

Wednesday, April 3, 2024 • Read Isaiah 51:1–16

Questions from the Scripture text: What is commanded in v1a? To whom? How else are they identified (v1b)? What does this word to which they listen tell them to do (v1c)? At which two things are they to look (v1c–d)? Who is meant by this rock (v2a), and who by the hole (v2b)? How did a people come from such infertile beginnings (v2c–d)? Who will do what, now (v3a)? In what condition and to what extent (v3b–d)? What will make them Eden-like (v3e–f)? What command is repeated in v4a–b? To whom? What will proceed from the Lord (v4c)? What will this law do unto whom (v4d–e)? What is the Lord bringing near (v5a–b)? What else will this salvation do (v5c)? With what outcome (v5d–e)? What command is repeated in v6a–b? What are they to look at this time? What will happen to this heavens and earth at which they look (v6c–d)? And to those who dwell in it (v6e)? But what will have an opposite outcome (v6f–g)? What command is repeated in v7a? To which two groups again (v7b–c)? What two things are they not to fear (v7c–d)? What will happen to the mockers (v8a–b)? But what (and therefore who) will last forever (v8c–d)? What new command is given twice in v9? To what (Whom!)? What had He done to Egypt (nicknamed “Rahab” in ancient times, no relation to the woman of Jericho, v9–10)? What will His arm now do in the same power (v11)? With what result in/from His people? Who is Zion’s comforter (v12a)? What response to mere men shows that they forget their place (v12b–d)? Whom does fear of man forget (v13a)? What (whom) did He make? What else did He make (v13b–c)? How much have they feared whom (v13d–f)? But what will they soon ask (v13e)? What are they urgent to do in their fear (v14)? But Who is the solution that they already have (v15)? And what is the solution that He has provided (v16a)? To remind them that He is doing what (v16b–e)?

What must faith do? Isaiah 51:1–16 prepares us for the first serial reading in public worship on the Lord’s Day. In these sixteen verses of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us that **faith must remember and call upon God, so that it does not fear men.**

Faith listens to the Lord in how it looks at everything, v1–8. The Servant had listened in order that He could speak (50:4). Now, the Lord turns His attention to the remnant who seek Him (v1), urging them to listen three times (v1a, 4a, 7a). Indeed, the Servant Himself is the speaker, here, from God—speaking in and from His divine nature. In the first two “listen” speeches, the secondary command is to “look” (v1c, 2a; 6a–b).

“Looking” has been a perpetual problem throughout the book of Isaiah, because Israel preferred help that they could see, and even gods that they could see (though such gods can never help!). So there is a lesson here that our ears must direct our eyes. What we hear from Christ, the Servant, in the Scriptures must determine how we interpret what we see.

In v2–3, what they are to see is the fruit God’s redeeming work among His people. Abraham was one man and as good as dead, and his wife who was a barren pit, this entire nation were born (v2, cf. Heb 11:11–12). So now God would use the same power to bring life out of barrenness—to bring Edenic joy and worship out of the wastelands of Zion (v3).

And in v4–6 what they are to see is a heavens and earth (v6a–e) that don’t have anything like the lasting power of God’s salvation and righteousness (v6f–g) for a remnant from all the nations who will trust in Him (v4–5). vv7–8, the third “listen” section make this same point, but now especially with those dwellers of the earth who will be destroyed (v6e). Many of them are reproachers and insulters (v7c–d), but the Lord’s people must remember that the mockers’ days are numbered (v8a–b), but the righteousness and salvation of the Lord are forever (v8c–d)!

What do your eyes see, dear reader? Is it a world that is the fruit of a long history of God’s almighty, redeeming work? Is it a creation that reminds you that the Creator is infinitely greater and everlasting, and that you shall be everlasting and great, too, by faith in Him? Let us learn to listen like Jesus. And let us learn to listen to Jesus!

Faith cries out for the reawakening of God’s display of strength, v9–11. Now, the voice addresses the arm of YHWH, the display of His might. This is either the voice of the remnant from v1–8, or the voice of the Servant, or (most likely) the Servant speaking as the representative of the remnant. He has learned what to see. He remembers the Lord’s great salvation in the past (v9e–10). And He prays that the same Lord would display the same power in the same righteousness for a new salvation (v11) as He brings the ransomed home with the joy prophesied in v3.

Faith mustn’t fear men, which is to forget God, v12–16. Fear of man (v12b–d, 13d–e) forgets the identity of our Comforter (v12a, 13a–c), which is to forget our own place (v12b). But the question in v13f will soon be asked, “where is the fury of the oppressor”? Let God’s people not be desperate like the hastening captive in v14. YHWH their God is the same as He ever was (v15, cf. v9e–10). The heavens and earth of the fallen world (v6c–d) will soon be replaced by newly planted ones (v16c–d), and His righteous remnant will be forever with Him (v16e, cf. 2Pet 3:10–13)!

In what part of your life do you “listen” to the Lord? How does it inform what you see in our world today? How does it inform what you see in the creation? How does it inform what you see in the circumstances of Your life? What is God like? How will He ultimately show that? Who will be there with Him?

Sample prayer: Lord, our help is in Your Name, who made the heavens and the earth. Forgive us, for in fearing men, we have forgotten who You are. Grant that we would hear Christ and respond to You as He does, entrusting ourselves to You who judge justly. And so give us our place in that New Heavens and New Earth in which righteousness dwells, we ask in His Name, AMEN!

Suggested songs: ARP102D “My Strength He Weakened” or TPH46A “God Is Our Refuge and Our Strength” (The following is a machine-generated transcription. **PLEASE BE AWARE** of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording via hopewellarp.org)

Isaiah 51, verses 1 through 16. These are God's words. Listen to me you who follow after righteousness? You who seek Yahweh? Look to the Rock from which you work Union to the hole. Of the pitch from which you were dug look to Abraham your father and to Sarah who bore you For, I called him alone and blessed him and increased him.

For y'all pay well Comfort Zion, he will Comfort all of our waste places. He will make her Wilderness like Eden. And her desert, like the garden of Yahweh. Joy and gladness will be found in it. Thanksgiving and the voice of Melody. Listen to me, my people. And give ear to me.

O my nation. For a law will proceed from me. And I will make my Justice rest as a light of the peoples. My salvation. My righteousness is near. My salvation has gone forth. And my arms will judge the peoples. The coastlands will wait upon me. And on my arm, they will trust.

Lift up your eyes to the heavens and look on the earth beneath. For the heavens will vanish away like smoke. The Earth will grow old, like a garment. And those who dwell in, it will die in like manner. But my salvation will be forever. And my righteousness will not be abolished.

Listen to me you who know righteousness. You people in whose heart is my law. Do not fear the reproach of men nor be afraid of their insults. For the moth, we'll eat them up like a garment and the worm will eat them like wool. But my righteousness will be forever.

And my salvation. From generation. Two generation. Awake awake put on strength o arm of Yahweh. Awake as in the ancient days and the generations of old Are you not the arm that caught Ray have apart and wounded? The serpent? Are you not the one who dried up the sea?

The Waters of the great deep that made the depths of the sea erode for the redeemed to cross over. So the ransomed of Yahweh shall return and come to Zion. With singing. With everlasting Joy on their heads, and they shall obtain joy and gladness sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

I even I am he who comforts? You Who are you? That you should be afraid of a man who will die. And of the son of a man who will be made, like grass. And you

forget Yahweh, your maker Who stretched out the heavens and laid, the foundations of the earth.

You have feared continually every day because of the fury of the oppressor when he has prepared to destroy, And where is the fury of the oppressor? The captive Exile hastens that he may be loosed that. He should not die in the pit that his bread should not fail. But I am Yahweh, your God.

Who divided the sea, whose waves roared. Yahweh of hosts is his name. And I have put my words in your mouth. I've covered you with the shadow of my hand. That I may plant the heavens. Lay the foundations of the earth. And say to Zion. You are my people.

So far, the reading of Gods inspired and denoting tort Well, in the Uh, 10 verses of this portion. We have three listen to mes. Verse 1, listen to me. You who follow the righteous after righteousness you who seek Yahweh? 4. Listen to me, my people give ear to me.

Oh my nation. And verse 7, listen to me you who know righteousness You people in whose heart is my law. Clearly, the Lord here is Addressing the remnant, the believing Remnant. That. Are going to be shaped by the word of the servant. In fact, it is probably the servant himself who is speaking here.

You remember? He said, In chapter 50 and verse 4. Yahweh God has given me the tongue of the Learned. That I should know how to speak a word and season to him, who is weary? He awakens me morning by morning, he awakens my ear. To here, as the Learned, the Lord Yahweh has opened my ear.

And so Jesus is first the great listener. Just as we remembered last week in that portion, In his Humanity, he grew in wisdom and Stature in favor with God and with men, But here's the great listener so that he might be the great speaker. And so verse 10, almost at the end of that chapter, just a couple verses before.

Our portion starts as who among you fears Yahweh who obeys The voice. Of his servant. Uh, and so it is the voice of the servant especially in verses 1 through 10 of Psalm 51. That is saying listen to me, listen to me, and perhaps, Most precious identification of these listeners comes in the second line of verse seven.

You people in whose heart? Is my law. The word of the servant, the word of our Lord, Jesus. Is powerful and effective and shapes our hearts. And so this listening to Jesus changes, what we see. When we look, The first two sections. First two, listen to me sections. Have a look command.

The first one says, look to the Rock and the hole and The Rock turns out to be. Abraham. And Uh, the Out of which we were dug. Uh, turns out to be Sarah. And he's saying he brought life out of that, which was inanimate. Abraham was one man by himself.

For, I called him alone and Hebrews 11 verses 11 and 12 talk about Sarah by faith. Conceiving a son past the time of child bearing and very specifically says from Abraham. He says from one man and he is good as dead. Uh, and so That is the description here.

The Wilderness God made water to come out of a rock for the nation of Israel. And in this metaphor, Abraham is an IM infertile Rock and yet. God has made a nation out of him just as he promised. And so, he says, Um, That he is going to do the same now.

Verse 3, Yahweh will Comfort, Zion. He will make her Wilderness like Eden and her desert. Her Wasteland. Like the garden of Yahweh. And so when we listen to God, it changes. What we see what we see. And now is not something to be discouraged over and to fret. About, we may be grieved at the current condition of God's people.

Indeed, I would say that you could hardly be biblically minded and look at the state of the church in our day where we are and not be grieved. But when we look, it must be according to what we have heard from God. And so since we know what he is doing, Uh, we have confidence.

That he is producing Paradise and he is gathering all his Remnant to himself and he will perfect them. And every last one of them. More common into perfect Holiness and perfect. Happiness. The second listen section, he says, lift up your eyes to the heavens and look on the earth beneath.

Now, he's saying, look at these things that look so permanent and so established. But look at them with, you're listening to what the Lord says. Lord says, these are going to vanish away like smoke and grow old, like a garment So, you don't put your hope in. Uh any Earthly thing you don't find your treasure in any earthly thing, like we heard in the morning sermon but also we do not fear.

Any creaturely power. Or be anxious. Uh, about them. Because those who are of the heavens and the Earth will die in like matter. And so, the Earth will grow old like a garment in verse 6 is matched with the moth. We'll eat them up like a garment in verse 8.

About these mocking men, the ones who approach and the ones who insult and he says hear me. Listen to me. You people who in whose heart is my law, do not fear. Those. Well of Heaven and Earth are passing away. And if The mocker and the reproach are the insulter.

Is the oppressor is passing away. Then what was forever? And you see that in verse 6. And you see that? Uh, inverse eight. And then you see that marvelously in verse 16, My salvation will be forever. My righteousness will not be abolished verse 6. My righteousness will be forever and my salvation from generation to generation.

Verse 8. And then, at the end in verse 16, I have put my words in your mouth. I have covered you with the shadow of my hand. Talking, not only to the serpent. Talking not only to the servant and to those who had been made like him who are listeners now and have God's word in his mouth.

I have put my words in your mouth, I have covered you with the shadow of my hand that I may plant the heavens, lay the foundations of the earth. So this is a new heavens and a new Earth. Which we're going to hear about again, in this last part of Isaiah.

But notice who's there that I may plant the heavens. Lay the foundations of the earth and say to Zion. You are my people. So the old Heavens one like smoke the old Earth. Uh, grown old like a garment But now in new heavens and a new Earth, And whereas the reproacher and the insulter Suffered the same fate as the old heavens and earth.

Zion is there in the new heavens and the new Earth and he says to them, you are my people. So the first thing That we see is that Faith listens to the Lord and how it looks at everything. It is not. It does not despair. Over the day of small things, it does not despise the day of small things with respect to the church or the work that God is doing in the world.

And this is not impressed. Oh, or fearful. Of those creaturely things. That will vanish and will be destroyed. The second thing that we see is that Faith cries out for the Reawakening. Of God's display of strength. He said in verse 5 on my arm they will trust and now Faith responds to what God has said by praying for what God has said.

And so this prayer in verses 9 through 11. Awake awake put on strength o arm of Yahweh. Yes, we hear your word to tell us that your arm was Well, now awoken that arm. Of strength perform. Great works. Like you have in the past. Now, the word Rahab here is not referring.

Uh, to the Jericho prostitute, who was converted? Uh, it is a nickname for Egypt Rahab. Uh, which was pictured as a great serpent dragon and was identified with Egypt in the ancient world. The faithful have taken their cue. And they have remembered what God's word has said about God and what God has done in the past verses 9 and 10, and they pray that God would show himself to be the same God in the present.

And so they pray in verse 11. For that joy and gladness and Thanksgiving, and Melody. That the Lord had told them about. In verse 3, they take the word of the Lord from Exodus and they take the word of the Lord from earlier in the chapter. And they pray.

For those things that Yahweh will return. And come to Zion with singing with everlasting Joy on their heads so that they shall obtain from the Lord of course, joy and gladness And sorrow and sign shall flee away. So the first thing is Faith listens to what God says and sees everything through the legends of the word of God.

And the second thing is that Faith prays for What it has heard from the word of God and it prays with confidence and certainty. That it is true because of who said it and because of to whom they are praying, And the last thing we see in verses 12 through 16 is that Faith must not fear men.

God emphasizes himself. He says, I even I am he, who comforts you Then he says, who are you? That you should be afraid. Not, who was that man? Or who were those tyrants that you should be afraid of them. But who are you? That you should be afraid. Should I overrule?

What God has said? Buy the anxieties of my heart and, and my ideas of what may or may not happen. We actually don't have a right to be afraid. Because fear. Is taking a counter opinion to what God has said. And many of us. I dare say, all of us often.

Need to be rebuked in this way when we are anxious over something. When we fear something, we could come to ourselves with the word with the scripture here and say, who are you self? Elect to be afraid when God has told you better than that. If we fear a man who will die and a son of man who will be made like grass verse 12, like we've heard about the oppressor The monker, the reproacher, the insulter If we do that verse 13 says, then you're forgetting Yahweh.

Your maker And he, There is no excuse for forgetting him. Because you are always walking under his Heavens. And on his Earth. You literally have an unlimited Supply. Of evidence and reminder. Of the Lord. And so, we mustn't forget, Uh, y'all are maker. Uh, he recognizes Sin in verse 10.

You have feared continually every day, because of the fury of the oppressor, Uh, but end. Into verse 13. Sorry, did I say that? Was verse 10? That's verse 13. You have feared continually every day because of the fury of the oppressor and the end of verse 13. Is asking the question, though, We will be able soon to ask.

Where is the fury of the oppressor? So not only is it silly? Uh, be afraid of it before it comes. Or before it's upon you. Because it's not there yet. Sufficient for the day, is its own trouble. We'll hear about that in the morning, sermon this week, But also, Very soon, it will be gone and never be seen again.

They will look for it in the place where it was and it shall not be found. And so he says, don't be Uh, desperate. Like the captive in verse 14. Who hastens? Rather trust in Yahweh. Our God. Verse 15. Uh, the one who and he picks up the language of their own prayer.

As. Had prayed, are you not the one who dried up the sea, the Waters of the great debt deep that made the depths of the sea erode for the redeemed to cross over. And he has answered in verse 15. Yes I am Yahweh. Your God who divided the sea?

Whose waves roared? And so he comes. Reminding us these things? Yes, let some rebuke. Yes with some chastening but not with Fury. Remember the speech in verse 12 through 16 begins with. I even I And he, who comforts you And it reminds us of this entire section of Isaiah, That began in chapter 40 Comfort, Comfort.

My people and he starts proclaiming to us over and over again. The servant who will come. And be the Savior. And so Faith. Mustn't fear men. Which would be to forget, God. He has given us the heavens. He has given us the Earth. Both which remind us of him.

He has given us his past performance, what he did. Uh, for his people with Egypt. And with God past performances indicative of future results. Uh, and he has given us his word. Which he puts in our heart for seven. He puts in our mouth for 16 and we may be sure that just as his salvation and his righteousness are forever.

So will we be forever? With him in the new heavens and the new Earth. So this is how Faith responds not. The way Israel has been responding up into this point. But the way that the servant's people, Are reshaped by the servant's words. To respond to God. May the Lord reshape your mind your heart.

By his words so that you will live with this. And, Uncertainty. Father, thank you for this portion of your word. Thank you for giving us. Some time to read it and think about it. And pray that your spirit. Bring up much to mind and give us to continue meditating upon it and benefiting from it.

Even as we have read and heard, That you would write it upon our hearts for. We ask it in Jesus name. Amen.