the spiritual life of Judah was basically non-existent. Assyria emerged as a new international power...and in 722BC they conquered the northern nation of Israel (the border of which was just 8 miles north of Jerusalem).

Isaiah condemned the empty ritualism of his day, and the idolatry into which so many of the people had fallen. He foresaw the coming Babylonian captivity of Judah because of this departure from the Lord. Also known as the “evangelical Prophet”, Isaiah spoke a great deal about the grace of God toward Israel, particularly in his last 27 chapters. The centerpiece is Isaiah’s unrivaled chapter 53, portraying Christ as the slain Lamb of God.

Isaiah had great reverence for God. He was a serious, spiritual man. He was known as the prophet of redemption. There were more prophecies of the coming Messiah in Isaiah than any other book, except Psalms. The book of Isaiah contains 66 chapters divided into 39 & 27, the same way the Old and New Testament is divided. If there is a key word throughout the book—it would be salvation. Isaiah expressed over and over that our HOPE is found in the redeeming work that will come of the ONE born of virgin—and who will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace, Immanuel...God WITH us!

Examination:

- Read **Isaiah 1**

- According to verse 1, how many kings ruled Judah during the time of Isaiah's ministry?
- Isaiah 1:1 introduces the entire Book of Isaiah—all 66 chapters. What one word does Isaiah use to summarize ALL that he writes in this Book?
- What does this verse tell us about the UNITY of the entire Book? Does Isaiah leave any doubt that he is the author of all 66 chapters?
- Take a close look at verse 2. How is God referring to Himself in this verse? To what is God comparing Himself?
- What have God's children done? Can you relate to this at all? How does it make a parent feel when their children rebel? Can you sense God indicating here that His heart is broken?
- In verse 3, we see that even oxen and donkeys know their master. What does this say about how the people of Jerusalem and Judah relate to God?
- What, according to verse 4, have God's children done? Is this still happening today?
- What is the result of this rebellion? What has happened to the strength of Israel and Judah?
- According to verse 9, what is God's response to this rebellion? How do we see the grace of God in His response? How is this grace further described in verse 18?
- What happened to Sodom and Gomorrah—and why do you think God referred to this in verses 9 and 10? Do you think this in any way applies to us today?
- What does God say in verses 10-15 that shows His desire for the people of Judah to confess their sin and come under conviction?
- What does repentance look like in verses 16-17?
- The Lord is a God of redemption...and redemption is a major theme of the Book of Isaiah. What is your understanding of redemption? Why is this such an important Truth in Scripture. What has God done to redeem us?
- How do you see redemption being described in verses 26-31?

- Read **Isaiah 2:1-11**

- Chapter 2 verse 1 is really the beginning of the message of the rest of the Book of Isaiah. Looking at verses 1-5, how would you describe that message?
- Is this (vv. 1-5) a message of hope? If yes—how?
- Verses 6-11 describe the mess that we're in. It was a mess that existed 2700 years ago—and it's a mess that still exists today. What are some of the aspects of that mess that Isaiah touches on in these verses?

Application:

As we'll see in making our way through the entire Book of Isaiah, the Upper Story has four main themes: God's Beauty; God's Judgment; God's Salvation; God's Glory. Take some time to think about these themes. How have you, personally, experienced God's beauty, His judgment, His salvation and His glory?