

## **The Beloved Bride** **Isaiah 62: 1 – 12**

Our sermon text is Isaiah 62. We'll look at the whole chapter, verses 1 to 12. Isaiah 62, verses 1 to 12. Before the reading, we'll pray. Please join me in prayer.

Our Father in heaven, we pray that you would indeed speak to us from your word, and that we would be given meek and humble hearts that are willing to receive the things that you have for us. Father, may we be given ears that hear, eyes that see, and hearts that understand and obey. We ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

Isaiah 62, starting our reading at verse 1: “<sup>1</sup>For Zion's sake I will not keep silent, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not be quiet, until her righteousness goes forth as brightness, and her salvation as a burning torch. <sup>2</sup>The nations shall see your righteousness, and all the kings your glory, and you shall be called by a new name that the mouth of the LORD will give. <sup>3</sup>You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the LORD, and a royal diadem in the hand of your God. <sup>4</sup>You shall no more be termed Forsaken, and your land shall no more be termed Desolate, but you shall be called My Delight Is in Her, and your land Married; for the LORD delights in you, and your land shall be married. <sup>5</sup>For as a young man marries a young woman, so shall your sons marry you, and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you.

“<sup>6</sup>On your walls, O Jerusalem, I have set watchmen; all the day and all the night they shall never be silent. You who put the LORD in remembrance, take no rest, <sup>7</sup>and give him no rest until he establishes Jerusalem and makes it a praise in the earth. <sup>8</sup>The LORD has sworn by his right hand and by his mighty arm: ‘I will not again give your grain to be food for your enemies, and foreigners shall not drink your wine for which you have labored; <sup>9</sup>but those who garner it shall eat it and praise the LORD, and those who gather it shall drink it in the courts of my sanctuary.’

“<sup>10</sup>Go through, go through the gates; prepare the way for the people; build up, build up the highway; clear it of stones; lift up a signal over the peoples. <sup>11</sup>Behold, the LORD has proclaimed to the end of the earth: Say to the daughter of Zion, ‘Behold, your salvation comes; behold, his reward is with him, and his recompense before him.’ <sup>12</sup>And they shall be called The Holy People, The Redeemed of the LORD; and you shall be called Sought Out, A City Not Forsaken.” Amen. May God bless His word to us.

So as there are a few people visiting, and a few people who haven't been with us for a while, let's just start off with a 30,000-foot overview of Isaiah one more time. Isaiah is speaking to the people of Judah in his time, in his day. Judah has problems. God has rejected the worship of Judah. Basically, God's complaint with Judah is that they are hypocrites. Their heart is not in it. Their standing before Him is not right. They do not truly trust in Him. They have a temple, they have worship services at that temple, and in Isaiah chapter 1, God says He hates them. He hates their gatherings. He hates these services. He does not see them as being true worship at all.

Isaiah speaks to the people of the fact that because of their disobedience to God, because they have broken their covenantal agreements with God, the nation is to be taken into captivity. It

will be taken off, once again, into slavery. God rescued them from Egypt out of slavery, and because of their disobedience, they will be once again taken into slavery, this time to a nation called Babylon, which in many ways was exactly the same as Egypt, except on a different part of the world map. That's about as far as it goes.

Isaiah does speak to them of the fact that they will be restored. He makes many promises to the people of Judah that Jerusalem is to be rebuilt, that they will return to their homeland. But he also speaks to them of a coming Saviour. And as we study in Isaiah the various passages that speak particularly of this coming Saviour, we see that this Saviour didn't actually come out of Babylon, He didn't come from the people who return from Babylon. They were still waiting for that Saviour.

We saw that the Saviour was to be born of a virgin; we saw that the Saviour was to come from the house of David; we saw that the Saviour was to be anointed by the presence and the power of the Holy Spirit, that His whole ministry was to be a ministry of obedient service in the sight of God.

The Saviour was further revealed as the one who fulfilled the promises made to Abraham, the one who fulfilled God's promises to King David. The Saviour was further revealed to be a suffering servant, one who would suffer for the sins of many, who by His knowledge would make many to be accounted righteous.

There were four specific and particular Servant Songs, which finished with, I guess you'd say, the ultimate Song of the Servant, which starts with the end verses of Isaiah 52, and runs through all of Isaiah 53, though that is not the only times in Scripture or in the book of Isaiah that we hear from that servant, the suffering servant who is the Saviour. I would suggest to us that we're hearing from Him once more this morning in Isaiah 62.

Isaiah 61 started with, "The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the poor," and we saw that in the gospel of Luke, Luke makes sure that we understand Jesus took Isaiah 61 and He applied it to Himself. Jesus took the scroll of Isaiah in the synagogue and He read, "The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the poor," etc., and He said, "And this day, this prophecy is fulfilled in your presence"—it's fulfilled here, it's fulfilled in Myself. I'm the one spoken of. And many of the commentators feel if you were going to say there was a fifth Servant's Song in Isaiah, you'd probably say that Isaiah chapter 61 was that fifth Servant Song. Isaiah 62, then, is where we're at this morning.

It starts off immediately, it says, "For Zion's sake I will not keep silent, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not be quiet, until her righteousness goes forth as brightness, and her salvation as a burning torch." Very much like when we looked last week at Isaiah 61, we've got to ask the question, Who is speaking? Once again, I'm going to give you pretty much exactly the same answer I gave you last week.

First of all, in the first instance, Isaiah is speaking to the people of Judah who are hearing his teaching. Isaiah is speaking to the people of Judah. And so Isaiah is saying, All of these promises have been revealed to me. Everything that you've heard from me so far has been told to me. I will not keep silent. For the sake of Zion, for the sake of Jerusalem, for the sake of the people of God, I'm not going to shut up about this. You want me to speak? Here's what I'm going to speak about: God's coming deliverance, God's care and love for Zion. That's what I'm going to speak about.

Furthermore, if we look further down into verse 6, we see there that the Scripture reads, “<sup>6</sup> On your walls, O Jerusalem, I have set watchmen; all the day and all the night they shall never be silent. You who put the LORD in remembrance, take no rest, <sup>7</sup> and give him no rest until he establishes Jerusalem and makes it a praise in the earth.” That's speaking about prayer. “Give him no rest,” at the start of verse. Give whom no rest? Give the Lord no rest. Put the Lord in remembrance. Speak to God.

So in the first instance, at the start of our chapter, Isaiah is saying, “I will not stop preaching. I will not stop proclaiming. Furthermore, I will not stop praying. I am praying for the fulfillment of these prophecies. I will not shut my mouth. I'm going to preach, I'm going to pray. In the name of God, I'm going to call for these things to come to their completion and their fulfillment.

But it's not only Isaiah speaking. Isaiah is preaching by the power of the Holy Spirit. These are the words of Scripture. This is breathed-out Scripture from God. And so obviously, God is speaking. And I would suggest to you that once again, God is speaking particularly through the person of the suffering servant. Remember Isaiah 61. We come to the conclusion that it could have been called the Fifth Servant's Song last week, and I would say that the servant still speaks.

So God Himself is saying, “For Zion's sake I will not keep silent, and for Jerusalem's sake, I will not be quiet, until her righteousness goes forth as brightness, and her salvation as a burning torch.” The servant Himself is saying, “I'm not going to stop working. I'm not going to stop doing these things. I am going to bring these things through to completion.”

Where it says, “I will not keep silent,” ask yourself the question, How did God create? How did God put forth His power? God spoke. God said, “Let there be,” and so it was. And now God says, “I will not keep silent.” What's He saying? “Let there be—my people. Let there be—my church. Let there be Zion. Let there be my heavenly Jerusalem.”

The scope of the prophecies of Isaiah, Isaiah's constant reference to the fact that God will be calling not only Jews to faith and repentance, but that God will be calling peoples from all over the world to faith and repentance, invites us to look upon the use of Zion and Jerusalem as being more than just a simple reference to a city on a hill in the Middle East. He's speaking of something bigger than just simply a Jewish nation-state. He's speaking of something bigger. Remember, God is calling all His peoples to Zion, from all over the world.

Turn, if you would, to the book of Hebrews in chapter 12. I want us to look at verse 22. The author of Hebrews has taught the people that the new covenant is superior to the old in many different ways, namely and largely because it's been put in place by a better mediator, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

In Hebrews chapter 11, he speaks of the Hall of Faith, or the Hall of Fame with regards to the people of faith. But I want us to see what it says here in Hebrews chapter 12, verse 22, speaking to Christians.

What does he say to them? "But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering." Who's he speaking to? He's speaking to Christians.

Now the whole point of the book of Hebrews was to teach Jewish converts that they can't go back to the law. There's nothing for them in the Old Testament. There's no salvation for them in the law. There's no salvation for them in the sacrifice of animals. And the author of Hebrews says to them, "You've come to the *heavenly* Jerusalem. You've come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, to the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering."

He sees Zion as being something more than a place of worship in a city on a hill. He sees Jerusalem as being something more than the capital city of a Jewish nation's state. He's talking about the church. He's talking about God's church. His church has been a part of humanity for all of human history.

All who are saved are saved through faith in the coming Saviour, or for those of us who have been saved since His work, we're saved through faith in the completed works of that Saviour. We're all member of this heavenly city, this heavenly gathering called Zion.

Let's just have a look at a couple of other references. Turn to the book of Galatians chapter 4. Let's go to verse 26. Now this is in the middle of Paul's interpreting from the book of Genesis the story of Hagar the slave woman who has a child by Abraham. And that child was not the child of the promise. And just in a sort of cast-off remark almost, I want us to see what Paul says there at Galatians 4:26: "But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother."

Notice, Paul sees obviously, therefore, two Jerusalems. He sees one Jerusalem that is not above, and yet he sees another Jerusalem that is above—the Jerusalem above that is free. Paul sees a city that is inhabited by God and by the people of God.

And then whilst we're doing this, turn to the book of Revelation and chapter 21. Let's start reading at verse 1: "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. <sup>2</sup> And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. <sup>3</sup> And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their

God. <sup>4</sup> He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.” Drop down to verse 10 of Revelation chapter 21, and just read a little more: “And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God.”

Now why have I dragged us through all of these cross-references to make a point? Well, from Isaiah chapter 62, we, the church of God, are instructed to pray for the fulfillment of the promises of God. And if you take just a literal reading of “For Zion’s sake” and “for Jerusalem’s sake,” that is, if you say to yourself, “Well, God was obviously speaking only to the Jews, only in the time of Isaiah,” you’re basically saying that he’s not speaking to the church. And I’m saying to you, No. God is speaking to all of the faithful of all time.

Scripture always speaks to all of God’s people at all times. The apostles themselves, in God-breathed-out Scripture, take that picture of Zion and the New Jerusalem and they use it as a metaphor for what? For the church, for the very church to which they were preaching, for the very churches that people like you and I attend.

And so the servant says, and God says, and Isaiah says, “<sup>1</sup> For Zion’s sake I will not keep silent,” back now at Isaiah 62, “and for Jerusalem’s sake I will not be quiet, until her righteousness goes forth as brightness, and her salvation as a burning torch. <sup>2</sup> The nations shall see your righteousness, and all the kings your glory, and you shall be called by a new name that the mouth of the LORD will give. <sup>3</sup> You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the LORD, and a royal diadem in the hand of your God. <sup>4</sup> You shall no more be termed Forsaken, and your land shall no more be termed Desolate, but you shall be called My Delight Is in Her, and your land Married; for the LORD delights in you, and your land shall be married. <sup>5</sup> For as a young man marries a young woman, so shall your sons marry you, and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you.”

So what’s the picture here that we’re being given? This church that is to be revealed, this body of Christ, as we call it, that is to be revealed, this bride of Christ that is to be revealed, is anticipated by God with something like longing.

Now it’s hard to imagine that God who is immutable, God who is eternal, God who is holy, God who knows the end from the beginning, God who is unchanging—it’s hard to imagine that God longs for something. But God is speaking to people in time, and God deals with His people through time, and what the Scripture is here saying is, God can’t wait to see the day that His church is revealed upon the earth. He can’t wait to see His bride. The pictures of marriage are all over this passage, aren’t they? And this is God saying, “I just can’t wait to see her. I can’t wait to see this.”

And look at what it says. I mean, what does a king do with a crown or a diadem? You wear them. But the picture here is “a crown of beauty in the hand of the LORD, and a royal diadem in the hand of your God.” It’s as though this thing is so beautiful that God’s eyes are just fixed on

it: “I’ve got this thing here in my hand. Look at the glory of it! Look at the beauty of it! Look at what it means to me!” God loves His church. God loves this heavenly Zion. God loves this new Jerusalem. God loves those people who are in His church.

Verse 4 tells us that “you shall no longer be Forsaken,” and this is just simply referring us back to previous verses in the book of Isaiah and previous references, for example, in Isaiah 49:14, or in Isaiah 54:1-7, or Isaiah 60, verse 15, where the people complained that God had cast them off, Isaiah anticipating there what the people would feel as they’re taken into slavery. And now God says, “You’re no longer Forsaken, you’re no longer Desolate. My Delight is in you, and your land Married. For the Lord delights in you, and your land shall be married.”

Now let’s look at verse 5, because it sounds a little confusing or strange. “For as a young man marries a young woman,” okay, we get that metaphor. That’s simple. You know, the picture here is love and the promise of offspring and the building of a family. Amen.

“So shall your sons marry you.” That’s not so clear and easy. “So shall your sons marry you.” The picture’s not incest. I think what Isaiah’s getting at here is that our relationship with God is a covenant relationship, and our relationship with the church of God is actually a covenanted relationship.

We don’t think that way anymore in the church, particularly in churches that are Baptist. I mean, they are better at understanding covenantal relationships in Reformed churches, to be honest. We should understand this. Our relationship with God through this church, or through *the* church, not just this church, but through *the* church, is a covenantal relationship, just exactly the same as a marriage relationship is a covenantal relationship.

My friends, how’s your relationship with the church of the living God? It’s a good question. Do you love the church? Do you see the church as something beautiful and glorious? Do you see that the church is what God is building? Do you see that the church is that which God has purchased with His own blood?—to quote Acts 20:28. Do you see that the church is a crown in the hand of God? It’s so beautiful that instead of putting it on His head, He’s looking at it.

Your relationship with the church is a covenanted relationship, just as marriage is a covenanted relationship. And God rejoices over us. Are we strengthening the church? Are we contributing? Are we contributing through our prayers? Are we contributing through faithful attendance? Are we contributing through obedience? I’m not necessarily talking whether or not money gets put in the plate, although that is part of worship.

Are we part of God’s church? Are we strengthening and building His church with Him—with Him, yes, with Him? “That sounds a bit synergistic, Scott. I thought you were monergistic. You’re reformed. You say God does everything.” Yes, God does everything. He absolutely does everything. And here’s the thing: God does everything through means, and the means by which He builds His church is the obedience of the people who are in His church. So we can say that

we are serving and working *with* Him. We are building His church *with* Him. We are obeying Him. We are being one with Him.

Let's read on now, verse 6. God says, "On your walls, O Jerusalem, I have set watchmen; all the day and all the night they shall never be silent." Now I think in this picture here, this metaphor of the watchman on the walls of Jerusalem, God is saying, "I have blessed you with preachers." Notice Isaiah back at the start there of verse 1 says, "I will not keep silent." He's one like the watchman who does not ever keep silence. He can't help but speak of the promises of God and the things that God is doing.

But look at the instruction here, second half of verse 6: "You who put the LORD in remembrance, take no rest, <sup>7</sup> and give him no rest until he establishes Jerusalem and makes it a praise in the earth." "You who put the LORD in remembrance, take no rest, and give him"—give God no rest—"until he establishes Jerusalem and makes it a praise in the earth." The word there, "You who put the LORD in remembrance," is an interesting word. It's got a biblical background, and we should look it up so that we actually understand what's being said there.

Turn to Second Samuel chapter 8, for an example of the way that it's used. King David has been established as the king of Israel. He's establishing the nation, he's establishing his rule over the nation, he's establishing his royal court—the authority structure of this nation. Second Samuel chapter 8, looking at verse 16: "Joab the son of Zeruiah was over the army, and Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud was recorder, <sup>17</sup> and Zadok the son of Ahitub and Ahimelech the son of Abiathar were priests, and Seraiah was secretary."

Let's go back there to "Ahilud was recorder." Recorder—that's exactly the same word that is used in Isaiah chapter 62, verse 6, "You who put the LORD in remembrance." It's plural in Isaiah; it's singular in Second Samuel, but it's the role of a recorder.

Now what was the role of a recorder? "Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud was recorder." Well, you've got a king who deals with people by speaking to his people. He speaks to them. What if he forgets what he says? What if he hears a court case, you know, a dispute over property, land, a family dispute. He makes a decision. He says, "Okay, here's the way it's going to be. The older son gets this portion, the rest of the family gets that portion. That's the king's decision. Finished. Out you go." Okay?

What if, two weeks later, someone comes back and says, "Can I have some clarity? Could you just give us a little bit more detail on the decision you took two weeks ago, Monday morning, please, King?" And the king says, "You know how many people have come to me in the last two weeks? I don't remember what was said. What did I say? What was my decision? Oh, hang on, I've got a recorder. Jehoshaphat, what did I say to these people two weeks ago?" And Jehoshaphat reads him the transcript of his decision. "Ah, I remember the case now." That's the picture, okay?

Now come to Isaiah chapter 62. “You who put the Lord in remembrance”—You bunch of recorders. It’s now in plural. “You bunch of recorders who hear the words of God. You who put the Lord in remembrance, take no rest and give *him*”—that’s “give the Lord”—no rest “until he establishes Jerusalem and makes it a praise in the earth.” What’s the instruction? Remember the words of the king, and quote them back to him. Remember the promises of God and quote them back to him, constantly. Give Him no rest. Give Him no rest, give Him no peace.

What, therefore, would be a sign or one of the fruits of the people of God? What would be an indicator that they indeed are the people of God? They are a people of *prayer*. What’s prayer? It’s nothing more than asking God to fulfill His promises. It’s nothing more than asking God to do for us the very things that He has promised to do.

We’re asking God to be our God. “God, be our God. God, be our Saviour through Jesus Christ our Lord. God, be the Saviour of the world through Jesus Christ our Lord. You have said you will build your church—build it! You have said your church is to be a glorious, shining light in this earth. Make your church a glorious, shining light in the earth! Pour out your salvation upon the earth!” We’re to be a people of prayer, praying. And it says, Give God no rest. What does it say in the New Testament? I think the King James Version says, “Be instant in prayer,” constantly praying. Pray, pray, pray, always in prayer. And this is not talking about praying for your own prosperity, and it’s not talking about praying that everything will go right. We’re praying for the establishment of Jerusalem—the new Jerusalem, the heavenly Jerusalem. We’re praying, “Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

I’m not saying that you’re *not* supposed to pray about whether or not you take a certain job, whether or not a certain investment goes well. Of course, put all of these things to prayer. We’re Christians. We pray to God our Father. But the commandment here is to remind God of His promises.

What does your prayer life look like? Do you know the word well enough to pray God’s promises back to God? There’s a challenge. Have you got enough Scripture fixed in your mind to be able to pray God’s word back to Him? In other words, are you memorizing some Scripture? Are you taking hold of God’s word, hiding it in your heart so that you can pray according to the will of God? Do you want to obey God? Do you want to be righteous?

Do you want to keep God’s law—for example, the Ten Commandments? Do you know that you can pray your way through the Ten Commandments? You not only pray that you don’t do the “thou shalt nots,” but you pray that in place of the thou-shalt-nots, you do the thou shalt. So where it says, “Thou shall not murder,” what’s it actually saying, or what’s it saying in its fulness? Don’t be a killer, don’t be a life-taker; be a life-giver. Be someone who gives life to the people around them.

Where it says, “You shall not commit adultery,” what’s it saying? It’s saying you shall be faithful to your spouse. You shall be a lover of your spouse and you shall uphold marriage in the earth—true marriage, marriage between a man and a woman.

When it says you shall not have an idol, “Don’t cast for yourself an image,” what’s it saying? Therefore, know the one true, living God, and worship Him for whom He has revealed Himself to be. And if you worship Him according to who He says He is, well, you can’t be worshipping an idol, can you? Every negative has its positive, and the fulfillment of the negative is the actual doing of the positive. Are you praying for this?

You say you want to be Christ-like—all of us say we want to be Christ-like. I hope you pray that you want to be like Jesus. Well just remember something, Jesus perfectly fulfilled the law in the sight of God. There was no sin of which He could be convicted, and there was no righteousness that He lacked. Everything God said a man or a person is supposed to be, that Jesus was. So if you want to be like Jesus, you’re a law-keeper—not because the law’s the law. You’re not going to be a legalistic Pharisee—“I’ve got a check-list. I do this, I do that, I do the other.” You’re not doing it for that reason. You’re doing it because you love God and you want to be like Christ.

So my friends, we can immediately ask, How is my sanctification going? You can look at your own life and see what you need to be working on, because the law tells you that. You shall not steal. What do I take that’s not rightfully mine? You shall not covet. What am I jealous of? What do I want for myself, when I should be happy with the things that God has given me?

Think your way through God’s law. Don’t be simplistic and wooden in the way you strive to understand these things. Take Scripture with Scripture, compare Scripture to Scripture. Get into the depths of the word of God. God says to give Him no rest. There’s God’s commandment. Church, here’s God’s commandment: Pray and pray and pray, and annoy Him till He does what He says He’s going to do. “Annoy me! Annoy me until I do it!” Isn’t that something amazing?

Turn in your New Testaments to Second Peter chapter 3, for example. Reading from verse 11: “Since all these things are thus to be dissolved,” now he’s speaking of the final judgment on the earth, “what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, <sup>12</sup> waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! <sup>13</sup> But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.”

See there in verse 12, it says, “waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God.” Waiting for and hastening. You say, “Hang on. God’s God. God’s got a time. God knows the beginning from the end.” You know, I’ve spoken of this earlier—God knows the beginning from the end. “How do I make God’s will come through, or be hastened? How do I make God’s will happen sooner?” Well again, my answer to you is as simple as it was before: God uses means to accomplish His will, and the means by which He accomplishes His will is the obedience of His faithful people.

Okay, you want the gospel to reign over all the earth. I want the gospel to reign over all the earth. God has said that the gospel will reign over all the earth. Are we hastening that day? Are

we praying? Are we holding God in remembrance? Are we praying for that coming day, for the coming fulfillment, for the coming—not only future judgment?

I know Peter puts the judgment slant on it, and in Isaiah 63, just to look ahead, Isaiah does exactly the same thing. He puts the judgment slant on it. But at the moment, in Isaiah 62, we're looking at the salvation slant. You see, God has a people He is saving, a church that He is filling, a heavenly city that is going to be populated. God has a plan, and we, through our faithful praying obedience, hasten the fulfillment of that plan. God plans not only the end, He plans the means. And one of the means by which the church can faithfully and powerfully proclaim the gospel is through being a praying church—a church that prays, a people who pray, who give the Lord no rest.

Now looking back in Isaiah 62 at verse 8, we see “The LORD has sworn by his right hand and by his mighty arm,” and then we're given some promises to us in the type of food: “I will not again give your grain to be food for your enemies, and foreigners shall not drink your wine for which you have labored; <sup>9</sup> but those who garner it shall eat it and praise the LORD, and those who gather it shall drink it in the courts of my sanctuary.” Notice those who gather this food are going to be in the presence of God, rejoicing in God's goodness to them.

But I just want us to look at how verse 8 starts: “The LORD has sworn by his right hand and by his mighty arm.” One of the classical doctrines of God is called the simplicity of God. Now, what does “the simplicity of God” mean? It means that God is God. It means that there are no parts of God. God is one pure spiritual being. God is God, there are no parts of God. You see, if God were made up of composite parts, well, God would not be the Almighty, Great God whom we worship. If He's reliant on something else to be God, well that “something else” that makes Him God, is God. So God is God. God is simple. God is purely God.

So when you come across a phrase, “The LORD has sworn by his right hand and by his mighty arm,” what's he saying? Does He have a hand? No, God is Spirit. Does He have a mighty arm? Literally, no. God is God. God is one true, living God. Purity. Absolute purity and simplicity. “I swear by myself.” Remember, this is set out to us as poetry. Poets use metaphors, words, pictures, illustrations. “The LORD has sworn by his right hand and by his mighty arm.” Remember back in Isaiah 53, the question was asked, “To whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?” Another one of those parts-of-God phrases. “To whom has God revealed himself?” No one gets a part of God.

You know, God is not a smorgasbord dinner, or He's not like Sizzler. Some of you probably don't remember a Sizzler restaurant, but there are still a few around. At Sizzler you go and basically pay for a seat. You get given a plate and all the food's out, and you walk along and you choose the bits that you want. I want some of this, I want some of that, I won't have some of that. Okay? That's not the way it is with God.

God is God. You get God as He reveals Himself to be. You get all of God. You get the one true, living God. And “the Lord has sworn by his right hand and by his mighty arm,” He's sworn by

Himself, just as He swore by Himself to Abraham. And that's what Isaiah's putting in remembrance for us there. Just as He swore by Himself to Abraham, these things will be accomplished.

Why does Isaiah put us in remembrance of the promises to Abraham? Because this great, beautiful Zion that he's speaking of is the fulfillment of God's covenant promises that started way back in the book of Genesis and continue right through to the book of Revelation. "I have sworn" by Himself, by His right hand, and by His mighty arm. He will be gracious. He will be merciful. He will build and strengthen His church.

Notice there in Isaiah 62, just looking back again at verse 5, where it says that God will rejoice over His church. "So shall your God rejoice over you." What was the response of Adam in the book of Genesis when God brought his wife to him? Where's the first song in the Bible? Where's the first poem in the Bible? Where was a man first inspired to sing words of love? It was back in Genesis chapter 2, verse 23 or thereabouts. Adam delighted in his wife, and he spoke poetically. "Bone of my bones, flesh of my flesh." That was a poem or a song.

God, through the servant, through Jesus Christ, rejoices over His church. The very sight of His church delights Him, and He wants His church to be constantly and always in prayer—praying, praying for the fulfillment of promises, praying that the church will be built and that the gates of hell will not prevail against it.

Let's look at the final three verses, verses 10, 11, and 12. These verses speak about basically the ingathering of these saints, the ingathering of these people who are being brought into Zion. "10 Go through, go through the gates; prepare the way for the people; build up, build up the highway; clear it of stones; lift up a signal over the peoples."

Isaiah also references his own prophecies as he speaks. Turn back to Isaiah chapter 40, and we'll start reading from verse 1. "1 Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. 2 Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins. 3 A voice cries: 'In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. 4 Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain.'"

Now just turn back again and look what the instruction in Isaiah chapter 62, verse 10, is. "Go through the gates; prepare the way for the people; build up, build up the highway; clear it of stones; lift up a signal over the peoples." In a way, we could say that this is God speaking to the servant, and telling the servant what His ministry is to be.

Isaiah 40 is really interesting. It's basically the passage which kicks off the start of our synoptic gospels. When John the Baptist came forth preaching, what did he preach? "A voice cries in the wilderness, 'Make straight in the desert a highway for our God.'" So Isaiah 40 speaks of the fact

that the Saviour comes to God's people, that God incarnate is coming to His people. "Prepare the way of the Lord." God comes to His people.

But look at this in Isaiah chapter 62:10. God's people go to God. How? We follow the Saviour. He prepared a way. He came to us, and now He has gone back to God, and we are following the Saviour by that same way. What has Jesus said? "The one who would follow after me" has to do what? Take up his cross. Cast off the things of the world. Sentence yourself to death—not literal death, but death to the world; death to serving the gods of this world, the prince of the power of the air; death to seeking things for yourself.

Am I saying you stop working? No, I'm not saying any of those things. But I'm saying that your strongest desire should be the glory of God and serving God, that everything in your life should be subservient to this strongest desire. You're going to follow Christ. You're not going to compromise in any way, shape, or form. You're going to do the things that Jesus has commanded you to do. Why? Because He's made straight the way before me. He's taken the rocks and the stones out of our way. We can go through the gates.

Psalm 24 and Psalm 118 speak of God, the King, Jehovah, entering into His place, or entering into His city. Psalm 118, which we read earlier, then goes on to speak of God's people going through those same gates. And here's the promise: We're to go through the gates. A way has been prepared for us. The highway has been built.

Looking at Isaiah 62, verse 11: "Behold, the LORD has proclaimed to the end of the earth: Say to the daughter of Zion, 'Behold, your salvation comes; behold, his reward is with him, and his recompense before him.'" This is another direct quotation out of Isaiah chapter 40. I'll just read it to you. "Behold, the Lord GOD comes with might, and his arm rules for him; behold, his reward is with him, and his recompense before him." Back in Isaiah 62:11: "Say to the daughter of Zion, 'Behold, your salvation comes; behold, his reward is with him, and his recompense before him.'"

The Saviour is coming. Once again, Isaiah lays it out to the people of Judah. "Your faith must be in the coming Saviour. Your hope is not the rebuilding of the city of Jerusalem in the nation of Israel. Your hope is eternal salvation, which will bring you into the very presence of God."

And Isaiah 62, verse 12: "And they shall be called The Holy People, The Redeemed of the LORD; and you shall be called Sought Out, A City Not Forsaken." And you shall be called "Sought Out." Sought by whom? Sought by God, sought out by God, God seeking for His people. How? Through the work of Jesus Christ. He has come. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life." A people sought, a city not forsaken.

Let's just wrap it up with a little bit of application and some closing thoughts. First, we should really be a people of prayer. We're commanded here to put God in constant remembrance. Give Him no rest until He establishes Jerusalem and makes it a praise in the earth. What do we want

to see? We want to see that final day when evil is utterly banished and destroyed from the earth, when God's people dwell in the presence of their God, rejoicing—rejoicing in His mercy to us. That's what we want to see. We want to see that day.

We all imagine heaven. Well, this is God's promised eternal life to us. It's not a spiritual life, floating around in the ether, you know, singing praises and playing instruments. It's a new heaven and a new earth, where we dwell with the Lamb in the presence of God, the Lamb being God incarnate. New heaven, new earth. All the metaphors in the book of Revelation are pointing back towards the Garden of Eden, but they're saying it's something better. The Garden of Eden had one tree of life, and it's saying in the book of Revelation, the garden has twenty-four, twelve on each side of the street. It's better, it's bigger, there's more. It's great.

Look forward to your eternal life in a real body, on a real place called the new heavens and the new earth, in the presence of a real Saviour, called Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God. And that's the final accomplishment of the plan of God. That's the final fulfillment of all His promises. And we, my friends, hasten the day through our obedience, our faithfulness, our prayer. We must be a praying people.

My friends, what's your relationship with the church? I've mentioned this, and I just mention it again so you go home with it. "So shall your sons marry you." You shall be in a covenant relationship with this heavenly Zion. If you're not in a covenant relationship with the church, with the visible church of God, my friends, there's something wrong. You're not understanding Scripture. You're not understanding what God has to say. He's saying that we are to gather together in His presence. He's saying that we are to be His people visibly. Righteousness is to go forth through the earth. Salvation is a burning torch.

Me and my Bible under a tree is not salvation going forth into the earth as a burning torch. I'm not saying you can't have a good study time with your Bible under a tree on your own. But what I'm saying is, that is not the worship that God has called His church to. He's called us to public proclamation, public worship. He's called us to be a people set apart, in His sight and in the sight of the whole world. Our commitment to His church should be exactly, in some ways, the same as our commitment to our marriages. And our commitment to our marriages is what? Till death do us part. We will serve, we will love, we will cling, we will cleave together.

Well, my friends, if you're a Christian, you've been called into a very big, broad family relationship, which is expressed in your life in your local area through faithful gospel preaching churches. God has called upon you to be covenanted with your church.

Are we a praying people? Do we know the promises of God? Do we remind God of His promises? Are we hastening forward the fulfillment? Are we in His church, publicly? Are we truly serving God in the way that He has commanded? My friends, God rejoices in that church. God rejoices in His people when His people are doing these things.

What's the picture? We're a crown in the hand of the Lord. We're a crown in the hand of the Lord. He hasn't put it on. He's looking at it. It's beautiful. He loves it. We're to love the church as He loves the church, even as we are in the church, and even as Christ dwells within the church. And He loves the church from within. So should we. Let's close in prayer.

Our Father in heaven, our Lord and our God, we thank you once again that you reveal such wondrous things to us from your holy Scriptures. We thank you that through the work of Jesus Christ your Son, and by the power of your Holy Spirit, you have granted life to your church, to your people, that we are counted as righteous in your sight, and that you love your church.

We pray, Father, that we also would love your church and that we would be faithful to you through being faithful to your church, and that we would indeed hasten the day of the coming of the Lord, that we would see the heavenly city, that we would see the new Jerusalem established in the new heavens and the new earth, and that we would there worship our Saviour forever. We ask all of these things in Jesus' name. Amen.