

Title: To those who "have it all."
Text: Isaiah 2.6-22
Theme: Lost identity
Series: Isaiah #5
Prop Stmt: You're only as good as your "God"
Aim:

One of Jeep's current marketing slogans goes like this, "The things we make, make us." Do you understand what that advertising campaign is saying? They are saying, that which we make, is what gives us identity, worth and validity. Beloved, if what we make, makes us, then we are in deep weeds. The very fact that we look for meaning and purpose outside of ourselves betrays the fact that meaning and purpose does not come from within. So, why then are we so tempted to look to what we make, what we accomplish, and what we do, as our security blanket?

I attended a wedding once where the program not only listed the bridesmaids and groomsmen, but it listed their degrees and their current jobs. It was as if they were saying, "Look at this wedding part. Aren't you envious? We are so great. We have it all. We are young, smart, and successful. What is there not to be impressed with?"

To those of you "have it all" or who are straining to get it, or who think you deserve it, or are tempted by it, this text is for you. In other words, I need this and so do you.

When Isaiah came on to the scene, Judah was in the final years of the reign of King Uzziah. The Assyrian threat was subdued for a time, and the time of peace allowed Judah to become prosperous and powerful. In fact, they became so wealthy and so strong; they did not need anyone, least of all God. They had learned that they could rely upon themselves. The things that they made, made them and they were impressive at least to themselves. God's view was different.

Read Text:

If you are reading this as a book, you would notice that there is a sudden change from verse 5 to verse 6. In v.5, Isaiah is pleading with the people to live in view of what God's plan is for them. That incredible plan is laid out in 2.2-4. Isaiah is challenging them to live with hope in what God is going to do. In fact, he is imploring them, even commanding them in v.5 because he knows their true condition and he knows that God has rejected them. That is why in v.6 he turns and speaks to God because the truth is; God's people were doing everything but living in view of God's promises. It was as if these people were saying, "hey, were the chosen ones, we can live above the law" and Isaiah is saying, "hey, the truly chosen ones live under the law! You and I both know that this is not a problem unique to 7th century BC Judah.

During the early 1500's the pope was raising money in order to build St. Peter's basilica in Rome. Direct mailing and infomercials hadn't been invented yet, so the pope declared that he had the power to create a special dispensation. He issued a

“bull”. He said that anyone who contributed money to the construction project would be forgiven of all sins, even future ones and would not face purgatory. In addition, if you made a contribution in the name of someone who died, they would instantly be released from purgatory. His emissaries were sent throughout the Holy Roman Empire with these freshly printed indulgences that were nothing more than a license to sin from the pope himself. Such a deal! Many of you know the story. There was a priest in the city of Wittenburg, Germany, who cared for his people and was appalled to see what was going on. Men in his village were getting drunk, beating their wives and taking up with others, all because they were now free to do so. They had the ticket. They were free to sin.

We are so enlightened, aren't we? We are the Protestants who protested the destruction of the gospel by the Roman church. We are the ones who are proud of the fact that we recovered the gospel from a works-righteousness, sacrament-based captivity. But, what have we done with it? In our addiction to success, stories and numerical results we have attempted to reduce the gospel to a formula. Here is the formula that we came up with: Pray to ask Jesus in your heart = Eternal life in heaven, guaranteed, no questions asked. The prayer was like magic words. Never mind that NO where in Scripture are we told to ask Jesus into our hearts. And the result of this was thousands of people who wrongly believed that their salvation was based upon a prayer they prayed, just like the thousands of people who wrongly believed that their salvation was based on an offering they gave.

It is like being inoculated. You get a little bit of truth, you hear it, are close to it, participate in it, and become immune to it. That is NOT what it means to be a child of God! But, it is so very difficult for someone who thinks they are fine, to recognize they are a train-wreck apart from being in one. Isaiah sees the wreck coming! He sees his people claiming to be fine when they are living in darkness. Now, this is very, very important to keep in mind when reading the prophets like Isaiah. Isaiah sees the immediate judgment that is coming upon Judah. It was real and it happened like he said. But, this judgment pointed to a greater judgment that would come upon the world. So, while there is an historical setting for this, there is a very real application for us, that is going to be actual; that we need to be aware of and prepared for. But, the way that we get prepared is to hide ourselves in the only One who can save us – and that is Christ.

The contrast between what he has just written and what they were doing is enormous. Look at this. He compares what his people are to what they were called to be and it is sad.

- Instead of the world being drawn to Zion (2) God's people are drawn to the world (6).

- Instead of the world gaining spiritual help in Zion (3) God's people are only concerned about amassing wealth (7)

- Instead of the world finding peace from the God of Israel (4) God's people are arming themselves with weapons of war.

- Instead of the world coming to Zion to learn from the Creator (3) God's people are "creating" their own gods (8)
- Instead of the world being received by and ruled by God (4a) God's people are rejected and denied forgiveness (6, 9)

They were so far from what they were supposed to be, but sadly, they did not know it. This is a theme throughout the Bible...

I. Those who are "full" are empty. (6-11)

Those who think that they have it all together, have no need of God. And whenever you have something that you look to for protection, for identification, for validation, for approval, or for success, and it is not God, you are setting yourself up for major disappointment. It is nothing short of madness and folly to attempt to exalt yourself. Here it is. These people were so proud of what they had become, but what they had become was being "rejected by God".

A. They are empty because they ignore God's Word. (6)

What is to the east of Judah? (Ammon, Edom, Syria, Assyria and Babylon). Where is Philistia? West! What is Isaiah saying? He is saying that Judah has borrowed pagan practices from east to west. They have gone everywhere, except to God in order to help them live. Fortune-tellers, soothsayers, are explicitly forbidden in the Bible because; it is an attempt to play God.

In this text and throughout Isaiah we are going to see a theology of idolatry developed. While many of the idols in Isaiah's day were made out of wood and covered with gold and silver, the truth is, an idol is anything that we look to apart from God for our security, or help, or validation, or worth or success. The gods that we look to are the inventions of our own hearts and reveal the same failures of mankind. Through magic and sacrifice they can be manipulated in order to do what the worshipper wants. They are not real. They are imagined and given form from that which has already been made. But, at times they appear to work. And every nation, other than Judah, had their own gods. Here is the choice: Will you listen to God, or will you listen to the nations? You cannot listen to both.

B. They are empty because they trust in the wrong god. (7-8)

The next two verses repeats one line three times and one line twice. Notice the digression and relationship. When you have a lot of money, you are tempted to buy things that will make you secure (at least you think). No one really loves money; we love what we think money will do. We think money will get us protection, love, or security, so the things that we purchase become the things that we worship. Or, like in Isaiah's day, the things that we make make us.

- 1) Verse 7a – filled with... there is no end to (wealth)

- 2) Verse 7b – filled with... there is no end to (weapons)
- 3) Verse 8 – filled with... (idols)

Back in Deut. 17, God forbid the king to amass great fortune and weapons because they would tempt the king (and by extension the people) to trust in them instead of God. What are you tempted to trust in? What do you have or wish you had that would get you the attention that you think you deserve? What things about yourself do you “happen” to let others know so they will think well of you? What possessions, appearance, etc, do you display in hopes that you will be complimented?

C. They are empty because they have no where to hide. (9-11)

In v.9, Isaiah is decrying the absolute absurdity of trusting in what you have made and claiming that there is anything that can compare with or compete with God! “So man is humbled and brought low” I take to mean – Look at what has happened to man? He is a joke! He trusts in his stuff. He trusts in his money. He trusts in his power. This is so offensive that Isaiah cries, as if he is afraid that God will somehow forgive them and overlook how terrible this really is.

His response reveals a critical issue. How can these people, who rejected God, created their own gods, have attempted to be God; how can they ever become the people with whom God will dwell? How can God have fellowship with people who hate him? Have you ever worked with someone who secretly hated you and attempted to undermine everything that you did, only for that person to either retire or take another job and you get invited to the going away party? Your friends may tell you, “just go along and play the game.” But, God doesn’t play games! How can God have fellowship with people who hate him and try to replace him?

That is an enormous tension that is not answered in this text, but it is answered later. For now, Isaiah points out, that those who trust in what they have, will find out, that what they have is a curse and not a help. When the terror of God is unleashed upon this world, those who were so mighty will be revealed as nothing. In fact, many of the mighty are empty, pathetic people who hide behind their stuff in fear that the truth about their insecurities will be revealed. Why trust in stuff that sucks the life out of you, when there is Christ, who offers you his own?

II. Those who have it all, have nothing. (12-17)

These verses are marked by a series of “against all” statements. The point is, God has put the pride of man in his crosshairs and is going to take him down. Specifically, Isaiah points out all of these things that are lofty and high, literally. He starts in the north with the cedars of Lebanon, known for their stature and strength. He then speaks of the oaks of Bashan, the mountains, hills, towers, walls, and even the ships that conducted trade, presumably in the Ezion-Geber port-city. You get the idea that Isaiah is speaking of a divine windstorm followed by an earthquake that runs from the north to the south and absolutely levels every thing in its path. All of the building

projects of man through which he attempts to display his greatness are bulldozed. It is not that building tall buildings is necessarily wrong. Fact is, in cities where land is a premium; it makes sense to build up instead of out. But, in the last 75 years, the world has been in a competition to see who can build the tallest building. The Sears Tower in Chicago is 1,450 feet high. The Burj Dubai that is in the beginning stages of construction is projected to around 2,600 feet high. It is fascinating to observe how we place so much identity and security with tall things like buildings. But, they are all coming down.

9-11 messed with us. Beyond the obvious point of being attacked by terrorists, we watched how two of our great buildings, massive buildings, icons of our success, were reduced to rubble, without warning. Do you remember that day? Do you remember how the things that we made, our big buildings, were now feared because they were seen as potential coffins? That is what Isaiah is saying here. There is coming a day when the very things that you were so proud of will be your curse. The people had put their trust in themselves. They were proud and the great trees, mountains, buildings and even their commercial shipping fleets were all expressions of their greatness. There was no humility, or thanksgiving, or acknowledgement of the graciousness of God. But, Isaiah says to those who have it all, it's all coming down. And when it does, what will you turn to?

III. Those who trust in themselves have no hope. (18-21)

Isaiah says that “the idols shall utterly pass away”. (18) There is no hope for one who trusts in an idol. They are (lit. “no gods.”) These verses are truly pathetic. They speak of the day (19c) when the LORD rises to terrify the earth. The reason he does this is because he cannot allow all of our sin to go on and on and not be responded to. But, on that day when he responds, what happens to all of the gods? What happens to all of the people? The picture is that of people who are running into any den, cave, or hole in an attempt to get away from the wrath of God and as they do, they realize that all of these idols, not only cannot save them, but they are an invitation to destruction. So, they throw them away. They toss all of these gold and silver, and former objects of trust into the places where the most unclean animals live.

So, it all comes down to this: Any attempt to exalt your self is to take a step toward nothingness. We like to surround ourselves with things that we think will make us more secure and these things tempt us to trust in them instead of God. Accumulating things and trusting in them is a means to exalting ourselves. But, therein is the problem. When we exalt ourselves and pretend to be our own savior, we have taken on a role that we cannot fulfill. 1) We don't live forever. 2) We cannot control events around us. 3) We cannot make and keep promises that will fix people.

It is interesting that instead of telling us to get rid of idols; Isaiah ends this section by telling us to stop trusting in man. He is only one breath away from death. Who will save you then?

Conclusion: 22

As of March of this year, Steve Jobs was worth 8.3 billion dollars. Do you know what the .3 is? That is 300 million dollars. What is Steve Jobs worth today? He is dead, age 56, pancreatic cancer. Steve was obviously a brilliant man, wealthy man, able to get the finest medical treatment available on the earth. He built a wildly successful company, but just like you and me, he was only one breath away from death.

Idols promise you power, love or success.
They lure you with things that appeal to your desires, even needs.
They promise, but cannot deliver.

What is an idol? It is our attempt to get what we want from life. An idol can be made out of gold, silver, or sit on 4 wheels in our driveway. It can be a relationship, an address, even a body shape or size. It can be the food we run to for comfort, the sleep we hide in for escape. Anything that we trust in, in order to help us get what we want from life is an idol. And what happens is that when we trust in an idol, we begin to take on the properties of the idol. You become what you worship, or as Chrysler says, the things we make, make us. But no idol can see the future, only God can do that. But, when you reject God for an idol, you blind yourself from seeing properly. You become like your idol. No idol can save you from death. No idol can redeem your soul. No idol can give you true meaning. That is the curse of the idol of evolution. Those who have sold their souls to evolution are left with nothing but a meaningless universe full of numberless dangers, horrors, disease and random events of destruction. We are so vulnerable to this world and so absolutely powerless to do anything about it. So, stop regarding man! Stop thinking that you can find a way to fix yourself, save yourself or redeem yourself. You cannot. You are the problem and you need a Savior who is real! You need someone who is sinless, so that death cannot stop him and the grave cannot hold him. You need someone who is merciful so that you can be forgiven. You need someone who is life and has life and gives life and creates life, so that you can live forever. You need someone who is real so that your hope, your soul, your future is anchored into truth and not imagination.

“Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other.” Isaiah 45.22

Why would you trust anyone else?