

Salvation for Hypocrites

Isaiah 58:1-14

Halifax: 13 March 2011

Introduction

Today we are going to look at the subject of hypocrisy.

- It's very peculiar the way people generally look at hypocrisy in our day.
- There are a lot of sins that have fan clubs,
 - but it's very hard to find advocates for hypocrisy.
 - There are advocates for sexual immorality in our perverted society...
 - You can even find advocates for the mutilation of unborn children who are not wanted, like the professor who advocated this in a debate at Dal last week...
 - But poor hypocrisy has very few supporters.
 - It ranks right up there with the mutilation of teenagers—it's hard to find anyone that will defend this practice.
- But there is something very peculiar about the way we deal with hypocrisy.
 - Although it is one of the most despised sins, it is universally practiced!
 - This is an odd thing because other despised sins, like the mutilation of teenagers, are very rarely practiced.
 - You would think that if we really despised hypocrisy the way we all say that we do, we would avoid it.
 - Of course when I say that it is universally practiced, I don't mean to say that everyone is a full blown two-faced hypocrite...
 - Few will even admit that they have a problem with it.
 - But we are all guilty of pretending to be better than we really are.
 - To demonstrate that this is so, let me ask you a question,
 - Who among you would be comfortable with having all of your inmost thoughts from last week broadcast on a big screen before the congregation this morning?
 - I'm not talking about the thoughts of things that are rightly kept in confidence (like where you have treasure hidden in your yard or something a friend told you in confidence).
 - I'm talking about just your sinful thoughts...
 - all your sinful attitudes, the envy, the disdain, the bitterness, the pride, the hard thoughts of God, the sinful lust and greed, the insults, the selfishness, the dissatisfaction with others successes—all that kind of thing.
 - No one would be comfortable with having all your sins broadcast—

- and if you say that you would, you are indeed quite the hypocrite—either a terribly self-deceived hypocrite or a blatant lying hypocrite.

But I have good news for all of us hypocrites today from the prophet Isaiah!

- There is salvation in the LORD, even for hypocrites!
 - That is the message of Isaiah 58.
- It goes right along with what we have been looking at in Isaiah for some time now.
 - For the past two weeks, we looked at the Lord's salvation for idolaters...
 - For those who change the truth of God into a lie because they do not like to retain true thoughts of Him.
 - Instead of recognising Him as the High and Lofty One who inhabits eternity and whose name is holy,
 - they make God out to be more like we are.
 - We saw this in Isaiah 57—
 - But the LORD promises that He will come and dwell with us if we will but humble ourselves and be broken and contrite because of our sin.
 - He, even the High and Lofty One who inhabits eternity and who is holy will dwell with *us*!
 - Three weeks ago, we saw that God's salvation extends even to those who were cut off from the worship of the temple.
 - Not only eunuchs and others like them who were not permitted to draw near, but also Gentiles from nations outside of Israel and Israel herself in the exile were cut off from the OT worship of God...
 - Yet, Isaiah declares that the LORD has salvation for all of these if they will come to Him for mercy.
 - This was the theme of chapter 56.
 - What powerful salvation there is in Jesus Christ—
 - for outcasts, idolaters, and hypocrites!
 - And all of this is built on the foundation of what Isaiah told us the LORD was going to do to save us back in Isaiah 53—
 - There He told us that His Servant (whom we now know as Jesus Christ) would bear the sin of His people so that they would be forgiven and healed!
 - All of our iniquities would be laid on Him—removed from us, and laid on Him so that we could be forgiven.
 - Jesus Himself came to make His soul an offering for sin!
 - This is such an offensive thing to the natural man, but it is just what we need if we are to be forgiven by our Creator, the Holy One.

- It is such a wonderful thing!
 - Isaiah tells us in chapter 54 it is so wonderful that it ought to cause the whole church to sing and praise God...
 - we, who were barren and unfruitful, now have many children!
 - Jesus has come, and through Him, we give birth to many who were dead in their trespasses and sins.
 - And in chapter 55, Isaiah tells us that this salvation is such a wonderful thing that everyone in the whole world ought to come and partake!
 - We are all perishing with food and water that cannot sustain us—
 - but in Jesus Christ we have living water that brings us complete pardon and abundant new life!
 - All we have to do to come is repent of our sin and come to Him for forgiveness and new life.
- It is salvation for outcasts, idolaters, and hypocrites!

So today, let us see how this salvation reaches even to hypocrites in our text today, Isa 58!

I. First, see how the LORD goes about uncovering our hypocrisy.

A. He tells Isaiah what he, as a prophet, must do in verse 1:

- **Isa 58:1: “Cry aloud, spare not; Lift up your voice like a trumpet; Tell My people their transgression, And the house of Jacob their sins.**

1. Special measures are called for because hypocrisy is one of the hardest sins for people to admit to.

a. Think about it.

- You often hear people say, “I’m having a problem with worry,” and in more personal settings, they may admit: “I’m having a problem with lust.”
 - But how often do you hear anyone say,
 - “I’m having a problem with hypocrisy.”
 - It’s just not something that people readily admit to.

b. What about you...

- Isn’t it hard even to face hypocrisy in your own life?
 - Isn’t it hard to admit that even when you worship God, your heart is often not with your lips?
 - It’s the one sin we just don’t want to acknowledge.

2. So the LORD tells Isaiah to shout about this sin!
 - a. That's what it means when it says **“Cry aloud, spare not, lift up your voice like a trumpet.”**
 - 1) The words translated “cry aloud” are more literally translated “cry with the throat” which means “at the top of your voice!”
 - 2) “Spare not” suggests that he must not be polite about pointing out the transgression that the LORD is about to refer to.
 - 3) To make it perfectly clear, He tells Isaiah to lift up his voice like a trumpet!
 - He has to rouse them from their lethargy!
 - Trumpets are used to wake people up!
 - Trumpets are used to alert people to danger.
 - Go blow the trumpet in their face!
 - This is what is needed for hypocrites
 - b. Sometimes, a minister of the word can be polite in pointing out sin.
 - For example, suppose the minister finds that a Christian man has been yelling at his wife for leaving the toothpaste out or something...
 - A Christian man is often quite ready to admit that he really should not have been yelling at his wife about that.
 - You only have to gently point out what he did and it is enough.
 - But with hypocrisy, a lot more is needed to get us to admit it.
3. He tells Isaiah that this sin needs to be spelled out to His people.
 - The rest of the verse says:
 - **“Tell My people their transgression, and the house Jacob their sin.”**

TRANS> So let's see how their sin is described...

B. The Lord describes their sin as hypocrisy.

1. Instead of admitting their need for mercy, His people were approaching Him as if they had no sin.
 - a. We have seen already (in chapter 57) that God is High and Holy and that He dwells with those who are humble and contrite to revive them.
 - He does not delight in our pretences—in Pharisees who come before Him declaring that they are not like other men.
 - He delights in saving us from our sins.
 - If we justify ourselves, excusing and explaining away our sin, He will not justify us,
 - but if we come to Him in humility and contrition looking to His mercy in Christ, then He delights in justifying us.

- So don't justify yourself...
 - Let Him do the justifying through Jesus!

- b. But look! They were approaching God as if they were righteous.
 - Verse 2 describes this:
 - **Isa 58:2: Yet they seek Me daily, And delight to know My ways, As a nation that did righteousness, And did not forsake the ordinance of their God. They ask of Me the ordinances of justice; They take delight in approaching God.**
 - It all looked good from the outside!
 - Here they were, seeking God daily—that is a good thing!
 - Here they were, delighting to know His ways—
 - They appeared to be eager listeners, like a people that are hungry for truth.
 - Here they were, asking Him for the ordinances of justice—as if justice was what they really wanted!
 - They even took delight in approaching God—you didn't have to drag them along—they were eager to come before Him.

- c. And look! They even had the audacity to complain that He was not answering their prayers even though they fasted!
 - **Isa 58:3: 'Why have we fasted,' they say, 'and You have not seen? Why have we afflicted our souls, and You take no notice?'**
 - You know how people will do this today—
 - They will marvel that such bad things happen to us when we are so good... how can it be?
 - And they have even been fasting—
 - Why is there no rain for their crops?
 - Why does the Lord not restrain their enemies?
 - This very attitude was the undoing of many in Israel when Jesus came.
 - He came to save His people from their sin,
 - but they felt that they were already righteous.
 - They felt that their great need was deliverance from the oppression of Rome.
 - They wanted salvation from God and they sought Him daily, but they did not want the salvation they most needed.
 - We have seen how many times Isaiah has reminded them of this need... from the very first chapter on...
 - In Isaiah 46:12-13, He made this very clear when He said:

- **Isa 46:12-13: Listen to Me, you stubborn-hearted, Who *are* far from righteousness: I bring My righteousness near, it shall not be far off; My salvation shall not linger. And I will place salvation in Zion, For Israel My glory.**
 - They needed God’s righteousness—no man has his own righteousness.
 - The whole Old Testament system of worship was designed to show them their need for salvation from sin,
 - but they rested in the rituals as if the rituals made them righteous.
 - They sought God for deliverance, but not for deliverance from sin.
 - In Isaiah’s day, they acted as if their fasting would impress God...
 - If they presented empty bellies and sackcloth to Him, He would accept them!
 - “We have fasted” they said, “and you have not heard.”
 - “Didn’t you see us fasting?”
2. The Lord proceeds to show them what is wrong with it!
- a. The problem was not with the fasting itself,
 - but with their failure to repent of their sins!
 - 1) See what it says, starting in the middle of verse 3?
 - **Isa 58:3: "In fact, in the day of your fast you find pleasure, And exploit all your laborers.**
 - Finding their own pleasure means that although they appeared to be broken before God,
 - They were not really so.
 - They would not abandon their own sinful desires.
 - They were outwardly ashamed, but not inwardly so.
 - The clear evidence that they were not sincere was seen in that even though they dawned their sack-cloth—they were exploiting their workers!
 - Treating them like dirt!
 - not paying them fairly, overworking them, squeezing everything they could out of them!
 - 2) And they were also cantankerous, even while fasting!
 - Verse 4 says that this nastiness was the result of their fasting!

- **Isa 58:4: Indeed you fast for strife and debate, And to strike with the fist of wickedness. You will not fast as *you do* this day, To make your voice heard on high.**
 - The idea is that instead of making them better, the fasting seemed to make them worse!
 - You have all seen this—
 - How often unspiritual people gather for Christmas dinner and get into a big fight
 - How often fights break out on Sunday morning on the way to church!
 - It is as if the means of grace make them worse...
 - And when there is fasting, instead of being humble, they become cranky because of their empty bellies!
 - But not only does fasting (or religious feasting) make people worse at the time of the fasting or feasting,
 - It also makes them worse the rest of the time!
 - It is almost like they suppose that because they are doing their religious words, it doesn't matter how they treat each other!
 - This is why some kids grow up despising church!
 - Their parents seem to think that because they are coming before God, they can act as they please the rest of the time.
 - I have done my little thing for God, so now I can go on oppressing others and God won't mind—
 - I said my prayers, I went to church, I fasted!
 - Coming to God like this is no way to get Him to hear your voice!
- 3) Do not act as if fasting itself will please God!
- a) As if the mechanics of fasting would somehow impress God and get him to do what you want Him to do!
 - In v. 5, the Lord says,
 - **Isa 38:5: Is it a fast that I have chosen, A day for a man to afflict his soul? *Is it* to bow down his head like a bulrush, And to spread out sackcloth and ashes? Would you call this a fast, And an acceptable day to the LORD?"**
 - Is the living God really going to respond just because we perform rituals?
 - Does He get off on seeing His people afflict themselves with fasting as a good luck charm or something?

- b) You see this sort of thing all the time!
- Someone who is full of sexual immorality will come to church as if God doesn't notice the sin they are living in all week and will accept them!
 - There are churches in our city that will allow people to come to the Lord's Supper who live together outside of marriage!
 - You will see a woman on her deathbed calling for the priest to come and perform last rites...
 - and yet, she is bitter and full of strife and has never repented of her sin—
 - Is a little water supposed to impress the Lord?
 - I have had parents who never worship God, who have no faith in Jesus, who have no interest in following Him,
 - come and ask me to baptise their baby!
 - How is this supposed to help?
 - How can I ask God to bless the child of parents who have no interest in training up their child in the Lord?
 - Is a little water supposed to blind God to all this?
 - Hypocrites always think that their sin doesn't make any difference as long as they perform the rituals!
 - The truth is that God searches the heart.
 - He tells us that obedience is better than sacrifice.
 - Rituals have their place
 - but their place is not *in place* of repentance!
 - Rituals do not take the place of sin!

- b. Fasting is a good thing when it is rightly used...
- For example, when a nation sees that they have sinned against God, the way Nineveh did when Jonah preached to them,
 - and then they fast to seek God's mercy!
 - Or when you come before God as an individual to seek His face with a broken and contrite heart.
 - Perhaps you see that your children are not responding to God's word and you want to cry out to Him to work in them...
 - And in doing so, you begin by confessing your own sins.
 - In that case, fasting is quite appropriate.
 - Jesus said that after He went away, His servants would fast.
 - I don't think we do enough of it today.

- Most Christians in the early church had a regular day of fasting each week to humble themselves before the Lord—

TRANS> But never suppose that fasting or any ritual will make up for a life of impenitence.

- And that brings us to the next point

II. The fasting that God blesses is the fasting of repentance.

A. See how the Lord describes proper fasting in verse 6-7.

- This is what He says:

- **Isa 58:6-7: “Is this not the fast that I have chosen: To loose the bonds of wickedness, To undo the heavy burdens, To let the oppressed go free, And that you break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, And that you bring to your house the poor who are cast out; When you see the naked, that you cover him, And not hide yourself from your own flesh?”**

1. Essentially, He tells the people to stop oppressing and start giving to others!

a. Instead of helping others to be freed from burdens, they were laying burdens on them!

- Instead of helping them to get on their feet, they were doing every thing they could to keep them down so they could exploit them!
 - If a man is hungry and he has no options, he will do work that is worth a good salary for a crust of bread!
 - If a man cannot pay his bills, you can make him your slave and put him to forced labour for you.
 - Instead of sharing the fruits of his labour with him, you take it all and give him a mere crust of bread.

- And note the imagery,

- You are to break every yoke—the yoke that wrongly held him in bondage to you.
- Breaking it means that you destroy it so as never to use it again.
 - If you keep the yoke, you have plans to use it again.
 - That would also be hypocrisy...
 - Like the man who breaks off an affair, but who keeps the keys to his mistress’s apartment...
 - You haven’t really repented if you keep the yoke for future use!

b. And not only are you to cut the oppression, you are to provide for the needy.

- 1) Don't just put off the wrong, but put on the right behaviour.
 - I have spoken to you about this many times...
 - You have not really repented unless you start doing the opposite of what you were doing before...
 - If you were exploiting, you need to start giving to the needy!
 - share your bread with the hungry!
 - bring the poor into your house!
 - cloth the naked

 - 2) In verse 9 &10 where this conduct of true repentance it repeated, we have a powerful command to **“extend your soul to the hungry”**...
 - That is the idea—not just to provide food and clothing as a good deed...
 - But to truly care for the needy so that your soul goes out to them—so that you, like Jesus, pour out your life for others!
 - It begins right in the home, and then it extends to all!
2. Oppression was particularly the sin in Isaiah's day, but we need to apply this to our sins, whatever they may be!
- a. There are plenty who need to repent of the same sin in our day.
 - There is oppression today in the workplace.
 - There is an effort to squeeze out as much as possible for as little pay as possible.
 - If you are doing this, you need to repent if you want to come before God.

 - b. But there are also lots of other sins that we need to repent of if the Lord is to hear us when we fast or come before Him in whatever way.
 - 1) There are a lot of workers in our day who commit the very opposite sin—
 - They try to do as little as possible for maximum pay...
 - They will take sick days when they are not really sick.
 - They will spend company time surfing the internet—doing Facebook or watching movies!
 - That is stealing!

 - 2) And I have already mentioned the problem of fornicators who come to worship...
 - I could speak about those who give to the poor as a way of gaining favour with God...
 - when they are cantankerous at home and treat their wife and their children like dirt.

- They do not really try to help the poor get on their feet, but only give as a way of trying to gain God’s favour—like the fasters in our text.
- c. The point is, we need to come to God as a holy God!
- And that means that we need to come to Him with repentance.
 - Your worship is worthless if you suppose that it itself will gain God’s favour.
 - As Jesus told us in the Sermon on the Mount, the blessed man is the man who is poor in Spirit, who mourns over his sin, who is meek, who hungers and thirsts for righteousness.
 - Come before God looking for mercy and grace and you will be filled!
 - That is the way we come before God if we wish to be blessed!
 - Looking to His provision for us in Jesus Christ!

TRANS> God will be pleased with your fasting when you do that!

B. He describes the blessing that He will bestow on you when you come with true repentance to seek His face...

1. First, in verse 8, He says that **“your light will break forth like morning!”**

- Where there had been confusion about God and His ways, now there will be clarity!
- You will see Jesus, the light of the world, and you will see that He is a perfect Saviour, that you are secure in Him, that He is beautiful.
- And this light will arise very quickly, like the light rises in Palestine each day at dawn.

2. Then He says that **“your healing shall spring forth speedily.”**

- Isaiah has been talking about healing a lot...
- They needed healing for the land that had been ravaged by enemies, and healing for their souls that had been ravished by the disease of sin.
- Again, as soon as you come to God, there is swift healing!

3. That the Lord will accept you—

- He says, **“your righteousness will go before you.”**
- In other words, He will not longer judge as a sinner—
 - We are completely accepted in Jesus Christ, not because we are without sin, but because He is our righteousness and has died for us.
 - No longer is our sin ever before us—
 - now the righteousness that God gives you is ever before you.

4. The Lord says that He will protect us—His glory will be our rear guard
 - No enemy will come up on us unaware because He Himself will watch over us.
 - As John says, the wicked one will not touch us.
 - We belong to the LORD now and no enemy will dare to come near us without permission when they see His glory surrounding us.
 - This does not mean we will be free of all trials.
 - It means that we will be free of trials that are not for the purpose we are now seeking—which is to be conformed to the image of Christ.

5. In verse 9, the LORD describes Himself as the ready hearer of our prayers!
 - It says:
 - **Isa 58:9: Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer; You shall cry, and He will say, 'Here I am.'**
 - Isn't that marvellous?
 - He presents Himself as always available for us!
 - No longer are we praying in vain as we saw in verse 3.
 - They were complaining that they were fasting and He had not heard, but when we come to Him with repentance, hungering for righteousness,
 - then He hears our prayers!
 - Then our prayers are that He would be glorified through us, even through our suffering!

TRANS> But before continuing with this great list of benefits, the LORD reminds us that there are conditions!

- These blessings are not automatically ours for *mere* fasting...
 - They are ours when we come with true repentance—looking for mercy.
 - We come like the tax collector for mercy instead of like the Pharisee with self-justification.
 - The LORD says,
 - **Isa 58:10: "If you take away the yoke from your midst, The pointing of the finger [this is probably a gesture for cursing someone such as we have today—we know that the Arabs had such a gesture in ancient times], and speaking wickedness, If you extend your soul to the hungry And satisfy the afflicted soul, [truly give yourself for them] Then...**
 - **Then** all these blessings will be yours...
 - and the list continues...

6. He speaks again about the light—walking in the light where we see God as He is and understand His truth...
 - **Isa 58:10: Then your light shall dawn in the darkness, And your darkness shall be as the noonday.**
 - We will know Him! And when we do, verse 11 says:
 - a. **“The LORD will guide you continually”—**
 - His will will be clear to us—we will know the way in which we should walk.
 - When you come to Him with repentance to do His will, He will show you the way in which you should go.
 - b. The LORD **“will satisfy your soul in drought and strengthen your bones,”**
 - He Himself will be our joy, even in deprivation and affliction!
 - Knowing Him, seeing His glory, knowing His promises, will enable to stand us to anything!
 - He Himself will strengthen our bones so that we will endure.
 - This has been seen to be true of God’s people again and again.
 - No matter what is done to them, their joy cannot be destroyed.
 - c. In the middle of a drought, the LORD says **“you shall be like a well watered garden and like a spring of water whose waters never run dry”**
 - Here are a people who are now committed to helping others instead of oppressing them...
 - When everything is taken away in drought, they will still be helping others!
 - The LORD sustains those who sustain others!
 - How many of you have ever had the experience of visiting a dear godly soul in their suffering and found that you were the one who came away with all the encouragement!
 - I had that experience with my friend Todd Adams who dies just a few weeks ago.
 - MS reduced him to a helpless man, but the more his body wasted away, the more his soul flourished.
 - He was a well-watered garden in drought.
 - A garden that was fruitful and that nourished others.
 - Now he is with the Lord of Glory in glory!

- **Isa 58:12: Those from among you Shall build the old waste places; You shall raise up the foundations of many generations; And you shall be called the Repairer of the Breach, The Restorer of Streets to Dwell In.**
- Brothers and sisters, we who come to God in true repentance are God's city and God's temple!
 - He promises to dwell in the midst of us forever as His house.
 - Jesus Christ is the One who said, "I will build my church"
 - He did His marvellous work for the purpose of making us a dwelling place for God.
 - He went to the cross to pay for our sins and He poured out His Spirit to transform us and to unite us to Himself and to each other.
 - He is the repairer of the breach and the restorer of the streets to dwell in.
 - He is the one who establishes us a kingdom of righteousness.
 - And we have the privilege of joining Him in this kingdom building work—
 - and most of all in being this kingdom.

TRANS> What marvellous blessings God has for those who come to Him with the fast that He has chosen!

- Do not come holding on to your sins as the hypocrites do, supposing that they will be heard for their much praying or their much fasting!
 - Come to Him repenting of your sins, looking to Him for forgiveness and new life.
 - Then you will have this marvellous blessing from the LORD!
- Our Gracious LORD might have ended here, but He does not.
 - With Him, there is always more emphasis on feasting than fasting.
 - Again, is not to say that the right kind of fasting has no place—
 - It probably needs more of a place than most of us give it.
 - You see how the LORD speaks of the fast that He has chosen.
 - But our God who has been saying,
 - "If you fast in the way that I have chosen, you will have this and this and this blessing..."
 - now says, in effect,

III. "If you keep the Sabbath in the way that I have chosen you will have and even greater blessing!"

- Let's take a look at what He says.

A. First, I want you to notice the structure of the passage...

1. There is a promise and there is a condition...
 - You see that verse 13 begins with the word **if**—
 - **“If you...”**
 - This expresses the condition.
 - And verse 14 begins with the word **then**—
 - **“Then you...”**
 - And here we have the promise that results when the condition is met.
 - It is an if/then statement.
 - If the condition of v. 13 is met, the promise of v. 14 is the result.

2. But let no one misunderstand this to be some kind of works or ritual salvation!
 - That is precisely what this whole passage is condemning...
 - It is hypocrisy to come to the Lord and suppose that because you fast or because you keep the Sabbath, you will be blessed.
 - As if it were an amulet or good luck charm that forced God to bless us.
 - The whole point here is that the kind of fasting and the kind of Sabbath keeping that God chooses is not a mere ritual performance!
 - It is rather a true coming to God, in humility and contrition,
 - using the rituals He has appointed to come near to Him rather than as an end in themselves or a work of merit!
 - The whole point is that you are to truly come to Him!
 - To Him who is revealed as the High and Lofty One who inhabits eternity and whose name is Holy...
 - You are to come to Him in the only way that you can come to Him—
 - humble and contrite!
 - looking to Him to save you.
 - looking to what He has provided in Jesus!
 - Not as one pretending you have no sin...
 - but as one who says, “God be merciful to me, a sinner.”

TRANS> Let us look first at the Sabbath keeping He calls for and then at the promise.

- B. He tells us what true Sabbath keeping entails in v. 13.
 - Verse 13 says:
 - **Isa 58:13: "If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, From doing your pleasure on My holy day, And call the Sabbath a delight, The holy day of the**

LORD honorable, And shall honor Him, not doing your own ways, Nor finding your own pleasure, Nor speaking your own words,

1. You will notice that He calls the Sabbath holy two times:
 - First He calls it “**My holy day,**”
 - and then He calls it “**The holy day of the LORD.**”
 - The LORD set apart the day as holy at Creation...
 - He declared it to be a holy day from the very start.
 - Gen 2:2-3 says: **And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.**
 - When it says He *sanctified the day*, that is the same as saying that He made it holy—
 - To sanctify something is to set it apart for God’s purposes.
 - It is not to be put to ordinary use.
 - For example, when vessels were sanctified, they were not to be used for common means, but only for the Lord’s purposes.
 - When you put something that God has made holy to ordinary use, you trample upon it with your feet.
2. And that is the main prohibition here...
 - You are to turn away your foot from the Sabbath!
 - It is holy ground and you are not to trample upon the day with your muddy feet...
 - That is, you are not to drag into the day your own ways, your own pleasures, or even your own words!
 - It is not a day to do your own thing.
 - It is not just another day for you to go to the zoo or to watch a ball game,
 - to go shopping or to catch up on some paper work,
 - to do yard work or clean out the garage,
 - to do home renovations or wash your car!
 - It is not a day for idle chit chat!

TRANS> But this does not at all mean that it is to be a day of gloom in which you can’t do anything!

- Not at all!

3. The LORD says rather that you are “**to call the Sabbath a delight, the holy day of the LORD honourable, and shall honour Him.**”
- a. It is a day to set apart everything so that you can commune with the Lord!
 - Of course you are to walk with Him every day, but on the Sabbath Day,
 - He calls us to lay aside our ordinary work and recreation and devote the day to direct communion with Him.
 - The day was made for us!
 - It is like a date with God!
 - Our husband wants us to come apart to spend this day with Him.
 - b. Isaiah does not mention it here, but in Leviticus, we see that He has called us to gather with His people for a holy convocation on the Sabbath.
 - It is not just a convocation, but a **holy** convocation in which God is praised, called upon, and listened to.
 - We are to proclaim what He had done, not only as our creator, but now much more as our redeemer.
 - We are to remember His statutes and ordinances and to walk in them.
 - We are to receive His word with faith and love.
 - And now that Jesus has come,
 - He calls us together to give thanks to the Father for accepting His offering for our sins!
 - We come together to sing and to eat the Lord’s Supper and to hear His word.
 - Our very name is church, or ekklesia which means assembly of called out ones—those called out in Christ!
 - We do not gather on the Lord’s Day to watch the super bowl, but to remember our Lord’s work and to give thanks and to seek the His blessing.
 - This is the most delightful thing in all the world.
 - If you do not see it as a delight, then you need to start keeping the day so that you will gain an appreciation for it!
 - There is something wrong with you if you would rather mow the grass than praise your Saviour and remember His gracious works—
 - than to hear His voice and learn of His ways—
 - than to pray to Him.
 - It is also a day of feasting...
 - Our Lord speaks of that in Psalm 22 when He speaks of gathering His people for a joyful feast.

- Don't let anything get in the way of this joyful day!
 - It is the Day that the Lord has made.
 - Let us rejoice and be glad in it.
- c. You see that it says you are not only to call the day a delight, but also to call it honourable.
 - We learned recently from the fifth commandment that the word honour means weighty!
 - The idea is that this day is become very important to you!
 - It is to have a very important place in your life—a supreme place—a guarded place!
 - I need to rebuke some of you because you haven't been keeping the day as you should.
 - And you see right here that the LORD Himself is the one who tells you to honour this day.
 - Why then, do you suppose that you can disregard the day and do your own thing?
 - By what authority do you set aside the holy day of the Lord?

TRANS> No, don't trample on God's holy day with your own doings!

- Call the day honourable, call it a delight, come before your God with joy!

C. The LORD says that there is a great reward for those who keep the day as they should!

1. Look at the great reward He has for you!

a. You see the if/then construction here...

- If you do not trample upon the day but call it a delight...
 - **Isa 58:14: "then you shall delight yourself in the LORD."**
- Isn't that an excellent promise!
 - Delight in the day that has been given for you to worship the Lord, to feast before Him, to praise Him, to learn of Him, to call on Him,
 - delight in it and you will delight yourself in Him!
 - He will reveal His glory to you, week by week, as you faithfully keep His day...
 - You will come to delight in His super-abounding grace that He lavishes upon His elect!
 - You will come to delight in His law that guides you in the way.
 - You will come to delight in His holiness and His beauty.
 - You will come to delight in His work.

- You will come to delight in His promises for the future.
 - You will come to delight in Him—everything about Him!
 - This is His promise!
- b. Besides that He says:
- **Isa 58:14: I will cause you to ride on the high hills of the earth, And feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father.**
 - This speaks of our inheritance as His people...
 - The LORD promises that we will inherit the heaven and the earth—a new heaven and a new earth in which righteousness dwells!
 - God Himself will feed us so that we will lack nothing—
 - He will nourish us up the bread and wine of Christ’s body and blood so that we will live forever and never hunger again.
 - It will be food that will enable us to grow into the likeness of Jesus so that we are renewed in His image.
 - It will be a community where, instead of oppression, everyone lays down his life for the other...
 - It will be a city whose builder and maker is God.
 - Do you see?
 - We keep the Sabbath and honour it and then the LORD honours us so that we ride on the high hills of the earth!
 - We come to Him, hungering for His righteousness on the Sabbath and He feeds us with the heritage He promised to Jacob—
 - even with Jesus our Saviour who our food and drink.

TRANS> What a reward!

2. But this is where hypocrites go wrong.
- a. It is just as with fasting...
- They hear that God answers those who humble themselves with fasting and cry out to Him, so they come with mere fasting...
 - They hear that God blesses those who keep the Sabbath,
 - so they keep the Sabbath as the Pharisees did and expect God to bless them for sacrificing the day.
 - They are ritual performers.
- b. But you see that this is not what the LORD is talking about!
- The Sabbath keeping He is talking about is true Sabbath keeping...
 - Not the mere cessation of our normal activities...

- but a coming before the Lord to rejoice in His gracious works for us, to rejoice in our Saviour and His finished work,
 - to give praise to God and to rejoice in what He has done!
- Hypocrites always think they will be rewarded for doing rituals.
 - They can be living an ungodly life without repentance, but because they said their prayers and went to church, God will bless them!
 - Because they gave to the poor, God will bless them...
 - Because they fasted, God will bless them.
- This is so wrong!
 - Fasting and Sabbath observance are not works that gain God's favour.
 - They are means that God has given for sinners to seek God...
 - The reward is not in getting repaid for giving up food or time,
 - the reward is finding the Lord who bestows His wonderful salvation on us and growing in that salvation!
 - God blesses those who diligently seek Him...
 - not those who observe rituals as an end in themselves.
 - We don't come to present our works to Him,
 - but to receive His righteousness and salvation which we so desperately need.
 - All of us are at best but recovering hypocrites whose hearts are not in our fasting or our Sabbaths as they ought to be...
 - But if we will but come to the Lord, humbly confessing even our hypocrisy,
 - He will pardon us and He will bless us.
 - That is why Jesus came—to take away our sins.