Isaiah 1:1-28

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Preacher: Chris Oswald

[0:00] Amen. Lord, we believe that you are our good Father and that you do all sorts of works on us that we cannot do for ourselves.

And I think one of those would entail, one of the best things you can do for us would entail getting our eyes focused on the right glory again. We pray, God, that as we open your word, you would do a work on our hearts because we believe that salvation isn't merely pardon or justification.
We believe that your salvation through Christ is transformation. Lord, we confess that you are offering freedom, true freedom, true adoption, no longer slavery, but sonship.
And so we pray that your spirit would bring those things to us today as we encounter your word. In your precious son's name we pray. Amen. You can be seated. We'll dismiss our kids to children's ministry.
And if you'll open your Bibles to the book of Isaiah, we're in chapter one again. We'll be going through Isaiah chapter one, verses one through twenty eight.
[1:41] Isaiah chapter one, verses one through twenty eight. Last week we we talked about the things that God sees and how Isaiah is really a book showing us how God sees things or what God sees.

And we said there's really four subjects in the book. And that is that God sees sin. God sees his servant, Jesus. God sees salvation.
God sees a supper, a great feast of joy and gladness that he has built for all of those that he redeems. And you can see through this slide here that the book of Isaiah is broken up into sections that largely have to do with those four categories.
But also, I think we've got another slide that shows that this is also just the way the book flows. It alternates between these four themes and you'll see these four themes woven throughout the book and throughout particular passages.
So you've kind of got a meta four segments kind of idea. But also within each chapter, you'll see these four concepts presented over and over again.
[2:49] Today, we're going to talk about not just what God sees, but how God sees. The idea of vision has been remarkable to me ever since I watched Star Trek First Generation.

And Geordi LaForge, Mr. Reading Rainbow, was one of the key characters on that show. And we would watch that show. And I understood that this was a man who was blind. This is the backstory. But through the powers of humanistic technology, he can now see not only what he used to be able to see, but all of the light on the UV spectrum. So he can see everything that a normal human being can't see.
That's an interesting thought. I've always thought, like, wow, my goodness, that's so interesting that there's a bunch of the world that we don't see and that we only see a very small spectrum on the UV spectrum.
And so this has always just been fascinating to me. There's this thing that I don't know a lot of people know about that a lot of flowers actually in their genome produce what I would call UV helipads on their flowers that signal to bees who can see on the UV spectrum where to land to get optimal access to nectar.
[4:07] Isn't that amazing? You look at a flower, you see a flower. You think you see that it's beautiful, but there's far more to see. There's actually instructions for these little helicopter bees on where to land and where to do their little bee activities.

There's a particular bird where the males and the females look almost exactly alike. But in the UV spectrum, the males have a kind of halo projected around them, and they stand out completely as a completely almost different kind of bird under the UV spectrum.

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So this idea that we're not capable of seeing the full reality that exists has always been very compelling to me. And of course, that is a central claim related to God's attributes, that God sees far more than we see.
God sees far more than we see. And that's the first point for this morning. God sees with perfect moral vision. God sees with perfect moral vision.
Now I want to take some time to build a couple of other concepts here that will be recurring in the book of Isaiah. And one of them is this phrase, Holy One of Israel, Holy One of Israel, almost all of the occurrences of this phrase appear in this one book, Isaiah.
[5:29] I think Isaiah makes up, I want to say it's somewhere around 5% to 8% of the whole Bible in terms of text. Well, 25 of the 31 times you'll see the phrase, Holy One of Israel, it appears in the book of Isaiah.

Now what is that, what is the significance of that? Well, this is a book about what God sees. And God's holiness is telling us, is assigning meaning to what He sees.
He is seeing through the lens, if you will, of His holiness. One of the most common issues that I hear about from new couples, we usually do some premarital counseling, but we save at least a couple conversations for after the wedding, because that's when the real interesting conversations are to be had.
So we usually save a couple sessions after the wedding. And one of the most common issues I hear about afterward is that couples struggle because they are realizing when they live together that they have two different definitions of clean.
Some of you are like, yeah, yeah, yeah. And by the way, I raised daughters and I raised a son, and that exists in a lot of layers. Anyway, it's funny how men tend to like their spaces very, like they want their spaces kind of clean typically.
[6:52] They're not as careful about their actual bodies. Women, it's more the opposite of that. Anyway, that's my observation. But anyway, you'll see couples arguing about this sort of thing.

What does clean actually look like? Well, this phrase, the Holy One of Israel, it's saying essentially God decides what clean is. God decides what clean is.
God decides what unclean is. His standard, not our standard, not a standard by comparison, not a standard by culture or conscience. His standard decides what clean is.
And the idea of standards is really central in the book of Isaiah. There are these two words that appear over and over again in the book of Isaiah. Mishpat, which occurs 42 times.
And then setka, sure I'm not pronouncing that correctly, but it means righteousness. And so you will see the phrase justice and righteousness appear over and over and over again.
[7:54] Justice and righteousness, justice and righteousness. In chapter one, you'll see the city was full of justice, righteousness lodged in her. And then later on in verse 27, you'll see Zion shall be redeemed by justice and those in her who repent by righteousness.

In chapter one, God tells them to seek justice and correct oppression. And later he will say he looked for justice, but behold, bloodshed and righteousness were found. And that's it. That's from Isaiah chapter five.
And there are all these Hebrew puns. You know, I'm very clumsy with Hebrew. I certainly I can. I'm starting to get better with the reading side of it. I don't think I'll ever really nail the pronunciation side. I'm just bad at pronounce pronouncing English anyway. But one of the really interesting things you begin to see as you play around in Hebrew is there's a lot of puns.
There's a lot of sound play going on. And so, for instance, when God says, I looked for Mishpat, but all I saw was Mishpat. It's I looked for justice and I saw bloodshed.
[8:57] Mishpat, justice. Mishpat, bloodshed. So righteousness and justice are all over the Bible, are all over Isaiah. And it's that's the standard. That's what clean is.

When justice and righteousness exist, a thing is clean. When justice and righteousness don't exist, a thing is really, really unclean. I think we've all heard about the idea of a black light and how it reveals things in a room that you can't see with your naked eye.
Now, when I was a teenager, I thought that mostly applied to Led Zeppelin posters. But it turns out this is prominent in criminology as well. And, you know, when all of the TV shows about crime scenes and everything came out, we all learned about this.
But there are actually people that are just trying to cause themselves trouble, and they'll actually bring a UV light with them when they travel to hotel rooms. And I'm like, I just don't want to think

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about reality at that level.
But this image, I've got a slide for it. I think it's a really important image for you to understand, because this is key to Isaiah. This is really Isaiah in two images.
[10:06] The people see with the lights on. But God has another spectrum of vision, and he sees the exact same scene in a very different way.

In verse 4, he says they are laden with iniquity. They don't see that. He says their body is full of wounds in verses 5 and 6. They don't see that. He says they are Sodom and Gomorrah.
What? Filthy. He says that his courts have been trampled. They don't see that. He thinks of incense as an abomination. The language of contamination is all over the book of Isaiah.
In fact, one of the more famous verses from Isaiah is that all our righteous deeds are like filthy rags, or our righteous deeds have become like a polluted garment.
I think you probably know that, by the way, I'm going to remain committed to, I have a firm, PG, high G, low PG standard of discourse in preaching.
[11:12] Because we encourage kids to sit in the service, and your timing on how you talk about things is your timing, not my timing. So that's going to be a massive challenge.

Massive challenge as we preach through Isaiah. That passage, all your righteousness is like filthy rags. Some of you already know this, but those rags are the kind of rags a woman would use once a month, and that's what those rags are.
Your righteousness are that. That's the contamination. In fact, I will tell you this. There is not a cuss word that existed in the time of the writing of the book of Isaiah that God does not use in the book of Isaiah.
Every label for a bodily function that is the grossest possible version, for a bodily fluid, for sexual acts of the most lewd and crude forms, all of it is deployed in Isaiah as God shows you what he sees when he looks at this people who claim to be righteous.
In fact, the Masoretic translation did a very interesting thing as they were working through Isaiah. They didn't want to distort what the actual word said, but they created a system where described in English, it would be what is written and what is said.
[12:33] Or no, what is written and what is read. And so they would put what is written in the actual main text, what is read in the margins, so that when you were in the congregation reading Isaiah, you would skip over, you would soften the extremely crude language that appears throughout.

So not only does God see contamination everywhere, he does not pull any punches. He says, I see this hotel room, it is full of contamination and desecration.
And really that's the courtroom language of chapter one is God just saying that over and over again. We continue back through chapter one, verse 16. He tells them to wash themselves because they're filthy.
Verse 21, the city has become a whore and full of murderers. Verse 21 again, the silver is no longer silver. Their wine is contaminated with bad water. The leadership loves bribes.
Everywhere you see filth. And the problem is that we talked about last week is they don't see that. They are actively engaged in the religious activities that they were prescribed and they do not see.
[13:41] They have the hotel room with the lights on. They do not see the contamination that has spread all over the place. And I think you know what it's like to walk into a house or to be the one who owns the house where you've been cooking something all day and it's around hour six or seven, you don't smell it really anymore.

And someone walks in and immediately says, oh, that smells, hopefully they say, oh, that smells so good. Nose blindness is a concept we all understand, right?
The people in Isaiah are nose blind to their own sin. And friends, I'd love to tell you, I'd love to give you this false comfort and say, but that was just them.
It's definitely not you. That's not why Isaiah exists. That's not why God wrote Isaiah. God didn't write Isaiah so that we could say that was just them, but not us.
God wrote Isaiah because he knew what human beings are and he knew that there would be blindness to contamination, nose blindness throughout our lives and he wrote this book to show us what it really looks like.
[14:46] The question is, why don't they see it? Why don't we see it? I think there's three contributing factors you're going to see throughout the book of Isaiah and the first one is culture.

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I spent the day yesterday in the Silver Dollar City. That is like my Missouri boy power-up place. I just feel better. You should see my sleep numbers from last night.
The highest, was it HRV or whatever? The highest scores I've had in years. The lowest heart rate I've had in years. You just get me in the Ozarks for a full day and I just feel great.
But one thing I have to say now that I don't live there and haven't lived there in a long time, food culture is really hard to outrun. The BMI in Silver Dollar City is not the same as the one that I live in now.
And, you know, as someone who has moved from one place to another, you guys, some of you have known me for 10 years since I've moved here, transplanting culture where your instincts are toward a certain way it's hard.
[15:59] You don't even know how impacted you are by the culture that you live in until you're out of it for a long time. And so you'll see, one of the reasons I took is through the King's stories that I did, those four sermons before going into Isaiah, is you'll see that there has just become a cultural acceptance toward usury, greed, so on and so forth.

And so one of the reasons they don't see it is culture is really hard to outrun. And again, I'd love to say that was only true of Isaiah. Friends, we've contended now, at least since 2020, with conversations in the public consistently about the way that various blind spots in the past, slavery, whatever, have manifested in a particular culture.
And the shocking thing to me is how arrogant we are as to assume we don't have those now. Because if we're focusing on those, that must mean that we don't have any to focus on ourselves, right?
Yeah. Spurgeon said, I believe that one reason why the Church of God at this present moment has so little influence over the world is because the world has so much influence over the Church.
Why couldn't they see their pollution partly their culture? Secondly, I would say, in addition to culture, there's an issue of conscience. The reality is that our consciences don't work perfectly and they wear out over time, and so we can consistently engage in sinful behaviors so that our conscience stops chirping at us when we violated the right way.
[17:38] And finally, the reality is is that even if you are in a great culture and even if you have a finely tuned conscience, you are a corrupt human being. That's what it means to be a sinner. I think this is probably one of the most distinct things about biblical counseling versus other models.

We do believe that men and women are profoundly corrupt. They come to us broken and not merely because of their circumstances. Jesus says in Mark 7, 21, For from within, out of the heart of man come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery.
Commenting on that verse, J.C. Ryle says, Our original sinfulness and natural inclination to evil are seldomly sufficiently considered. considered.
Our original sinfulness and natural inclination to evil are seldomly sufficiently considered. The wickedness of men is often attributed to bad examples, bad company, peculiar temptations, or the snares of the devil.
It seems forgotten that every man carries within him a fountain of wickedness. Why couldn't they see all of the pollution, all of the corruption, the blood on their hands, their incense as abomination, the trampling of the courts?
[19:07] Why couldn't they see that their whole body was sick? Culture, conscience, corruption, might be something else I'm not thinking about.

The point for us this morning is that God has perfect moral vision and it's his standard that wins because he alone sees fully and completely.
Thinking about this particular topic, I really benefited from a very old work from a man named Stephen Charnick and I've translated a lot of this into paraphrase because his writing is not delivered for your ease.
It's very old and I don't feel like obligated in these kinds of settings to trounce around ye olde English with my congregation so this is my paraphrase of something Charnick wrote.
God doesn't judge by appearances. A work that looks good on the outside doesn't fool him so his knowledge and therefore his judgment works on a completely different level from ours.
[20:14] Because his understanding is perfect, God looks through the veil and sees the heap of filth hidden in the soul. He sees what each act really is and the motive behind it and he judges things as they are not as they look.

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Disguises can't deceive him since he knows them long before they were woven. He reaches into the deepest and most tangled wills and every hidden motive is laid bare, laid open before him. Each action is bare on the outside and open on the inside. Everything is as clear to him as if our bodies were made of glass. So if we hold anything back in secret, he will surely call us to account.
Go back to that hotel room slide again. When the people looked at Jerusalem, they saw the Temple of Solomon, one of the most impressive structures in the known world.
They saw this uniquely exquisite theological system called monotheism. It was a beautiful thing. They saw an arrangement of laws perfectly suited for real life in a way that other systems were not.
[21:33] They saw priests, they saw a sacrificial system meant to worship the one true God. And when God looked at Jerusalem, what he saw was a crime scene.

talk about a difference. God sees victims.
Point number two, God sees the victims. God sees with perfect moral clarity. Point one, what does God see with his perfect moral clarity? One thing we must always remember is God always sees the true victims.
victims. By definition, true victims are often invisible. In some cases, a whole system, a whole culture gets built to make the victims invisible.
Slavery. Or in other cases, like as with the unborn, the victimized are victimized because they are invisible.
[22:37] we have tried one time in the history of the human world to give women the right to vote and so far it's added up to the largest genocide ever known in the history of the world.

That's the data. That's where we stand today. You can argue about cause and correlation but let's understand where we are.
A bunch of people who complained and engaged in political activism to gain their rights have used their rights to trounce the weak.
And I will be clear, I'm not for repealing this amendment because I think God's going to do it. And I think God's going to do it in a way that is very loud, very painful, and very clear.
We've mishandled it. You figure out who's to blame for that, feel free. But when God looks at America, he sees a crime scene.
[23:49] When God looks at democracy, we see the Bill of Rights. We see the First Amendment. We see the Temple of Jefferson and the Temple of the Constitution.

What does God see? God sees the victims. Look at Isaiah 1, verse 16.
Wash yourselves. Make yourselves clean. Remove the evil of your deeds from before my eyes. Cease to do evil.
Learn to do good. Seek justice. Correct oppression. Bring justice to the fatherless. Plead the widow's cause.
God's compassion. And all of the majesty of Jerusalem with all of its splendor and sophistication and all of the wealth of Solomon, it was all designed to overlook the people who had no one to stand up for them.
[25:03] Why are the fatherless and the widow brought up so frequently both in the Old and New Testament as the object of God's compassion? Is it because of their gender or their age?

No. They represent something larger than that and you need to have theological vision to understand. They represent people who didn't have anybody to stand up for them. It's not specifically a call to care for these two particular types of people, although we should care for those particular types of people.
They were in a category in the ancient world of people who had no one to stand up for them. No one to look out for them. And God sees the victims.
Verse 17, he says, you are supposed to stand up for these people. And again in verse 23, your princes are rebels and companions of thieves. Everyone loves a bribe and runs after gifts.
They do not bring justice to the fatherless and the widow's cause does not come to them. God sees with perfect moral vision and one of the things he sees is the hidden victim.
[26:19] It's good to have a theology of victimhood. Victimhood's not a bad thing. It's just bad when someone uses it and they shouldn't be using it. Victimhood is bad when they use that status to become the victimizer, which is all too common, which I think is what's happened with feminism and abortion, by the way.

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It was legitimate victimizing happening to some degree and it was grabbed, grasped, and used as a weapon to kill babies. The theology of victimhood is that God sees the hidden victim and I think one of the most interesting places to turn to to see this is in the story of Hagar, who was the victim of two believers unbelief and sin, Sarah and Abraham.
She was such the victim that she was cast into the desert with her child, sentenced to die of thirst. She had no one, no one to stand up for at all.
And then she's the one, when God provides for her, she's the one who coins the name of God. You are the God who sees. You are the God who sees.
You are the God of seeing, she says. Truly, here I have seen him who looks after me. God sees the victim.
[28:00] When Israel was crushed in Egypt, the Lord said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their task masters.

I know their suffering. So God sees the victim. When the system is designed to hide the victim, when the victim is victimized precisely because they aren't seen, God still sees.
And God stands with the hidden victim. God says, he is the father of the fatherless and a protector of widows is God in his holy habitation.
Deuteronomy 10, 18 says, he executes justice for the fatherless and the widow and loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing. Psalm 146, 9 says, the Lord watches over the sojourner. What's a sojourner? It's someone who has nobody else. He upholds the widow and the fatherless, but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin. God secures relief for the hidden victim.
[29:11] He only doesn't see them. He doesn't just stand with them. He will take care of them. Exodus 22, you shall not mistreat any widow or fatherless child.

If you do mistreat them, they cry and they cry out to me, I will surely hear their cry and my wrath will burn and I will kill you with the sword and your wives shall become widows and your children fatherless.
Later in the same book, the book of Isaiah, God says, woe to those who decree iniquitous decrees to turn aside the needy from justice and rob the poor of my people of their right.
Their widows may be their spoil. that widows may be their spoil, that they may make the fatherless their prey. God sees the victim. He stands with the victim.
He secures the victim's rights. And look at this, look back at our original text, Isaiah chapter 1 verse 24, God will treat these people, the victimizers, the perpetrators, as his personal enemies.
[30:21] Look at Isaiah chapter 1 verse 24, therefore the Lord declares the Lord of hosts, the mighty one of Israel, I will get relief from my enemies and avenge myself on my foes.

Note in the text, these are people who are not actively trying to offend God. They're engaged in the very sacrificial system he commanded, but he calls them his enemies because he sees the victim, he stands with the victim, he will secure the rights of the victim, and he will avenge the pain of the victim.
He stands with them as if he was one of them. I will get relief from my enemies and avenge myself on my foes. I will turn my hand against you and smelt away your dross as with lye and remove all your alloy.
So the God who sees with perfect moral vision, sees the victims who can't be seen by anyone else, he doesn't simply see them, he stands with them, and he will not let the victim go unavenged.
He will secure relief for them. I would love to have a conversation with someone about the possibility of repealing whatever amendment we could talk about, and I would just love to say it is so too late for that, and I just need you to understand, to me at this phase you sound like a cackling hen arguing over nonsense while a pile of bodies stands behind us both.
[31:52] I have no interest at all in seeking some kind of repeal, because I honestly believe, it's way beyond that, guys. God has just decided he will avenge, and every time a pastor has to say a hard thing and then answer 15 emails about gentleness with a pile of fetuses, mine.

Come on, guys. God sees a crime scene. We're way beyond bickering about it.
Now, I would love for this sermon to just end in a way that has this large application talking about a concept out there that very few of us have engaged in or participated in, and many of us have given money to outlaw and so forth.
I'd love to end it there, but I need you to understand that it's my job as pastor to preach against the sins in the congregation, and so that's what we're going to do now.

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Let's understand a couple things first and foremost. Nobody in this room stands fully on one side of the ledger. God looks at each of us, and he sees multiple crime scenes, some of which we are the victim, and some of which we are the perpetrator.
[33:21] And so to make proper application of this text, we have to talk about both sides of that ledger. When you are the victim, and God knows sometimes you are, the playbook is clear.

There's just one belief and one behavior that you have to engage in when you are the victim. number one, the belief is simply this, God sees me, he stands with me, and God will secure my relief.
And there's a prayer that follows that, there's a behavior that follows that, namely prayer, and that prayer is, Jesus tells us clearly in Matthew 5, you have heard that it was said that you shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy, but I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your father who is in heaven, for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.
When you are victimized, understand, God sees you, he stands with you, and he will secure your justice. And you need to pray for your enemy.
Friends, if you have the Holy Spirit living inside of you, you will not find it hard to pray for your enemies when you understand how much God is ready to trounce them.
[34:50] I have absolutely been a victim and once I got my theology of victimhood straight, I understand completely how Stephen or Jesus could say, Father, forgive them, they know not what they do.

When you understand how firmly God stands with the victim, and you're in that position, if you have the love of Christ inside of you, you will actively intercede for your enemies because you understand what's coming for them if they don't repent.
Everybody in this room is probably on that side of the ledger in some area of their life. You are an actual victim. Someone has lied to you or cheated on you or stolen from you or slandered you. Understand that God sees that. He stands with you, and he will avenge that act.
So what's left for you to do is as a fellow sinner in need of God's mercy, you just pray for your enemies. You're not in the, you do not need to rouse up God's anger against your enemies.
[36:10] It's already there. You need to pray for them, that God will give them the gift of repentance before it's too late. Now, what about when you're the victimizer?

First thing to stipulate is that you probably wouldn't even know it. Your culture, your conscience, even your fundamental spiritual corruption will make it hard for you to see when you are on the wrong side of the crime scene.
it's true that only God's grace can help you to see that and to experience it as weighty enough to stop mincing words and critiquing style points of confrontations and just say, yes, I am guilty.
It's hard. God has to do that. I think for our church, I think I want to talk about thought about like, well, God, where what is the thing we can't see?
And like, I'm one of us. How do I see it? That's where I want to end. I would say that as I have carefully thought through this, I would say that our congregation struggles with a few particular kinds of greed.
[37:35] And let me just get into what I think I see. I think the first one is that we struggle with greed for a quiet and peaceful life.

I think this is actually the abiding sin of conservatism and Midwesternism, and it's why Minnesota is burning. I think we have a greediness about a peaceful, quiet life.
Now, let me explain greed for a minute. Augustine just says it's wanting more than you need. It's enough isn't enough.
God wants all of us, largely speaking, to have enormous volumes of quiet and peaceful living. Paul tells us we should aspire to this very thing.
But when we become greedy for it, there will be certain signs. And one of them is that we will stop telling people the harder truths that we know full well will likely lead to the disturbance of our peace.
[38:54] We become greedy for calm waters only. We like the calm waters. And so we, many of us, take the path of staying out or staying in the harbor as much as possible.

But God gave you your life and your voice and the truth so that you would engage the darkness with the light of God's word.

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And with God's truth and God's love. As you're designed to have plenty of harbor time, almost all of us will. But there's a greediness for the calm waters.
God made you to live a life where you spend a lot of time in the harbor, but then in the moment when it's called for, you leave it and you go out into the open waters and you go through the storms and then you wind up in another harbor again.
And you do this, you're supposed to do this your whole life and you're supposed to learn the secret of finding peace in the storm and not become so dependent on the harbor. But you can't learn that until you just get into a bunch of storms.
[40:22] I think some of us have become greedy for quiet and peaceful lives and that means we've become passive in standing up for the right things in the right moment in the right way. Something like this is at play in the text.

The victimizers in Isaiah 1 are not only the people who are actively oppressing the victims. There's another guilty party in the text, Isaiah 1.23. People are failing to bring justice.
They're failing to proactively bring justice. The accusation here is not preemptive oppression. It's passivity in the face of injustice.
People are overlooking injustice, refusing to shed light on the darkness. And they're doing this, the text tells us, because they love a bribe.
Your princes are rebels and companions of thieves. Everyone loves a bribe and runs after gifts. They do not bring justice to the fatherless, and the widow's cause does not come to them.
[41:33] They're over, we, they are overlooking their responsibility to speak into the darkness and defend the victim because they love bribes.

That's greed. They're greedy for something. The greed is motivating. The bribe is working because they're greedy. Friends, let me just tell you how we could have like a national revival.
You could have a revival in your home possibly. If you just noticed this. The world is full of people who love their little slice of darkness. And they will offer you the following bribe.
If you let me continue to walk in darkness, I will not make your life a lot less peaceful for the next six hours, six days, six months, or six years. See, bribes are always implicit threats.
Like in, the best delivered bribes are like, it's, it's a carrot and stick. I read a lot of espionage novels, so trust me. It's, I will try to get you to take the bribe.
[42:43] And if you don't, I will make your life really hard. And you are in relationships right now where that is the subtext.

I love my darkness. And if you speak up on it, I will make your life harder. But I would like to offer you the bribe of artificial peace.
Wouldn't you like just a little bit more time in the harbor? Um, what do you think the percentage of American marriages work on that math?
How many men in this room have sold out their wives for six hours more apiece? how many bribes have been taken in workplace conversations, in moments of key conversations with people who are obviously struggling with key sins?
How many bribes have been taken? because we are greedy for a quiet and peaceful life. We've stopped trusting God to provide suitable and sufficient time in the harbor, which He's faithful to do because He's a Father and He loves you.
[44:18] He loves giving you good gifts. and we've never learned how to live a godly life in the storm and we're scared to death of them. And so we stay in the safe and shallow waters.

I think that's one area that we could probably think about as a congregation. A greediness for peace. God provides plenty of peace.
It's His will to give us plenty of peace. It's also sometimes it's time to go to war. Secondly, I think another thing to think about is just how often unforgiveness and bitterness is a kind of greediness problem.
I point this to you as well as a potential issue. I think in addition to having a greed for peace, I think there's a tendency to have a greed for moral power. What I mean by that is I think we feel really nice when we are on the moral high ground.
This manifests itself in all kinds of ways, but one of the ones I'd point out to you that shows up consistently in Scripture is the tendency toward unforgiveness or bitterness is simply this.
[45:38] When someone has sinned against you and done you wrong, watch how your heart responds. because very often you will use those sins as a way of charging your own

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self-righteousness batteries and you will hold on to those things in a greedy way for a kind of moral superiority God wants you to hold and then let go of.

And if you are here and you're an unforgiving, bitter person, God gave you real things, you were wronged in real ways. and to hold on to that for a moment is human and right and true, you hold on to it much longer.
It's like the ring. It's like the ring of Sauron. You will start to feel good. There's a little bit of a nicotine hit that comes from being wronged.
And you'll find yourself thinking this doesn't feel that bad to rehearse. the wrongs of other people all day. And you become greedy for this I've been wronged state and God would say no, let it go.
Let it go. Do not use your power. See, you have power in the moment when you've been wronged. God is for you. You're on the moral high ground. You have power then and it feels really good to have power especially when you've lived a whole life of powerlessness.
[47:11] What are you going to use that power for? God says, let it go. You have been forgiven much. You too should forgive. The third thing I thought as I prayed was just how slander and gossip is the same kind of thing.

The basic idea of the abuse that you see in Isaiah is that people are using their power to feed on the weak. And that's kind of been guiding my thinking about this.
I would tell you that slander and gossip is one of those things that's just easy for a culture to get. I wouldn't say that we have a particular problem with it, but it's just one of those cultural blind spots. I just want to point out what's happening there and it's simply this.
You are using a particular power, your ability to frame the truth in the absence of the person you're talking about. The person you're talking about has a particular weakness. They're not there.
and you have a particular power. You're there. There are all sorts of little ways that aren't little at all that God sees and is offended by.
[48:19] And I want you to know that there are bribes everywhere. The bribe to have a peaceful evening when you need to have a hard conversation. The bribe to hold on to being wronged because it gives you a sense of moral superiority.

The bribe of getting a unique chance to frame someone else's perception of another person almost like you're God. Bribes are everywhere.
Look back at verse 24 of chapter 1. Therefore the Lord declares, the Lord of hosts, the mighty one of Israel, I will get relief from my enemies and avenge myself on my foes.
I will turn my hand against you and will smelt away your dross as with lye and remove all of your alloy and I will restore your judges as at the first and your counselors as at the beginning.
Afterward you shall be called the city of righteousness, the faithful city. Zion shall be redeemed by justice and those in her who repent by righteousness but rebels and sinners shall be broken together and those who forsake the Lord shall be consumed.
[49:36] Friends, if you have been victimized, understand there's two paths for the person who did what they did to you and one is that God in his grace would give them repentance that leads to life and the other is eternal ruin and those are the two ways it goes and I just can't find it in myself to cheer for anybody to go to hell for saying a bad thing about me.

I just can't find it in myself to do that and so I would encourage you to join me in praying for those who have done you wrong asking the Lord to bless them with himself with a renewed vision of Jesus with a renewed vision of sin to see the crime scene for what it is to bless them with repentance to bring them to life I just can't bear to think of the other I don't possess the moral superiority to cheer for that myself there is one who does but it's not me I pray that God will avenge my enemies I pray that God will do those things I just always ask that he would do it the way that he's talking about here where he says that he will wash them with lye there's nothing for fun about what's going on here the repentance here is it's literally the language of melting metals it's the language of refinement I'm not asking my enemies to get off easy at all
I'm just asking that they be given the same thing God has given me and that is the experience of true repentance that really hurts but then in the end yields a peace will harvest likewise friends if you're here and you're on the other side of the ledger and it was apparent to you that you're on the other side of the ledger you need to repent none of this we will hear you more about this next time if you are taking bribes for temporary peace involves you not speaking up friends it will not be fun to repent but it will be good God promises that when we repent this way he says I will restore your

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judges as at first and your counselors as at the beginning and afterward you shall be called the city of righteousness the faithful city there's two levels of application here the first is he is saying essentially that when he actually judges a people those prophets who are called to actually call out sin in a particular way those people always get marginalized in seasons of corruption they always get put in prison they always get persecuted and the people who don't join them are obviously guilty to some degree or another what God's promising here is that he will restore justice and he will allow people with those prophetic voices to exist again the judges and the counselors can actually do their work so at a societal level that's what he's promising here at a personal level
I think it's pretty clear that what he's saying is that when you finally tell God you're sorry and when you say that you repent and when you choose to repent God will restore the joy of your salvation and suddenly you will realize that you have the Holy Spirit presence and a relational vitality in a way you didn't have before and suddenly you realize I was seeing in black and white this whole time I was nose blind to a bunch of things and not just sin but also the glory of Jesus and so suddenly the counselor the Holy Spirit his presence his ministry is restored in your life when you repent and God leads all of us to this place God leads all of us to this place if we are in Christ we will live on both sides of the ledger and on both sides of the ledger we will always wind up seeing more of Jesus Christ we will see more of his strength more of his holiness more of his mercy and grace!
Father God we praise your holy name for your word we pray God that you would use your word not to callous us please Lord don't allow this word to callous us don't allow this word to harden our hearts towards you but Lord allow this word to be a seed that lands in fertile soil keep the birds away Lord from stealing the seed keep the thorns away God please allow your word to have its full work in us Father God we praise you for your faithfulness and care and for shining your light into our darkness we pray God that you would deliver your light into our hearts today in Jesus name we pray amen well today for communion I just want to remind you that the salvation that God offers isn't just forgiveness it's transformation because Jesus Christ has offered his more than perfect like his fully righteous self for every little tiny atom of your sin he has made payment in full half of what [56:00] I should but he has paid for it all so do not stay away from this table because you saw your sin today come to this table and celebrate the great God who made an end of all your sin through the giving of his son Jesus Christ please come to the table today grateful for Jesus Christ but not because you're so close to!

you're!! you're just about as good as him that's not what we need to feel today we need to feel oh I surely do need a savior and I surely am grateful that I have one so come and grab the elements and return to your seat and we'll partake together

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